



A Religious Response to the Political and Ethno-Religious Disintegrations in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Disagreement and emergence of factions in the Nigerian political and ethnic milieus have become a ceaseless occurrence. This has accelerated to the point that the shout of “to your tents o Israel!” has become resonant in Nigeria, as often as we can conceive it. Quite uninterestingly, this incessant yearning for separatism punches African communality thereby perforating unity in larger scales and forming a smaller scale convergence of some persons aimed usually at disabling their mother group. It is apt to note that some factors can ignite the longing for disintegration. As the manifesto of administrative highhandedness by Rehoboam (Between 930-870 BC) was the cause of Israel’s disintegration, hence the shout “to your tent O Israel”, in Nigeria, marginalization and religious chauvinism are among the key causes of disintegration. This write-up suggests that constant malicious disintegration weakens the strengths of the country. It then surmises that a redress has to be made, in such a way that every action of a Nigerian should be guided by the belief in African communality and above all, by the belief in our common sonship in the family of God and as descendants of Abraham of faith. Thus, our shared heritage in Abraham herein, serves as deterrence to disintegration, since in the Nigerian context; the root of every ethno-political uprising seems to have a religious undertone (albeit, geographical partitioning of Nigeria by the colonialists is also the cause of these problems). It does not claim to be all exhaustive in its dealing with the topic. Its method will be analytical and hermeneutical.

Keywords: Israel, Nigeria, Politics, Ethnicity, Disintegration, Abrahamic heritage.

I. INTRODUCTION/DISINTEGRATIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

“The origin and history of ethnic conflict (societal wars and violence) can be traced from eternal (internal) state rivalry to external (physical). And its root cause is not very far from power competition and decision making over economic resources and other important human factor, like position” (Ikechukwu, 2012: 1). Thus, disagreement between two parties or more, precipitate loss of unity. When there happens to be a loss of unity between two or more formerly united entities or persons, another alliance is usually formed. This implies that many groups separate in order to unite. But the latter unity is always that of a small scale which can be considered a faction of a former larger integrated group. It is also quite knowable that not all disintegrated groups are retaliating. Sometimes, disintegration is worthwhile and could even promote a healthy relationship.

Going by the above stated adumbration, the history of man’s salvation has demonstrated some kinds of disintegration. This kind of disintegration occurred out of the fault of the ruled and not the ruler. It begins with human orchestrated separation from God by the sin of Adam and Eve. “The first transgression of man had the following results...Immediately connected with the preceding was the loss of communion with God through the Holy Spirit.” (Berkhorf, 1958: 225-226). Furthermore, some biblical figures had disobeyed God which resulted in a kind of disintegration. This kind of disintegration was always accompanied with punishment. For instance, Cain disintegrated from God by murdering his brother, Abel. Consequent upon this, he was divinely besieged with societal disintegration (Genesis 4:1-16). The insistence of man in sin caused God to destroy the world with flood. By this, there was disintegration between the corrupt human race and Noah’s relatives and selected animals. By this disintegration, the flood engulfed all the remnants of the earth (Genesis 7: 1-24). God disintegrated the whole earth (which previously spoke the same language) because humans wanted to equate themselves with Him through the building of the Tower of Babel. To avert this conspiracy and challenge, God scattered them all over the earth (Genesis 11:1-9). Further, Israel (both southern and northern Israel) suffered from disintegration from God whenever they transgressed the ordinances of God. God would most often permit their adversaries to disintegrate them and at times, scatter them among the nations of the earth. He made this happenstance known to Israel through prophecies and real events (Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 4:23-27;

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28:25, 37, 64). God had also promised Israel a convergence in the latter years (Deuteronomy 4:27–31 see also; Deuteronomy 30:3; Psalm 107:1–3; Isaiah 43:5–6).

One of the bad effects of disintegration is that hardly can the number and values/belief of the people remain the same before disintegration and at the moment of convergence (if convergence would happen at all). This is because, the people would have mixed up with other people of different orientations and may either join them in their values or diminish their own values. In this write-up, the politico-Ethical disintegrations in Nigeria will be analogically scrutinized as having a religious undertone. The background of the event of “To your tent O Israel” will serve as a reference point.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Throughout their history in the Promised Land, the children of Israel struggled with conflict among the tribes. The disintegration went back all the way to the patriarch Jacob, who presided over a house divided. The sons of Leah and the sons of Rachel had begun to quarrel even in Jacob’s lifetime (Genesis 37:1-11). The enmity among the half-brothers continued in the time of the judges. Benjamin (one of Rachel’s tribes) took up arms against the other tribes (Judges 20). Israel’s first king, Saul, was of the tribe of Benjamin. When David was crowned king—David was from the tribe of Judah (one of Leah’s tribes)—the Benjamites rebelled (2 Samuel 2–3). After a long war (2 Samuel 3:1), David succeeded in uniting all twelve tribes (5:1-5). The frailty of the union was exposed, however, when David’s son, Absalom, promoted himself as the new king and drew many Israelites away from their allegiance to David (2 Samuel 15). Significantly, Absalom set up his throne in Hebron, the site of the former capital (v. 10). A later revolt was led by a man named Sheba against David and the tribe of Judah (20:1-2).

The reign of David’s son, Solomon saw more unrest when one of the king’s servants, Jeroboam, rebelled. Jeroboam was on the king’s errand when he met the prophet Ahijah, who told him that God was going to give him authority over ten of the twelve tribes of Israel. God’s reason for the division of the kingdom was definitive: “Because they have forsaken me . . . and have not walked in my ways.” However, God promised that David’s dynasty would continue, albeit over a much smaller kingdom, for the sake of God’s covenant with David and for the sake of Jerusalem, God’s chosen city. When Solomon learned of the prophecy, he sought to kill Jeroboam, who fled to Egypt for the sanctuary (1 Kings 11:26-40). After the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam was ready to become the next king. Jeroboam returned from Egypt and led a group of people to confront Rehoboam with a demand for a lighter tax burden and better governance than that of his father, Solomon.

III. REHOBOAM DISPLEASED THEM WITH THESE WORDS:

My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.” (1 Kings 12:14). At the manifesto, the people answered Rehoboam, “What share do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, O David.” (v 16). By this, Ahijah’s prophecy was fulfilled. Only Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to King Rehoboam. The northern tribes crowned Jeroboam as their king. Rehoboam made plans to mount an assault on the rebel tribes, but the Lord prevented him from taking that action (vv. 21-24). Meanwhile, Jeroboam further consolidated his power by instituting a form of calf worship unique to his kingdom and declaring that pilgrimages to Jerusalem were unnecessary. Thus, the people of the northern tribes would have no contact with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

“So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day” (1 Kings 12:19). The northern kingdom is called “Israel” (or sometimes “Ephraim”) in Scripture, and the southern kingdom is called “Judah.” From the divine viewpoint, the division was a judgment on not keeping God’s commands, specifically the commands prohibiting idolatry. From a human viewpoint, the division was the result of tribal or ethnic discord and political unrest.

IV. ARUNDOWN OF NIGERIAN ETHNO-POLITICAL DISINTEGRATION

Before we further our discussion on this, we should know that Nigeria’s Ethno-political disintegration is not unconnected to religious unrest. The religions strictly into this dispute are Christianity and Islam, incidentally, Abrahamic religions (together with Judaism). In conforming to this idea, Badawi, in his statement titled “World Apart” stated thus, “indeed the greatest discord today is among the descendants of Abraham. These are the people of the book, the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, who had in fact shared a common beginning in the religion of Abraham” (Badawi, 2006). He goes beyond the time of Abraham by observing that even before Abraham, there had been conflict, so it is as old as human history down to the Abrahamic period, to ancient kingdoms, Dukes, and Kings (Ikechukwu, 2012).

4.1 Political/Colonial and Ethnic Conflict

The then British colonial policy was autocratic. It deprived the masses of certain necessary rights and privileges like active participation in leadership free of coercion and the basic needs of equality and social well-being. These denials resulted in conflicts. For instance, the separation of governments which Colonial administration introduced in the North and the South could have been planned to ignite ethnocentrism. This era of provincial development, though was relatively peaceful, but has always been the source of Nigeria's unending vendetta. Notwithstanding, the "indirect rule" administration in Nigeria by Lord Fredrick Lugard, the chief administrator, was inappropriate decision-making tool for managing tribal tensions and hatred in the colony (Ikechukwu, 2012: 2). Some academics hold that, the system not only reenergized ethnic divisions, "it has complicated the task of welding diverse elements into a Nigerian nation" (Coleman, 1958:194). This implementation and method of governance, distanced ethnic groups from each other by the way Lugard gave power to the traditional rulers who corruptly abused and misused it in the villages to amass wealth, land and establish patronage networks, which, seconded and encouraged in the long run, tribalism and nepotism. The segregation of the Nigerian colony was also reinforced by the colonial laws that limited the mobility (Afigbo, A.E., 1989; Okonjo, I.M., 1974) of Christian Southerners to the Muslim North, created a separate settlement for non-indigenous citizens in the North, and even limited the purchase of land outside one's own region. Prejudice and hatred became the order of the day in the provinces as different ethnic groups started looking at each other suspiciously in all spheres of contact. Unequal and preferential treatment of ethnic groups created disparity in educational achievement and widened the political and economic gaps between northern and southern Nigeria (Ikechukwu, 2012:2). This was the state of affairs until 1960, when Nigeria got her independence.

4.2 Divisive Politics in Post-Colonial Nigeria

After the nationalist struggles for independence between 1930s -60s, and after the independence, there was a high expectation from well meaning Nigerians, of a political stability. In this political stability, one expected to have a political system that would see to the collective good of all (Abubakar, 1997:71). But unfortunately till date, "national unity and integration is yet to take firm roots in the political system while the economy remains extroverted, dependent and underdeveloped." (Abubakar, 1997:72) In support of his previous arguments, Abubakar (1997: 73) further stated that,

In a political system where politics has been reduced into zero-sum game and cultural pluralism along cleavages of ethnicity, regionalism, and religion is prevalent, then political instability becomes the norm rather than the exception. Social groups, classes and factions which are out of power- whether civilian or military- would strive to supplant the incumbent regime and install themselves in state power. Herein, therefore, lies the crux of the instability of Nigeria and the attendant failures of a democratic social order in both the prebendalization of state power and the desperate struggle to retain such power that we could understand the outburst of communal violence and conflicts which have become prevalent in the country's post-colonial history.

Macpherson's Divisive Constitution

The implementation of Macpherson Constitution by the colonialist aided ethno-political disintegration in Nigeria. This constitution recommended the introduction of three regions each with its own autonomous legislature. This First, subverted the possibility of national unity and integration because there was no national forum where the future of Nigeria could be discussed by the Nigerian elites. Secondly, this constitution promoted ethnicity problem and regionalization in political processes. Thus, the political parties which emerged to contest political power relied primarily on mobilizing primordial sentiments, as opposed to national issues. Thirdly, this constitution entrenched a skewed federal system in which the northern region exercised dominance over the other two regions (south and west) based on geographical size and population.

While Macpherson thrived together with its divisive objective, political parties consolidated their power base in the region. Thus, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) emerged from a northern based cultural group known as Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa. NPC concentrated its base amongst Hausa-Fulani. The Western-based Egbe Omo Oduduwa which later metamorphosed into Awolowo's Action Group (AG) saw to the interest of Yoruba while Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) on its part, consolidated its base within the core of Igboland in the east. (Abubakar, 1997: 74). Therefore, at this time, political parties were based on ethnic regionalist tendencies and on the dominance of personalities. This political nepotism strengthened Nigerian ethno-political disintegration. With this mindset, every activity was geared towards favoritism and suspicion. This resulted in Nigeria-Biafran war between 1967-70.

Have Second – Fourth Republics Integrated Nigeria?

At the end of the civil war in 1970, Nigeria emerged as a more balanced federation with a twelve- state structure. This does not however erase the grievances in the minds of many Nigerians who felt marginalized.

Gowon, the then president of Nigeria, could be said to have tried to ensure the unity of the country (regardless of the feelings of the perceived marginalized) by eschewing any form of secession. But his failure to keep to his promise of handing over power in 1976 led to the ultimate collapse of his government and thus, made him the same with other rulers suffering from a sit-tight malady. At the time of Gowon, there was a ban on party politics. Olusegun Obasanjo became the military president of Nigeria in July 29, 1975. Among the reformations he planned to make was lifting the ban on party politics on September 21, 1978. At this, there was a seeming disintegration and a subsequent integration into smaller scale parties. Many political associations, clubs, unions and councils surfaced from their cocoons. In the final analysis, FEDECO (Federal Electoral Commission) only registered six political parties in the second republic. These parties were as follows: NPN (National Party of Nigeria), UPN (Unity Party of Nigeria), GNPP (Great Nigerian People's Party), PRP (People's Redemption Party), NPP (Nigeria People's Party) and NAP (Nigeria Advance Party) which was belatedly registered to contest the 1979 elections. (Falola & Ihonvbere, 1985: 49-50).

With the declaration of Shehu Shagari (of NPN) as the president of Nigeria in the dawn of the second republic, in the 1979 presidential election, there came more conflicts among the political parties. Other parties perceived a clear fraud in the election which brought Shagari to seat and then fought NPN party in one way or another. This resulted in more political party disintegrations. This election maneuvering did not only escalate political disintegrations but also ethnic and religious crisis which has long started even before the war. Thus, the political revolts metamorphosed to religious/ethnic unrest. Elaigwu (1993: 11) aptly captured this thus,

The year 1980 marked a watershed in the history of inter-religious group harmony in Nigeria. For the first time since independence, violent religious riots broke out in unanticipated proportions. Death tolls rose, innocent citizens were rendered homeless, properties were recklessly destroyed, sacred places of worship were vandalized and burnt, and security agencies were rendered impotent by the magnitude of violence unleashed by religious fanatics. Shagari's clear incompetence and continuous thirst for power by going for another tenure, saw the close of the second republic as power was taken out of his weak hands by Mohammed Buhari in 1983. Buhari later lost the power to Ibrahim Babangida in 1985. The annulment of the June 12 election by Babangida gave another lift to political disorganization, ethno-religious conflict and then, national disintegration.

The Babangida administration, on June 23, 1993, annulled the election results of June 12, 1993 of which MKO Abiola was the purported winner. According to the president, the voting has been irreparably tarnished by procedural irregularities and a legal tussle and the integrity of the nation's judiciary must be protected. (Lewis, 1994: 323-340). But in spite of the rationalizations by Babangida, the annulment unleashed the hidden agenda of the seizure of power in accordance to the northern agenda. This annulment fanned much resistance in other regions of the country and consequently, violence. All tribes, scattered all over Nigeria, returned to their ethnic lands out of fear of a repeat of 1967-70 vendetta. The citizens of Nigeria got once more disintegrated politically, psychologically, physically, religiously and otherwise. Lewis (1994) further captured this point thus, Ethnic politics under the military, especially, amidst a declining economy,....served to aggravate social divisions. Religious enmity intensified by the 1986 announcement that Nigeria would join the Organization of Islamic Conference, grew in scope and severity throughout Babangida's tenure. The marginalization of Christians within the President's Military Council added to such resentment.

Next to take over from Babangida was Ernest Shonekan (civilian) who headed the interim government from August 27, 1993 to November 18, 1993. His defense minister, Gen. Sani Abacha, ousted him out of presidency, ushering Nigeria into another six years subjection to military rule. His long planned rulership was quenched by his unprecedented demise which put Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar on seat. He became the last military president of Nigeria who then handed over Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, launching Nigeria into the fourth republic of civilian rule. Nigeria is still in the fourth republic as at the time of the writing of this article.

The writer can now answer the question posed at the subtitle of this subsection: Have Second-Fourth Republics Integrated Nigeria? The writer can comfortably chant a negative response to that. If the Nigerians of today can say often with nostalgia: "when things were good", referring to the past republics which are considered horrible, what more horrible word can be used to capture the state of things nowadays. The only integration Nigeria has today is nominal integration, by going by the name, 'Nigeria'. Integration in all ramifications is almost becoming an impossible and old-fashioned word used only in papers.

The next thought that should preoccupy well-meaning Nigerians is that of integration. We should also know exactly which kind of integration we need. To do this, we must be ready to understand whether integration must imply remaining glued together in the same country or integration found in freedom and unity in diversity (remaining one in mind but under different heads), taking a clue from the Israelites who though were disintegrated in the scriptures (I Kings 12: 16b) but maintained their ultimate value which is the worship of One God, though there were some records of idolatry among them, permitted by Jeroboam. Above all, if truth is to be told, the major undertone of Nigerian problems is religion (Christianity and Islam). If religious quagmire is tackled and regulated wisely in Nigeria, there would be lesser problems than there is now. Nigerians would

begin to consider their fellow countrymen as majorly humans, worthy of free and comfortable existence; and not as estranged creatures who worth immediate extermination because they are of another belief. Before we further our discussion, may we analyze Nigeria comparatively with Israel in terms of disintegration.

Comparative Analysis on Nigeria and Biblical Israel on Disintegration

While analyzing these two peoples comparatively, we should state both the similarity and dissimilarity between their ethno-political disintegration. We shall first state their similarity.

Israelites' prophesied disintegrated into Northern and Southern Israel, consequent upon the political highhandedness promised by Rehoboam. They first anticipated a change in the administrative harshness they received from King Solomon, the son of King David and the father of Rehoboam but unfortunately, they got the manifesto of a harsher treatment. To evict the oncoming doom, the Southern Israel seceded from the Northern Israel. In Nigeria's situation, no promise of administrative turmoil was overtly made to the populace rather, those political miscreants who ruled and rule Nigeria, have, by their unvocal impishness caused incessant yearnings for secessions among almost every tribe in Nigeria. Thus, the administrative imperiousness promised by Rehoboam has been played out by some partial rulers who by their divisive administration have chased Nigerians to their respective tribes at least for now, emotionally and psychologically. The need for Nigerians' return to their respective tribes is demonstrated often in the way intertribal disputes turn deadly; the indigenization of political parties, obvious marginalization against some tribes and in the outcry of secession by some tribes in Nigeria.

We now review the dissimilarities found among these two peoples and their rulers.

Nigerian tribes were forcefully and selfishly merged to become one country. This made Nigeria not a nation but a geographical expression. This pain of forceful amalgamation becomes so excruciating especially, when one knows that in the real sense, these forcefully merged tribes share uncommon values about human life, environment and religion. The case is different with the Israelites because they, even after their secession, did not obliterate their belief in One God who saved them from the hands of the Egyptians (not minding that there were some negative influences they received from their neighbours which has to do with idolatry).

It is also good to observe that Nigeria is a conglomeration of people of different values and religions (majorly, Christianity and Islam) unlike the Israelites who had one religion, Judaism, and also who historically descended from Abraham, as the scriptures state. However, the linking factor remains that Judaism, Christianity and Islam have something in common and that is the heritage they share in Abraham.

Amidst every similarity and dissimilarity, the main point remains that disintegration occurred with the Israelites in the scriptures, and in its likely manner, it is happening with Nigerian ethno-political milieu. This write-up is not geared towards providing political and ethnic solutions to the disunity ravaging Nigeria but it tends to procure a solution through what it regards as Abrahamic Paternity, a shared heritage Christians have with Muslims.

Abrahamic Paternity: a Response to Nigerian Ethno Political/Religious Disintegration

In this section, we shall be discussing Abraham of faith and not be concerned about the Abraham of history.

In a jiffy anyway, we have to comment with Tarek Mitri (2000):

Whatever the historical Abraham may have been, the true one is the one that comes to life in the stories each generation has woven around him, in the short statements or literary masterpieces which the biblical authors wrote about him, each one adding its own sensibility. These stories were understood and interpreted in ways that made Abraham live in our own hearts and minds. The "real Abraham", says a Christian scholar, cannot be retrieved from under the earth and yet the "true Abraham" accompanies us through time. Possessing Abrahamic heritage, in many cases, has become religiously instrumental for interreligious dialogue. It is believed to invoke peace between tribes, nations and religions especially, in Nigeria where intertribal unrest have their causative factor always as religion. Below will be stated the belief and paternity Christianity and Islam have in Abraham of faith.

6.1 Abraham in Islam

Muslims believe that Abraham was the father of all nations; was in particular, the father of Ishmael and Isaac; that Ishmael was blessed by God and that the Prophet, Mohammed, their religious founder, is a descendant of Ishmael (the son of Abraham). By this, Muslims are the children of Abraham. Muslims also believe that Israelites are also the descendants of Abraham, through Isaac. Thus, "Muslims believe that the prophet Abraham became the leader of the righteous in his time and it was through him that the people of both the Arabian Peninsula and Israel came." (Wikipedia, free encyclopedia, 2016) Muslims maintain that Abraham further asked God to bless both the lines of his progeny, of Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac), and to keep all of

his descendants in the protection of God. They also believe that Muhammad is a descendant of Abraham through Ishmael. The Quran extols Abraham as a model, an exemplar, obedient and not an idolater. (Quran 18:120) In this sense, Abraham has been described as representing primordial man in universal surrender to the Divine Reality before its fragmentation into religions separated from each other by differences in form. (C. Glasse in *Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, 18). These further instances manifest a great similarity between Islam and Christianity. Hence, some passages of the Quran, meanwhile, deal with the story of how God sent angels to Abraham with the announcement of the punishment to be imposed upon Lot's people in Sodom and Gomorrah. (Quran 52:24-34; 25:51-60; 11:69-76) Other verses mention the near-sacrifice of Abraham's son, (Quran 37: 100-111) whose name is not given but is presumed to be Ishmael as the following verses mention the birth of Isaac. The Quran also repeatedly establishes Abraham's role as patriarch and mentions numerous important descendants who came through his lineage, including Isaac, (Quran 25:53 Jacob (Quran 29:49) and Ishmael (Quran 2: 132-133).

6.2 Abraham in Christianity

Christians believe that Abraham was a righteous man who pleased God by his unflinching faith; that he was the father of all nations and the father of Ishmael and Isaac. Furthermore, Abraham was the grandfather of Jacob (who was called Israel) from whose lineage Christ, the founder of Christianity, came. Thus, all Christians are the children of Abraham.

Abraham (Hebrew: אַבְרָהָם) originally Abram, is the first of the three patriarchs of Judaism. His story features in the holy texts of all the Abrahamic religions and Abraham plays a prominent role as an example of faithfulness in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Particularly in Christianity, though Ishmael was born before Isaac and thus, the first son of Abraham, he was not his child of promise. Ishmael was the son of Sarah's Egyptian maidservant, Hagar. The Bible records that Hagar and her son, Ishmael, were sent away by Abraham into the desert of Beersheba, under the instigation of Sarah and the approval of God. (Genesis 21:8-21) God also promised to make Ishmael into a nation because he was also the son of Abraham (Gen. 21:13). As has already been stated above, Christians believe that they share the common inheritance of Christ who is a descendant of Jacob (Israel) and then, of Abraham.

6.3 Evaluative Response

Having considered the beliefs in Abraham both in Islam and Christianity, the divergences found therein are minor to be compared with the similarities found therein. The major recurring message is that both Muslims and Christians are descendants of Abraham and they share in the common heritage of Abraham. An apparent disintegration could have happened in the Bible in the case of Hagar and Ishmael's expulsion into the desert but the fact remains that Ishmael and Isaac remained the sons of Abraham. Thus, they have the same blood running in them and the same belief in one loving God, entrenched in them. One may then question: from where comes the acrimony that is now characteristic of the both religions, to the extent that they seem irreconcilable? How would our father Abraham of faith feel, seeing his children, disintegrate as often as ever? Further, how would the two brothers, Ishmael and Isaac feel as these religions which stake their base on them respectively, fight each other?

It is a biblical truth that Ishmael and Isaac parted ways but they did not disown their root, Abraham. It was not also recorded that they fought each other. A slight variation in the both religions (which could be on monotheism: 'One God' of Islam and 'Trinity' of Christians, misconceived by Muslims to mean 'three Gods'.) is not worthwhile to ignite constant squabbles, to the extent that Islam considers Christians as people of different faith and hence, infidels. One of the verses that give credence to violence and religious intolerance against those of other faith is in Quran (2:191-193) and it goes thus:

And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out. And Al-Fitnah [disbelief or unrest] is worse than killing... but if they desist, then lo! Allah is forgiving and merciful. And fight them until there is no more Fitnah [disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah] and worship is for Allah alone. But if they cease, let there be no transgression except against Az-Zalimun (the polytheists, and wrong-doers, etc.)

The following Quran passage makes it clear that Christians are considered to be polytheist and should have violence meted out on them. Thus, in Quran 3:151, it states: "Soon shall we cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers, for that they joined companions with Allah, for which He had sent no authority". This speaks directly of polytheists, yet it also includes Christians, since they believe in the Trinity, that is what Muhammad incorrectly believed to be 'joining companions to Allah' (Violence. 2002-2017).

One can then correctly assert that Islam should give room for interreligious profound studies, not primarily to get converted to these other religions but to know the reason why they should be respected. Muslims should also know that as they value their religion, so do others value theirs. As Islam began in time, so

do other religions begin in time. It has no wherewithal to lord it over others and consider itself the best among all. Again, the inability to comprehend the religious beliefs and practices of other religions on the side of Muslims, is not enough to bedevil them and denigrate them with the word, 'infidel'. Further, Islam should know that even if it has the same Abrahamic inheritance with Christianity, there is bound to be at least accidental variations in the both religions, in time. There has to be development in their theologies which may not necessarily touch their roots.

Finally, if Quran values Jesus Christ so much to the extent of mentioning him over 180 times, though with some diminutions arrogated to him from the feat Christians have placed him, Muslims have no reason to detest the followers of Christ. Thus, in Wikipedia, free encyclopedia, 2017, it states, In Islam, **Isa ibn Maryam** (*'Isā ibn Maryām*, lit. 'Jesus, son of Mary'), or Jesus, is understood to be the penultimate prophet and messenger of Allah (God) and *al-Masih*, the Arabic term for Messiah, the "Christ", sent to guide the Children of Israel (*banī isrā'īl* in Arabic) with a new revelation: *al-Injīl* (Arabic for "the Gospel"). Jesus is believed to be a prophet, who neither married nor had any children, and is reflected as a significant figure, being mentioned in the Quran in 93 *ayaat* (Arabic for verses) with various titles attached such as "Son of Mary", "Spirit of God", and the "Word of God" among other relational terms, directly and indirectly, over 180 times. In total, Jesus is mentioned 187 times in the Quran as such the most mentioned person with the name Isa mentioned 25 times, in titles mentioned 79 times, in 3rd person mentioned 48 times, in 1st person mentioned 35 times.

The value Islam places on Jesus should be manifested in its relationship with Christianity. Nigerian Muslims and Christians should even exhibit a greater rapport because before the advent of Islam and Christianity to Nigeria, Nigerians had already become children of Mother Africa. 'Africa had already given birth to them geographically and essentially, before chronologically, Abraham fathered them in faith'.

Nigeria should not be essentially split by religion-infested politics. Even if there be tribal secession(s) from Nigeria, it should not cause aggression but should be seen as unity in diversity. It should not be practiced in the spirit of disintegration as Nigeria experiences now. The case remains that of a people of Africa, honoring Abraham in various ways that may not be under a particular religious and political platform. It is quite disheartening that religion, which should be a binding force, is responsible for disintegrations befalling in Nigeria. Our common heritage and faith in Abraham and Mother Africa should be our practical pacific ideology.

V. CONCLUSION

Nigeria has long been besieged by series of conflicts that have their root in religion. Majorly, Christianity and Islam have been the two religions embattling each other in Nigeria, since the amalgamation in 1914. This religious enmity has infested different facets of Nigeria to the extent that political parties and government appointments are fashioned in favour of some tribes and religions. Worthy of note is the fact that each major tribe of Nigeria has a dominating religion practiced therein. This makes it difficult to separate religion from tribe in Nigeria. This write-up then tries to analyze Nigerian disintegrations in the limelight of Israelites' disintegration during the reign of Rehoboam, thereby pointing the similarity and dissimilarities in the both disintegrations. One of the outstanding differences between both of them is that Israel disintegrated, not because of religion but administration (though with a link to divine prophecy of secession) but Nigeria disintegrates because of religion which has pervaded all angles of her existence. Thus, this write-up surmises that Nigeria could be saved from this ruinous existence by tackling the problem of religion (between Christianity and Islam), believing that when religion is gotten right, Nigeria is gotten right as well. Therefore, this reconciliation would hold on the Abrahamic common heritage Christians share with Muslims and also on some other teachings these religions hold in common (especially about Jesus Christ). Further, it reminds Nigerians of their common heritage also in Mother Africa whose children we remain whether as different countries or as a country.

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