

THE ROLE OF THE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATOR IN ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The menace of insecurity in Nigeria is bothering every patriotic citizen of the Nigerian nation. This abysmal absence of security has resulted due to the inability of successive governments to rise to the responsibility of meeting social needs as well as making life comfortable for citizens. In Nigeria, instances of insecurity are increasing at an alarming rate every day, ranging from economic sabotage, political crisis, and ethnic chauvinism, to religious unrest. Insecurity has exacerbated the already tense situation of Nigerians (as a result of the downturn of the economy). Their countenances have changed somewhat since they do not know what can unfold within a reasonably short time. Consequently, this has made a considerable percentage of Nigerians to be sent to their early graves. Indeed, living together peacefully in the face of Boko Haram insurgence, bombing, kidnapping, Fulani herdsmen invasion and all sorts of vices has virtually become a mirage despite all security measures being put in place by those in authority. Religion is regarded as an antidote to all forms of insecurity. Christianity in particular reckons security is vital to peaceful co-existence. The paper adopted the descriptive approach to discuss the various issues raised and put them in their right perspectives. The national security of life, property, intellect, religion, economy, and political affairs is the main focal point of peaceful co-existence and national growth of Nigeria as will be explicated in this paper. Moreover, concerted efforts were made to proffer the roles of theological educators as means of enhancing national security and peaceful co-existence.

Key Words: Theological Educators, National Security, Peaceful Coexistence

Word Counts: 255

I. Prolegomenon

National Security issues in today's world have taken a dangerous trend that warrants academic discourse¹. The impact of insecurity on peaceful coexistence is a major global theme. Some atrocities perpetuated in the world today, some societal crises, criminal activities, and some challenges to peaceful co-existence in Nigeria are engineered by religious fanaticism. Some people who claim to be religious are the devil incarnate for they still hide under the pretext of being Christian to perpetuate criminal acts which have adverse effects on the national security of Nigeria as a nation.

Reference to Nigeria as a "security-risk nation" by the international communities is not an exaggeration. The pages of the nation's newspapers are full of incidents of insecurity threats. A confirmation of this can be alluded to in the incessant political, religious and ritual killings, which pervade the nation in all its regions. In the Niger – Delta area, and almost all over Nigeria cases of kidnapping are rampant. There are also communal clashes in parts of Kaduna state especially in Kajuru, Chikun, and Jama'a Local Government Areas. Religious imbroglio and political killings are common in the northern and south-western states respectively². Some factors have been identified as threats to national security in Nigeria and the world at large. These include injustice, ignorance, hatred, unemployment, political opportunism, ineffective judicial system, corruption, indiscipline and exploitation of weaker nations by superpowers of the world, among others.

The role of the theological educator in enhancing national security and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria

As a matter of urgency, it needs to be remembered that Nigeria as a nation has not folded her arms watching the security of the nation deteriorate further. She has put in place some security agencies among which are the Armed Forces, namely the Nigerian Army, the Air Force and the Navy: the Nigerian Police, State Security Service, National Intelligence Agency and the Defence Intelligence Service. Others include the Nigeria Immigration Service, the Nigerian Customs Service, the Nigeria Prisons Service, the National Drug Laws and Enforcement Agency and National Agency for Food, Drug Administration Control. There are also the Federal Road Safety Commission, The Federal Fire Service, The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and The National Emergency Management Services. To ascertain financial security, two anti-graft agencies have been put in place, namely, the Economic and Finance Crime Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).

However, the fact remains that as the number of security agencies is increasing, cases of insecurity are also increasing geometrically. As the security vote in the nation's annual budget is increasing, so also the nation is witnessing more cases of civic strife and insecurity. It should be noted that the lacuna in our nation's system of maintaining security is theological pragmatism which has not been given adequate attention by the rulers of the nation and misinterpretation of the concept of security by those who claimed to be the executors (theological educators) of divine instructions.³ It, therefore, becomes imperative to have a cursory look at the challenges of security from the perspective of theological education, and as

well discuss theological roles as a way of curbing security challenges in Nigeria as a nation.

II. Security Challenges on Peaceful Co-existence and National Growth in Nigeria

Security challenges in Nigeria, according to Ayuba Isayaku, began to escalate from the inception of democracy, in 1999 till date. Ayuba further explains that Nigeria which has the largest population in Africa, with its oil wealth, is blessed with human and natural resources aimed at lifting the country into the rank of developed countries but has been faced with incessant security challenges which grossly affect her national growth. Despite the existence of security units such as the State Security Service (SSS), the Police Force (PF) the Nigeria Army (NA) the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) among others.

Nigeria today is still faced with diverse security challenges ranging from the Niger Delta militants to the alarming activities of the Boko Haram sect, the upsurge in kidnapping, and other criminal activities.⁴ Igboin also remarked that despite the large annual budget for security intelligence Nigerian could not maintain adequate security which is necessary to boast her national growth and engender peaceful co-existence among her citizens. For instance, Nigeria's budgets for security have consistently been prioritized above all else for the past five years or so, yet there seems to be no visible amelioration of insecurity.⁵ Hertskovits, also argued that the global promotion of fear and focus on insecurity and violent activities is an excuse for "security". Spending and the focus on "Boko Haram" have also become avenues to enrich crony security

consultants' private security companies, weapons manufacturers and suppliers, to mention but a few.⁶

Doyin Adeoye, further remarked in "*Tribune Newspaper*" that security issues which used to be one of the least social problems faced by the country seem to have crept into the forefront of its social problems in recent times, with the security sector eating deep from both the state and local government budgets which could have been adopted for the viability of socio-economic growth in Nigeria.⁷ One could not but wonder when the results of these expenses would be visible and total security restored to the nation. Rotimi Fasan, in a '*vanguard Newspaper*' article, remarked that Nigeria is today faced with a lot of security challenges and not a few of these challenges are tied to the question of our inability to think and act as a nation. Although Nigerians loosely speak of the country and its people as a nation, it is conspicuous that the people lack a common outlook on life that is significant to the forging of a common sense of societal vision important to the making of a nation. He continued and said that there is yet no sense of a national outlook on how society could address many of the challenges facing it. Most times, when Nigerians comment on matters of national security, they tend to do so from a less nationalistic standpoint.⁸

It may not be possible to begin counting the gems Nigeria has lost in the hands of assassins in the name of politics due to the alarming rate of insecurity in the nation. Murder cases are so rampant in Nigeria that one can say without exaggeration that hardly could a day pass in Nigeria without a record of one

murder case or the other. Apart from incessant killings of innocent souls by Boko Haram, extra-judicial killings are also rampant in the country. The Attorney General of the Federation, Mohammed Adoke submitted on December 10, 20, 12 that 7,195 cases extra-judicial killings were recorded in Nigeria in the last four years. In Potiskum, Yobe state, three South Korean doctors attached to Potiskum General Hospital were attacked by armed men and killed. In the same vein, nine female polio vaccine health workers were murdered Kano state. In Anambra state, about sixty bodies were reportedly sighted floating on the Ezu River, with twenty – three bodies recovered so far by police authorities.⁹ Recently in Abuja which is the Federal Capital Territory, it was reported that sixteen policemen were killed by the bandits. Igangan, in Ibarapa North Local Government Area of Oyo State, was also experiencing a suspected Fulani herders attack in which scores of residents of the Igangan community were killed in the early hours on Sunday, 6 June 2021 while several houses including the palace of Ashi of Igangan were burnt by suspected herdsmen¹⁰ as at the time of working this paper. The concern of this paper is to articulate and demonstrate how theological educators in the course of imparting knowledge of theology adopt it in promoting national security, justice, unity and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. On this note, it is expedient to discuss the conceptual interplay of national security and peaceful co-existence.

III. The Conceptual Interplay of National Security and Peaceful Co-existence.

The role of the theological educator in enhancing national security and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria

The interplay of national security and peaceful co-existence has been so common in the minds and dealings of the common humanity of today. There is a need to properly understand these concepts for proper management of human relationships that will promote the well-being of lives and properties. Security is, however difficult to achieve when individuals are unable to live peacefully among themselves. To this effect, Udeh identifies insecurity:

As a situation of instability, crime, lack of development, and depreciation in the well-being and quality of life of the people. This is also associated with all natures of violence and conflicts against the peaceful well-being of lives and properties.¹¹

From the foregoing definitions of insecurity, national security encompasses a broad range of facets such as economic security of a nation social security, political security, energy security environmental security as well as the ability to fight threats to the life and properties either from within or externally and the maintenance of the state's sovereignty. National security is a major concern of a nation such as Nigeria. This is because it borders on the very peaceful co-existence and sovereignty of the state. Edeko further asserts that national security means the protection and preservation of all that the nation considers important and valuable. It includes the conditions of life that are healthful and satisfying to all members of the nation. He vehemently argues that there is a need for the preservation of economic and environmental heritage from generation to generation. He also explains that national security has a positive impact on the conditions of life of individuals within

the various states and provides them with a genuine atmosphere for peaceful co-existence.¹² According to Aliyu Mohammed, former National Security Adviser, “National security from any perspective is about safeguarding the interest of the citizenry and providing the type of atmosphere that is free of threats that could inhibit the pursuit of the good of all. It is about the processes and measures required to preserve law and order.”¹³ The Nigerian constitution of 1999 section 14 (2) (b) vested the government with the responsibility of safeguarding lives, property, and welfare of Nigerian against both internal and external threats including other forms of danger.¹⁴

Dasuki in support of Edeko, opines that national security is an encompassing phenomenon that is paramount to individuals, entities, communities, and even nations. He recognizes security interests as safety of life and property, economic, physiological, and mental well-being and the freedom to pursue the attainment of legitimate objectives without hindrance. He outlines Nigeria’s security challenges including, terrorism, Niger Delta militancy, herdsmen invasion, Boko Haram, kidnapping, maritime insecurity, illegal bunkering, armed robbery, pipeline vandalization, youth unemployment, climate change, porous borders, and finally proffered the way forward, namely; comprehensive database system, public enlightenment, reorganization of security agencies, provisions of infrastructure, job creation, poverty alleviation, among others which paves way for peace to co-exist with others.¹⁵ So, man exists because of his communal participation. He is not an isolated being. Therefore, man should naturally assist

The role of the theological educator in enhancing national security and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria

others to have peace as their right, not with strings attached. The strings may be in the forms of hatred and selfishness; such exploits the brutalities of the poverty, oppression, power and greed of modern society which often result in national insecurity. In response to the national insecurity, Paul VI also affirmed that:

Peace is the ideal of mankind. Peace is necessary. Peace is a duty. Peace is beneficial it is not a fixed and illogical idea of ownership, nor is it an obsession or an illusion. It is a certainty. Yes, it is hope: it holds the key to the future of civilization and the destiny of world security. Peace is the goal of mankind in the process of its growing self-awareness and of the development of society on the face of the earth. Peace is the human power of potential actualization and societal thrust for national security and development. Peace is humanity itself.¹⁶

The above assertion shows the significance of human life in the development of the nation about national security and the respect for peaceful co-existence among individuals in the society. Then what is the relationship between national security and peaceful coexistence? To answer the question there is a need to contextualize the meaning of theological education, about the actualization of peace and national security. According to Fasuyi and Isanbor;

The central message of any theological education is on peace, love and avoidance of conflicts among humans which the theological educator of any religious denomination had taught his/her followers for the attainment of a happy end. This central message is on the moral principle on which the volume of the life of man is weighed, through the tenets which make him enjoy a peaceful life. However, this theological tenet (principle/belief) has been challenged by the reign of insecurity of human lives that possess these tenets, particularly the tenets to co-exist with others peacefully, as religion will understand. Thus, there cannot be peaceful living without security.¹⁷

In conclusion, this section affirms that the ultimate source of human peace and security is not found in the mere will of human beings, in the reality of the state, or public powers, but in God his creator and theology. The term theology emerged from two Greek words “*Theo*” (God) and “*logia*” (study) meaning the study of things about God or “*logos*” (word) the discourse about the word of God. Theology is the systematic attempt to comprehend the word of God as revealed in Jesus Christ in terms of peace, love and relevance to the maintenance of adequate security in the nation today. Education, theology, theological education and theological educator will be considered next.

IV. Education

Education is a phenomenon which takes place every day and everywhere in human lives. Education is a universal practice by societies at each level of development. It describes the total process of individual learning by which knowledge is impacted, valuable skills developed and faculties trained. Generally speaking, education is the complex process of socialization that would aid people in holistic development and wholesome existence from cradle to grave.¹⁸ Ngwu, defined education as the acquisition of the art of utilization of knowledge and reconstruction of experience.¹⁹ John Dewey in his view defined education as the reconstruction of experience that leads to change in behavior. It is a process by which culture transmits itself from generation to generation. It is also a deliberate, systematic and sustained attempt to transmit, evoke or acquire attitudes, skills, knowledge, values and sensibilities to bring about a change(s) in behaviour.²⁰ To this effect, education is to equip the recipient with suitable skills

and cultural behaviour that would lead him or her to function effectively as a bonafide member of his or her society. The foregoing prompts a review of current education curriculum content and process, particularly theological education that will pave the way for the anticipated spiritual formation for national unity, security and peaceful co-existence.

V. Theology

It is paramount to understand the term theology first before dabbling into discussions about theological education. The term theology emerged from two Greek words – Theo (God) and Logia (Study), meaning the study of things about God or logos (word) the discourse about the word of God. Hence, theology is the systematic and rational study of religion and its influences and the nature of religious truths. Macquarie J. defined the Latin equivalent theologian, as reasoning or discussion concerning Deity²¹ Adebo in his perspective said that it is “The science of things divine”²². This notwithstanding, the term can be used for a variety of different disciplines or forms of discourse²³. Hence, theology could also be defined as the study, which, through participation in and reflection upon religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available²⁴.

From the foregoing definitions, it could be deduced that theology is not just the study of religion; rather it is the study of religion from the perspective of faith. Theological studies, then is not a meaningless pursuit, its goal, according to Thomas Aquinas, is that it must lead to God.²⁵ The chief purpose of theology is to provide an understanding of revelation. Such an enquiry will thus, be the contemplation of the mystery of the

triune God.²⁶ This study shall now turn to theological education.

VI. Theological Education

The term theological education is defined as the “process of preparing for a religious vocation. It is a process of providing God-called men and women with knowledge, skill, competence or usually desirable qualities of the character being so provided, especially in a formal course of study, instruction or training in a school”.²⁷ This is a particular system or school of religious beliefs and teachings. In essence, theological education revolves around or centres on the word of God as presented in the Bible. In theological institutions, students are taught practical skills for their work in the church and society.²⁸ In this context theological education refers to the teaching of the doctrinal truth of the Bible formally and informally to help individuals follow Jesus in obedience (discipleship). Theological education is God-centred, and meant to meet the total needs of man, physically, socially, psychologically and spiritually. It is the discipline of the mind or character through constant study of the scripture. As a discipline, Kaiyewu observed that theological education is a process, which leads men from the bondage of ignorance to knowledge, from the stage of “I don’t know to the point of knowing facts about God, from the realm of the darkened mind to the glorious enlightenment of the word of God”.²⁹ It is in concord with the above that Oyalana sees “theology as the rational and systematic study of religious truth and its influences on society at large”.³⁰ Oyalana further sees theology as the study of religious faith, practices and experience or of spirituality.³¹

It should be noted that theological education is not only for Christian affairs, though it is primarily preparation for the ordained ministry. Consequently, the followers of Islam, Judaism, and the world's other religions have developed theologies that express the content of their specific faith in the form of theological education. While acknowledging that theological education is not the prerogative of any one particular group, this paper seeks to demonstrate and expatiate the fact that every theological education of whichever type of religion be it Christianity, Islam, African traditional religion, and so on, should tend towards creating a conducive atmosphere for national security and peaceful co-existence among Nigerians.

VII. Theological Educator

As discussed earlier, theological education is not the prerogative of any one particular group of religion, there are people specially trained and assigned from each specific faith whose duty is to propagate the faith with the view of making converts and the trainers of such people who are responsible for propagating the religion are known as theological educators.³² Otherwise, a theological educator is a professional teacher in the field of theology who had received training and who in turn trains others in the same discipline. On the other hand, theological educators can be seen as the custodians of the doctrine, liturgy, ethics, philosophy, and practices of a particular religion whose duty is to teach and influence others through the impartation of the in-depth knowledge of such religion unto others, who will go and further propagate the faith. Thus, theological educators teach and interpret the beliefs and practices of religious groups and train others on how they should carry out the assignment. To this end, it behoves

theological educators in Nigeria to be worthy and exemplary leaders to those they lead. Therefore, to reduce the spate of religious extremism which is one of the factors that threaten national security, theological pragmatism must be applied by theological educators in interpreting theological issues in order not to inculcate teachings and practices that can destabilize peaceful co-existence among Nigerians.

VIII. The Way Forward: The Role of Theological Educators

Theological education has many social dimensions, which are relevant to our contemporary needs. To understand this, the socio-economic, political, scientific and technical needs of each individual must be borne in mind by theological educators. In its various institutional and social forms, theological education is a force to be reckoned with. As a major education of various religious denominations, its claims are both human and divine. At this point, therefore, concerted efforts will be made to discuss some of the roles of theological educators in enhancing national security and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

▪ Tolerance of different approaches to theological education must be encouraged.

Every Nigerian needs to realize and accept the fact that the country is a multi-religious state. Christianity, Islam and Traditional religions with their theological education have come to stay in the nation. Differences in the approach to theological education by various religious denominations are natural and should not be allowed to tear the nation apart. Even within the same religious faith, there are marked differences in their theology due to mode of worship, doctrinal beliefs,

liturgy, Litany and so on.³³ For instance, among Christians there are Roman Catholics, Baptists, Anglicans, Methodists, and Pentecostals just to mention a few. Among Muslims, there are sects like the Ansaudeen, Almadiyah and so on. So, to avoid unnecessary bloodshed in the name of religion, theological education of all religions in Nigeria must encourage religious tolerance on the part of all religious adherences to pave the way for national security. In the words of Ninalowo, “Tolerance is synonymous with the acceptance of theological perspective differences... it is conceived as the recognition and acceptance of religious group diversity such as along theological precepts, norms, and tenets.”³⁴

▪ **Love must permeate all our theological teachings**

In a similar vein, the content of theological education of all religions in Nigeria must be saturated in Love and enveloped with love, if national security and peaceful co-existence will be experienced. Throughout the New Testament of the Holy Bible, One word permeates all theological teachings and sermons. The word was expressed impressively in the story of a “pagan” who did the will of God- the poor, insignificant and “untouchable” Samaritan. The word manifested itself physically on a little hill outside the walled city of Jerusalem. The word is ‘Love’, and this same word “Love” should wholly permeate the process of all religion’s theological teachings:

It is not the love of money, power or position. It is not the love to reign and rule as kings of kings and commander-in-chief of all natural forces on Land, sea and air. It is the Love of humanity. The theology of love that feeds the hungry and clothes the naked; The theology of love that gives water to the thirsty, courage to the hopeless

and comfort to the cheerless; The theology of love that rescues the perishing and cares for the dying. The theology of love opens a vista of joy to the poverty-stricken and life-forlorn people; it is the love of God through service to Humanity that strengthen national security and peaceful co-existence among various religious group.³⁵

▪ **Theological dialogue with people of other faith**

Theological discussion or dialogue with people of other faith is one of the most effective tools of religious conflict resolution in any given nation. Nigeria church leaders, Muslim Imams, shrine priests, and theological educators in the world at large should learn to embrace the spirit of dialogue in theological contention. This will go a long way in promoting peaceful co-existence, security and mutual respect among adherents of different religious faiths in a multi-religious society like Nigeria.

▪ **Religious Theological Education should be integrated into Nigeria's educational system curriculum.**

Religious/theological education should be integrated into Nigeria's educational system curriculum from primary to tertiary institutions. Religious/theological education should be made compulsory or a core subject in Nigeria's educational curriculum just as it is in Japan and China. Students, regardless of their religion should be made to learn all three forms of religious education (that is CRS, IRS and ATR). This would promote inter-faith understanding, tolerance, relations and peaceful co-existence in the country. This implies that all

schools, whether public or private (faith-based or non-faith based) should be compelled by law to offer these three forms of religious/theological education.

▪ **Nigeria Government's supportive role**

Theology is a matter of Conviction according to one's conscience. Although anybody could try to evangelize since there is freedom of speech, no one should be coerced into any religious tenets. The Nigerian government at all levels must operate on the principle of separation of either church or mosque (religion) and state. That is, no government should favour one religion at the expense of other religions. In other words, no government should operate on any theology or religious penal code particularly sharia or the Ten Commandments. Likewise, perpetrators of religious violence must be prosecuted and punished if found guilty to serve as a deterrent to others. It is not enough to set up committees. Such committee (s) must be given a free hand to work. The report and recommendation of the committee must be made known to the public. The law of the land is no respecter of anybody. Nobody should be above the law. Justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done. Since religion will continue to be a fact of life particularly here in Nigeria, all religious adherents must respect the right of others to teach theology of their religion without intimidation from anywhere.³⁶

▪ **The theological educator should employ persuasion**

The theological educator should employ persuasion rather than force both in winning converts and in retaining them. A theology of any given religion that promotes social unrest,

insecurity and killing to gain supremacy is inhuman both physically and spiritually. In the first place, killing takes away life, and it is not in the interest of theological education that is centred on God.³⁷ It also runs counter to an individual's potential future covenant with salvation and the more mundane problems of organizing and maintaining a religious community such as a church, mosque, or shrine and applying theological education to social life for national security.

▪ **Religious codes and moral ethics should be respected**

Every religion has its moral codes that are drawn from her theological education, which strict adherents of such religion cannot compromise with on any ground. That is, every religion has moral standards which must not be lowered. The Christian religion upholds the Ten Commandments as God's given moral ethic for the human race. Islam cherishes the Sharia code as Allah's rule of law for the Muslim faithful. The unwritten moral ethics of African religions were strictly enforced in the applicable contexts. Adherents of Judaism do not treat the Torah with kid gloves. The contention here is that religious riots cannot be divorced from what religious fanatics considered an infringement on their religious tenets because theology and morality are bedfellows.³⁸ In essence, every religious adherent should respect one another's religious code and tenets so that the theological education of their religious contexts can share and create a common forum for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

IX. Conclusion

The paper has demonstrated that a good understanding of the essence of theological education of all religions in Nigeria will promote national security. However, it was discovered that theology, as a type of education has left undone the task of making herself a tool for building a society of true followers of Christ in love, peace, mercy, unity, compassion, charity, selflessness and humanism. Why? It is because religious leaders, theological educators and adherents of different religious groups have shirked their duty of showing that theological education is the means for the comfort, peace, prosperity, desirable national security and salvation of the human race. It is also challenging that the more churches and mosques that are built for so-called services to God, the more irreligious and worldly Nigeria becomes, for the very heart of all religions is theological enquiry and reflection that expresses the content of faith in the clearest and most useful ways of enhancing national growth, continuity, peaceful co-existence, national security and survival of any society. This has been gradually forgotten and is declining.

Man's search for his maker, creator or God has resulted in diverse theologies and approaches to the Supreme Being. The search has also witnessed many doctrinal beliefs about the nature, the work and the being of God.³⁹ So, while theological education has been a sort of blessing in terms of peace, harmony, love, and solidarity, it has been a source of violence, disharmony, insecurity, bitterness and war in some instances. Theologically, if all religions all over the world could use their theology to educate people positively about God, religious conflict resulting from theological contentions could be

ameliorated or done away with worldwide, and the planet, Nigeria included, will be at peace and be more secure than what it is at present.

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*The role of the theological educator in enhancing national
security and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria*

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