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**PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN NIGERIA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF  
CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE OF NEIGHBOURLINESS**

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**Abstract**

Peaceful co-existence in Nigeria has consistently been proven almost impossible amidst the various efforts to live together in harmony as a people; and this has been due to the activities evil men who have consistently taken undue advantage of the endemic ethnic biases or religious bigotries in the society to perpetrate their evil agenda. Given the religious stance of the issue, this study was poised to explore a scriptural approach in unraveling the matter. Basically, the method adopted in carrying out the study was an analytical appraisal of the selected text as Paul’s theme in the passage was assessed vis-à-vis the subject matter of the work. The peace in Nigeria was termed negative, where the peace in existence is mere absence of direct violence, war, or fear etc. or anything worse than such as affirms the study. Basically, the deduction of the study was that the issue could not be who a neighbour is but what the problem is. Men of mischief were seen taking undue advantage of the ignorant, idle, and indigent youths to accomplish their nefarious selfish interests; and the counsel of this work is that such must not be accommodated: the appropriate quarters even the government must resist them squarely especially since the Government’s primary assignment is to ensure safety of lives and properties of the citizens though such may be hard for them to do on the ground that most of the ills in the society are often caused by majority of them in government.

**Key Words:** Peaceful, Neighbourliness, Co-Existence, Self-defense, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

The last two lines of the Nigerian National Anthem read, “One nation bound in freedom peace and unity.” When one reads or sings this or even hears such being sung, the thinking will be such that the nation is a place where maintenance of peace is a common thrust especially as the cultural and the philosophical ideology behind the white colour of the nation’s flag is “peace and unity,” as it were. And, looking at the situation of things in the nation especially in relation to peace, one will hardly be wrong to term such conclusion as a mere cliché. Quite pathetically, ill-willed fellows among the elite class, out of their selfish interest, having known the influence of religion and ethnicity in the country, stylishly engage the weak in creating near-absence of peace among peoples of Nigeria at will especially through the means of xenophobia and religious bigotry. As true as this assertion could be, none among the perpetrators has once accepted responsibility for this, but Nigerians know. Even the international community knows. Such has significantly affected the security situation of the nation-state of Nigeria. That is, it is no longer news to wake up any day and hear of anything that has to do with loss of lives on account of the attacks of some gunmen or armed men here and there. If it would not be through means of Boko Haram scourge in the north, it could be that of the Hausa-Fulani herdsmen across the nation or even that of kidnappings all over the place, harassing unsuspecting innocent citizens and even foreigners alike. Worst of it all is the fact that the kingpins of these barbaric acts especially that of the Boko Haram scourge could succeed in using the world’s most acclaimed institution (religion) as regards morality as well as peace-making, to foment such dastardly acts.<sup>1</sup>

Looking at this study from the point of view of Paul’s words in Romans 14:19 “... pursue the things which make for ‘peace’” and Galatians 3:28 “There is neither Jew nor Greek...”) in relation to peace, togetherness, and security issues in Nigeria,” it will

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<sup>1</sup>Chibuzo I. Nwanguma, “Re-Reading ‘Living in Peace with our Neighbours’ Rom. 12:17, 18) in the Light of Security Challenges in Nigeria” *Insight: Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol.10, (2014), 67

be necessary to say, from the very outset, that the selected passages are essentially all about relationships the Christian is expected to keep with those within and outside the Christian folds particularly, in context of this study. While one might think the passage is Pauline, it will be pertinent to state, from this onset, that the passage rests basically on the sayings of Jesus, known to Paul through oral traditions which Matthew eventually documented in the acclaimed Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). This was why this author, in another study on a related theme sees working on the subject matter as a challenging task especially in connection with "... the relative nature of the main key word in the title 'peace' and the same renders this work most herculean" particularly, when the statement of Jesus, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27, KJV), comes to mind.<sup>2</sup> This statement, therefore, provides two distinct types of peace, namely, the world's peace, and Jesus' peace. The implication of this saying of the Lord which is evident across New Testament literature is the main task of this paper.

### **The Problem**

As implied in the introduction above, one would wonder whether Nigerian peoples ever understood what they were embarking on before they declared themselves a people. This puzzle comes about when one ponders on the issue of "living in peace with neighbours" in the country where lives and properties of people are not safe in market place or places of worship for the sheer sake of belonging to a particular ethnicity or religion. Thus, men of mischief have virtually succeeded in using ethnicity and religion to make living in peace with neighbours almost impossible especially where petty misunderstanding that ensues between two members of different ethnicities or religions inadvertently, inter-ethnic or inter-religious quarrels or riots that end up claiming lives in tens, hundreds, or even thousands suddenly results. As one thinks about all these, a question like could such not be politically motivate quickly comes to mind. For instance, if it is not news of killing in churches or any public outfit capable of attracting multitudes of people and thereafter burning houses, it will be that of Hausa-Fulani herdsmen encroaching upon people's farms, school compounds and even raping people's wives and daughters across the country. All these make peaceful co-existence very difficult if not impossible. Since April 2014, the Chybock girls' story has always

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 68

been an uninterrupted headline news on national dailies that one would wonder the veracity of the saga especially, whether a political party is not using this to score political points? Wherever such abounds as case seems in Nigeria, one will hardly believe there is unity or peace.

Looking at the issue critically, the counsel of Paul in Romans 12:17-18 on “pursue the things which make for ‘peace’” vis-à-vis other relevant passages in the Bible stimulated by studying the passage (Romans 14:19), particularly the New Testament passages, was considered very cogent for the problem especially given that Paul himself, as it were, lived like some of those involved in the mayhem live today (cf. Acts 9:4-6; 22:3-18). Certain underlying realities of the passage led to references to other relevant New Testament verses and the outcome constituted the thesis and conclusion of this paper.

### **The Word Peace: A Definition**

The word peace could mean several things to different people. Basically, it can mean want of war or liberty from any form of upheaval. However, to some people, especially the average Nigerian, particularly among the Igbo, one will hardly talk about peace and forget about war. To such the raw material which peace producers take to peace factory is war during which the feelings and thinking of all as well as their abilities and capabilities would have been known. Could such be what Jesus had in mind when He said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you, not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). However, He also said in another place that He never brought peace to the world but war...,that relatives would turn against their own for His sake (Matt. 10:34). Could this explain why the obvious challenges in religion world or what?

What then is Peace? Usually, the term could be defined as:

- a. freedom from war, or the time when a war or conflict ends
- b. a calm and quiet state, free from disturbances or noise
- c. a state of mental calm and serenity, with no anxiety
- d. freedom from conflict or disagreement among people or groups of people
- e. a treaty agreeing to an end of hostilities between two warring parties
- f. the absence of violence or other disturbances within a state

In the same vein, Dzurgba<sup>3</sup> defines it as freedom from quarrel, strife, conflict, rioting, disorder, hostility violence or war.” He adds that “it is freedom from fear, anxiety, uncertainty disturbance or tension” and that “it is an atmosphere of calmness, security and safety.”<sup>4</sup> These two definitions aptly represent the various definitions on this concept. Peace also includes “personal wholeness, soundness and wellbeing as well as general prosperity.”<sup>5</sup> Common in the definitions is the frequent occurrence of the word “healthy” or “newly healed” interpersonal or international relationships, prosperity in matters of social or economic welfare, and the establishment of a working political order that serves the true interests of all. But, Vine approaching it from New Testament perspective, describes it as a) harmonious relationships between men (Matt. 10:34; Rom. 14:19), b) between nations (Luke 14:32; Acts 12:20), c) friendliness (Acts 15:33; 1 Cor. 16:11), d) freedom from molestation (Luke 11:21; Acts 9:31), order in the State (Acts 24:2), f) harmonized relationships between God and men accomplished through the Gospel (Acts 10:36; Eph. 2:17), and g) the sense of rest and contentment consequent thereon (Matt. 10:13; Mark 5:34; Rom 1:7; 3:17).<sup>6</sup> The correspondence between these definitions and the etymological terms *pax*, *shalom*, and *salaam* forces one to wonder what came over Nigeria and Nigerians especially, as one remembers the national anthem of the country and the last sentences of the stanzas in particular. This will be addressed later in this paper.

As earlier stated in the foregoing paragraph, the immediate ancestor of the word peace is *pax*,<sup>7</sup> a Latin word meaning “freedom from civil disorder.” and our English word came into use in various personal greetings from c.1300 as a translation of the Hebrew *Shalom*. The translation is however, imprecise because the verb means a lot to the Jews. Primarily it means “to be safe or un-injured in mind or body (Job.8:6; 9:4).”Shalom can better be described thus:

This word is normally used when God is keeping His people safe... it also means to be finished or to be completed .... Other meaning of this

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<sup>3</sup> A. Dzurgba, *Contemporary Ethics: Theories and Issues*, (Ibadan: John Archers (Publishers) Ltd, 2007), 36

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Chibuzo I. Nwanguma, “James’ Concept of Wisdom (James 3:13-18): A Veritable Tool for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Nigerian?” *African Journal of Biblical Studies* Vol. XXXII, No 1 & 2 (2014), 186

<sup>6</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (London: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 464

<sup>7</sup> S. Zodhiates et al (eds.), *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible*, (Chattanooga: AMB Publishers, 2008), 2013

word could mean to be in peace with one another (Ps. 7:4-5), to make a treaty of peace (Joshua 11:19; Job 5:23)<sup>8</sup>

The word peace is a cognate term with the Arabic *Salaam*<sup>9</sup> with multiple other meanings as explained above. The New Testament word  $\epsilon\iota\rho\eta\nu\eta\iota\varsigma$ , *eirēnē*, means everything stated above except a state of concord, peace, harmony between governments,  $\epsilon\pi\omega\tau\alpha\sim|\tau\hat{\alpha}\ \text{pro}^{\$}\ \epsilon\iota\rho\eta\nu\eta\iota\varsigma$ , *epōt' ta pros eirēnēn*, (“ask for terms of peace,” Lk. 11:21), and harmony in personal relationships (Matt. 10:34).<sup>10</sup> One can deduce from all these that:

- (a) Peace is all about total soundness, that is, soundness in all aspects of life viz. health, intra-personal and inter-personal relationships as well as social or economic matters or well-beings;
- (b) Given that Christianity, Judaism, or Islam use or apply the word as a religious maxim or dictum, the concept it portrays or communicates is both true and divine, and a necessity for human existence.

This could perhaps explain why the author of the later Nigerian national anthem makes reflection of it (peace) a concluding sentence in each of the two stanzas of the anthem. But the peace in Nigeria can only be better perceived in relative terms. The image is most apparent in the analogy of Bakut as he quotes Johan Galtung (1990 and 1996). Here peace is classified as ‘negative’ and ‘positive’. In his words:

When peace is said to be ‘negative’, it means that the peace in existence includes only the absence of direct violence, war, fear and conflict at individual, national, regional and international levels. On the other hand, when peace is said to be positive, it means that peace in existence, in addition to the above, also includes the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationship, just and inner peace at individual level.<sup>11</sup>

The former rather than the latter in this citation is true of the kind of peace that exists in Nigeria. Better put, the peace that exists in Nigeria is far worse than the so-called negative peace and

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<sup>8</sup> An Unpublished anonymous writer whose work made much sense to this writer

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Fredrick W. Danker *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (3rd ed. Based on Walter Bauer's *Griech=Duetsches-Worterbuazu Den Schrieten Des Nuen Testaments Und Der Fruhchristlichen Literatur Sixth Edition ed. Kurt Aland Barbra Aland, with Victor Reichmann and on previous English ed. By W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker*), Chicago: University Press (2000), 287

<sup>11</sup> B. T. Bakut, “The Environment, Peace and Conflict in Africa” in. S. G. Best (ed.) *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 2006), 235

this is why Jesus' or Christians' perspective of the term neighbour and such will be attended to later in the study. However, if all will cooperate on the major things rather than on private ends and prejudices, peace and unity will tend to emerge rather than strife and disunity<sup>12</sup> because emphasizing the positive is an incomplete, but nonetheless fairly accurate, description of what can be done. Thus, if men aim at the great objects proposed by the Christian religion, they will live in peace. If they seek to promote their private ends, to follow their own passions and prejudices, they will be involved in strife and contention.

### **Leaving in Peace with Neighbours (Rom. 12:17-18): An Exegesis**

The passage, in Greek text, reads thus:

17 mhdeniV kakoVn a)ntiV kakou~ a)podidovnte\$, pronooouvmenoi kalaV e)nwvpion pavntwn a)nqrwvwpwn:18 ei) dunatoVn toV e)c u)mw~n, metaV pavntwn a)nqrwvwpwn ei)rhnevonte\$: (Rom 12:17-18)

As noted in the introduction, Paul in his narrative counsel, moved from relationships between believers to relationships with those who do not know God, who themselves may even be enemies of God as well as that of believers. In vs17a, for instance, he says mhdeniV kakoVn a)nti^ kakou~ a)podidovnte\$ (“Do not repay anyone evil for evil”). While this gives no option to reason that is, thinking of the application of the *lex talionis* (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth)<sup>13</sup> concept, going by the force of the verb a)podidovnte\$ and a)ntiv, *apodidontes and anti* (“giving back,” “instead of”) and that of kakovn, and kakou~ (“bad”) however, the remainder of the verse is open to more than one interpretation.<sup>14</sup> The believer is apparently left with the choice of reacting like any other person would want to do, but like Harrison and Hanger would put it, since Christians are constantly under the scrutiny of both the unsaved persons and fellow Christians, they must be careful with respect to what they do; their conducts

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<sup>12</sup> Martins G. Collins “Peace” Retrieved from the web on Friday, 15th December, 2017, <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerse1>

<sup>13</sup> Solomon Andria, “Romans” in N. Weanzana and S. Ngewa (eds.), *Africa Bible Commentary Series*, (NC: Hippo Books, 2012), 232

<sup>14</sup> Everett F. Harrison and Donald A. Hanger, “Roman” in T. Longman III & D. E. Garland (eds.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (rev Ed.), (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2008), 192

must not betray the high standards of the gospel.<sup>15</sup> Again, the verb *pronoew~*, *pronoew* (“thinking of beforehand”) which is translated “be careful” in NIV but literally translated “to think of beforehand,” implying that the believers’ conducts must not be regulated by the improper habits that characterize the conducts of the world, but that in all conditions, the actions of the believer must be such that reflect the gospel they preach and represent the body of the saints as worthy ambassadors of Christ.

With the conditional clause *ei) dunatoVn toV e)c u)mw~n*, (“If possible, so far as it depends on you”) which entails that living in peace with people is dependent on one’s ability v18, Paul ended this passage with an exhortation that is even more difficult to follow especially in context of hatred. Thus, the charge to live at peace with everyone is hedged about with two qualifying statements. The, if clause, as shall be seen below, implies that situations may arise when living in peace, *ei)rhneuvonte\$, (eirçneuontes)* with all may really be difficult or even impossible. Much will be extensively discussed on this in the subsequent segments below especially in the segment on the contextual interpretation. Whatever the position in the subsequent sections, however, the truth, nevertheless is, anything the believer is confronted with while on his pilgrimage journey here on earth now, either in Nigeria among the heathens and the Boko Haram insurgencies and attacks, or anywhere in the world, the hostility now may not be severer than what it was when the church had the emperors of Rome and the unfriendly Jews to contend with all over the empire when this counsel was given. If they could maintain their standards as believers amidst all odds, the present believers in Nigeria and anywhere could do better.

### **Christians’ Perspective of the Word Neighbourliness: An Explanation**

The Christians’ perspective of neighbourhood actually came to the bear as Jesus their Lord, answered the question by “a certain lawyer” in Luke 10:25 as to what to do in order to inherit eternal life. Jesus’ answer was simple, “what is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” (v26). By Luke’s choice of the word “tested Him,” one could see that the lawyer had idea of what to say but Jesus as a wise Teacher, would not fall into his trap. He rather chose to answer him the way He did. The lawyer’s

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid



choice to answer Jesus' question from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18; and his follow-up question to Jesus brought about what one can rightly call the Christians' idea of neighbourhood.<sup>16</sup>

According to Gundry, this question of the lawyer "who is my neighbour" "attempts to draw Jesus into the rabbinic debate over whether the term 'neighbour' includes non-Pharisees and personal enemies."<sup>17</sup> Jesus, in His parable, decided not to answer this question the way the scribe expected it but perhaps put it right, "To whom can I be a neighbour?" because this latter question arises from an attitude which recognizes anyone in need as a neighbour. The choice of such phrases like "a certain man from Jerusalem," "a certain priest," "a Pharisee," and "a Samaritan" makes the discussion difficult for the lawyer. With respect to this, Gundry further writes that the Samaritan had equal reason to pass by the injured and possibly dead man, however, for Samaritans likewise avoided defilement from the dead – and perhaps even more reason, because chances were the victim was a detestable Jew. Consequently, when the Samaritan discovered the man was an injured Jew, he treated the wounds with indentation continues overleaf wine to disinfect them and olive oil to soothe them, tore bandages from his own turban or linen undergarments to wrap up the lesions, went on foot as the Jew rode the donkey (the slower pace exposing them to greater danger of further attacks by bandits), paid enough money to an innkeeper for two weeks of convalesce, and pledged unlimited credit for any expenses – all without hope of reimbursement since Samaritans had no legal rights in Jewish legal courts.<sup>18</sup>

Subsequently, the narrative vis-à-vis the parable of Jesus, a neighbour, contrary to the popular definition of "one of two or more people that are near one another," or "those living in the house next to mine," the term "neighbour" means one who is available to help at the time of need regardless the distance in race, or age, or place of abode. The person may be of different race, and can even often disagree with one with respect to either religious views or in general world-views. The summary of Jesus' parable on "who my neighbour is" is that everyone is a neighbour to as many as are willing to go His way.<sup>19</sup> The story however, is not only on neighbourhood but it

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<sup>16</sup>Chibuzo I. Nwanguma, "Re-Reading 'Living in Peace with our Neighbours', 70

<sup>17</sup> R. H. Gundry, *A Great Survey of the New Testament* (rev. ed.), (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, ND), 156

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 157

<sup>19</sup> T. Nelson, *The Word in Life Study Bible: Discover the Truths of God's Word for Your World*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., ND), 258

includes Jesus' idea of love. This is shown in the question He asked the lawyer at the end of the parable and the answer which the lawyer by means of circumlocution answered, "The one who showed mercy on him" (Luke 10:37). Thus, religious persuasion, inclination or ethnicity of whatever, human beings made by God are precious to Him and anything done to assist anyone at any given time is of paramount importance to God. To the Christian, everyone regardless the faith or race is such that deserves the best attention at all times. The same is a neighbour.

### **Living Together in Peace with Neighbours: A Contextual Clarification**

Basically, Paul's theme in the entire passage (Rom. 12:14-21) as one looks at it holistically, on a general note, is a focus on the Christians' commitment or service to the society both within and outside Christian community especially the latter. Christians are here exhorted to maintain good relations with non-Christians through praying for their welfare, empathy with their joys, sympathy with their sorrows, and respectful and forgiving attitudes towards them. According to Gundry, if non-Christians still practice persecution amidst the believers' favourable disposition towards them, "God Himself will judge them and vindicate His people (Rom. 12:14-21)."<sup>20</sup> In the light of this passage, especially vs. 19-21, Zodhiates et al, referring to one of the imprecatory Psalms, Psalm 109:1-29, assert that the Christian can decisively do something, at least, to pray that God should intervene and punish them. Contrary to the age long view that imprecation "was only proper in the Old Testament times ... that New Testament grace demands that believers are never to pray in the manner to invoke the wrath of God upon the wicked", they start airing their view in this regard with this rhetoric question, "is not the command to love one's neighbour also found in the Old Testament (Ex. 23:4, 5; Prov. 20:22; 24:17)? Did not the Lord even then proclaim that vengeance is His (Deut. 32:35, of Rom. 12:19)?"<sup>21</sup> They add

In the same manner note that David, the author of most imprecatory prayers of the Old Testament, was unwilling to hurt Saul, one of his worst enemies, even when he was delivered into his hand. Even more convincing is the fact that there are instances of such imprecation in the New Testament (Acts 1:20; 5; 8:20-23; 13:10, 11; Rom. 11:9 (cf. Ps. 69:22, 23; 2Tim. 4:14).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> R. H. Gundry, op cit, 283

<sup>21</sup> Zodhiates et al, op cit, 1088

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

Further to the analogy of Zodhiates and his colleagues as regards imprecation with respect to the text under review is the implication of the lacuna in the first clause of vs. 18, “if it is possible, as much as depends on you” (NKJV). The clause certainly implies that the ability to bear or endure a pain varies from person to person, from time to time. What happens in a situation when while a party desires peace, the other does not seem to like the peace? The Lord’s instruction to the disciples quickly comes to play here: “And when you go into a household, greet it, if the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you” (Matt. 10:11-13). One can only live in peace with his neighbour as much as he can - only to the extent of his ability. Again, if the statement of Jesus in Matthew 5:39b is literally read, the common interpretation is non-retaliation but if closely examined in context of this topic, one is left with the responsibility to use his initiatives. There could be need for instant justice by the recipient especially if the slapping reoccurs after the second slap. The reason is particularly because the Lord did not say what should happen after the slap on the other cheek. Discretion is ultimately needed before the slapper kills the individual.

While the Christian will hardly be advised to strike back, the silence of the Lord with respect to what happens after the strike on the second cheek calls for discussion. The principle of natural justice and of course self-defense or self-protection is hereby implied. The slap receiver has right to either run away, call out for help or defend himself. To this Nelson would say “... some circumstances call for resistance and self-defense. The Law specifically sanctioned self-protection when there was no other apparent recourse (Ex. 22:2). Likewise, Jesus Himself protested when slapped (John 18:22-23).”<sup>23</sup> While no one has the right to take laws into his hands, it will also be nice to note in this connection that Jesus did not totally deny principle of *lex talionis* (law of retaliation). Against modern popular misunderstanding, the *lex talionis* safeguarded justice by not allowing excessive punishment as well as by insisting on punishment; Jesus’ instruction to “go two miles” instead of “one mile” in Matthew 5:41 is one of His characteristic way of ensuring peace and one of His hyperboles as opines Gundry.<sup>24</sup>

Bringing this to the context of our discussion, it is on record that several peace talks have taken place between Islamic leaders who have always claimed non-party to what have been happening and the Christian leaders who have been at the receiving end

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<sup>23</sup> T. Nelson, op cit., 28

<sup>24</sup> R. H. Gundry, op cit., 138

of the mayhem to no avail. For instance, Isidore Nwanaju dedicated a section of his six hundred and thirty five page book *Christian-Muslim Relation in Nigeria* in which details of the several efforts on this issue were well documented.<sup>25</sup> If the Muslim leaders know nothing about the happenings and peace talk with them seems to yield no result, peace talk is therefore out of the approach. The issue on ground is that of terrorism, and the people involved are not known. Their demand is what no one can grant them..., that Nigeria should be Islamised.<sup>26</sup> One will therefore be right, at this juncture, to adjudge Ahiamadu right when he said that obedience to Divine instructions in Nigeria would be difficult “because of a diversity of loyalties to various divinities ... Hence, the question of the quality of justice and peace inherent in Nigerian has been an elusive one ...”<sup>27</sup> as one looks at the issue holistically. For instance, a statement credited to Abubakar Shekau, leader of Boko Haram in 2012, according to Nigerian Christian Elders Forum (NCEF) at a meeting in reference to Boko Haram insurgency and Fulani Herdsmen harassment across the country demanding some explanations from the Muslim leaders who claim that those groups are none Islamic sects, reads thus:

It is between Muslim and unbelievers (arna). It will stop when Islamic religion is the determinant in governance in Nigeria or, in the alternative, when all fighters are annihilated and no one is left. I warn all Muslims at this juncture that any Muslim who assists an unbeliever in this war should consider himself dead.<sup>28</sup>

It then becomes necessary to advise that:

1. Christians or Nigeria cannot seek peace with them because they are not neighbours by all standards of Christian neighbourhood and neighbourliness as already explained above.
2. Christians cannot take laws into their hands by fighting back because the Bible especially in New Testament does not encourage such.
3. The Government should use its agencies to fight such an ungodly position to a halt because it has the capacity to do so both as empowered by the constitution

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<sup>25</sup> Isidore Nwanaju, *Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria*, (Lagos: Free Enterprise Publishers, 2005), 324-501

<sup>26</sup> Ola Ojo, a discussion on the subject matter, Ajebo on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Amadi E. Ahiamadu, “Justice and Peace Exemplified by the Gibeonites (Josh. 9-10): Implications for Sustainable Peace in Nigeria,” *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, Vol. XXXII, No 1 & 2 (2014), 79

<sup>28</sup> Nigerian Christian Elders Forum, “Islamisation: Nigeria on Theories of Jihad” a Meeting by the Sect consisting of Several Christian Leaders on the looming Jihad in Nigeria, Vanguard News, 11th September, 2017 (Posted to My MTN Line)

and the scriptures (Rom. 13:1-7).<sup>29</sup> Thus, they should come out of their hidings and get the issues resolved.

4. Nonetheless, it seems the government itself is highly handicapped in this regard. Why? From all indications, the probability is really high that virtually all in government are the progenitors of corruptions and terrorisms in the society. Thus, asking them (those in government) to fight or forestall them (the terrorists and corrupt practices) is like telling one to dissolve an institution he constituted which is practically impossible. Consequently, the resort is prayer for God's intervention in His own way; for only Him can overthrow the wicked the way He does (Hag. 2:22). In history, He brought Pharaoh and his army down and saved His people (Ex. 14:25-31), He dethroned Saul (1 Sam 13:13-14; 15:22-23), He sent Nebuchadnezzar to the animal kingdom for a long while (Dan 4:31-33) and brought his dynasty down (Dan 5:25-31). He also had Herod eaten up by worms while alive till he died (Acts 12:21-23). All these He did in His own way. In any of the cases, humankind was freed: this is why His intervention is just very urgent in Nigerian case and Nigeria must be freed.

At whatever level of government, its responsibility is essentially to protect the citizens and maintain peace and order, and since this is not in place, the cry of Nigerians is God, send us the Messiah. This is particularly because the concept of self-defense is not necessary in the context of Nigerian Security Challenge. The reason is essentially because those involved in the act are non-visible, and they are generally seen to represent a people or even a government. They have made Lebanon non-governable and are trying to overthrow the government of Nigeria.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

In conclusion, this work was poised to address the issue of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria taking cue from the counsel of St Paul on "Living in Peace with our Neighbours" in his Romans account as stated in chapter twelve, verses seventeen and eighteen vis-à-vis other relevant Biblical passages stimulated in the course of the work basically in the New Testament. Generally, it was established that the peace that is prevalent in Nigeria was a negative or partial one in the sense that it is such that exists in order to avoid obvious trouble and such has been in existence for as long as one can

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<sup>29</sup> Chibuzo I. Nwanguma, "Re-Reading 'Living in Peace with our Neighbours', 73

remember. Thus, the study revealed, it has been persistent essentially due to the nefarious activities of mischief makers among some influential men in the country who have consistently taken undue advantage of the ignorant and indigent idle youths to create avoidable troubles in the society using the tools of ethnic sentiments and religious bigotries which they know are glaring in the nation. As indicated above, such has been on for as long as one can remember, perhaps, right from the early days of the country. It was also deduced that the issue has been such that has defied several peace and conflict resolution solutions so far engaged to curb the menace.

In order to address this issue, more working concerted efforts have to be made by leaderships and members of the two main groups, religion and ethnic regions, identified in the course of this study as the most susceptible to those vicious men who for selfish interests have not ceased to use them to foment troubles in the country. In the first instance, it will be advisable that the leaders be told that they have to be sincere to themselves in intra-religious as well as intra-ethnic matters, and in inter-religious issues as well as inter-ethnic matters. This is important because only sincerity can help to solve the problems especially given that the activities of most of these leaders have gotten to the point that one begins to suspect that they are allies and cronies of the mischief makers identified in the study. The second advice is more like the first. Let them, the leaders, cultivate the habit of telling their followers the truth and nothing but the truth and this will certainly frustrate the evil activities of the selfish influential men who use their followers to perpetuate their vices. The third thing to look at is the issue of job and wealth creations so as to empower especially the youths who have always been used to do all the evils. Also, there is the need of educating the youths on insisting on seeing the children and relatives of elites joining them in the mayhem the former would want them to embark on. Of course, what will make such insistence worthwhile is job or wealth creations. Above all, the Christian leaders in particular should necessarily consider prayer therapy. This writer strongly believes that the main cause of all these are some spiritual forces. The same Paul suggested such in another letter of his, "Put on the whole armour of God, that you may stand the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:11-12, RSV). The issue has gotten to the

point that one has to resort to prayers and chances abound that such brings about the desired results.

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