

### **III. HISTORICAL THEOLOGY**

## **THE CHURCH IN NORTHERN NIGERIA IN THE FACE OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM, AND THE RE-INTERPRETATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHURCH SUFFERING: A REFLECTION**

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**ABSTRACT.** Extant studies have shown that at the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the most immediate danger faced by nations of the world, apart from global climate disruption is fundamentalism. It has shown that this phenomenon has tended to divide the world on the line of religion. In the case of Nigeria, this dividing line is always in the increase and is setting the people against themselves. This is because, this has not only disrupted development, but has led to a situation in which some people have become second class citizens in their native country, so much so that they arguably constitute what the Catholic Doctrine refers to as the “Church Suffering”-faithful who are undergoing the purification of purgatory while on earth. This is hinged on the premise that perhaps for the sake of Christ and the Church, they are being prepared for heaven after torturous life on earth. The qualitative method is used for this particular research. Data obtained from primary and secondary sources were deployed to carry out the study with an analytical and narrative historical approach. This includes historical, descriptive and analytical approaches based on gathered evidence. The primary source for this research is based on field investigations conducted in the area and surrounding territories. Among other things, the data collection process includes semi-structured interviews with individuals. The research also uses historical documents from the national archives, relying on previous research conducted on issues relating to Colonial and Missionary activities in northern Nigeria, Religion, doctrine and intergroup relations in addition to documentary data taken from newspaper accounts, diaries, letters and verbal reports.

**Keywords:** Religious Fundamentalism, The Church, Doctrine of Church Suffering.

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## Introduction

Extant studies have shown that at the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the most immediate danger faced by nations of the world, apart from global climate disruption is fundamentalism<sup>1</sup>. This in the view of Caplain, makes Fundamentalism an unquestionable evocative image of modern time, with its roots back in history<sup>2</sup>. Scholars have argued that the one definition for this crisis-ridden trend is ‘enthusiasm without substance’<sup>3</sup>. In his analysis, Herriot argues that the major problem with fundamentalism and fundamentalist is that it is a type of belief system that enables individuals to make sense of their lives and provides them with an identity<sup>4</sup>. It sort of stereotype their view of others and their religion. In this way, the society is presented with a situation and a social phenomenon, in which strictly religious people act according to the norms, values, and beliefs of the group to which they belong. It is a cultural product, in the sense that different cultural settings result in different forms of fundamentalism. And it is a global phenomenon, in the obvious sense that it is to be found everywhere, and because it is both a reaction against, and also a part of, the globalizing modern world. This contemporary crisis gives urgency to a re-examination of the various perspectives of the concept of fundamentalism. The challenge is urgent given to the fact that some adherents of different religions in the world have torn themselves between awe and terror at what humanity, as agent of its cultures and religions, has inflicted upon itself in the name of God. This shows that the global community stands in desperate need of intercultural and interreligious dialogue that brings fundamentalism into conversation.

## Fundamentalism: Origin and Root

Fundamentalism comes from the *Latin* word “*fundare*”, meaning to establish. The first and most basic distinguishing feature of fundamentalist movements is that they are reactive. Fundamentalists believe that their religion is under mortal threat from the secularism of the modern world, and they are

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<sup>1</sup> Mathew Hassan Kukah. *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1993), 1-200. Gaiya P. Maigamu, *Religion and Justice: The Nigerian Predicament* (Kaduna: Espeep, 2004), 25.

<sup>2</sup> Caplain Lionel, ed. *Studies in Religious Fundamentalism* (London: Macmillan Press, 1987): vii, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Nwosu P., “Fundamentalism in Religion from Catholic Perspective,” in Emmanuel Osewe Akubor, and Shabayang Barnabas Samaila, eds., *Religion, Religious Education and Nation-Building: Nigeria and the World in the 21st Century: Festschrift in Honour of Professor Joseph Haruna Mamman* (Ibadan: Darosat Publishers, 2019), 257.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Herriot, *Religious Fundamentalism: Global, Local, Personal* (USA: Routledge, 2009), 2.

fighting back<sup>5</sup>. They may resist in different ways, but they are all essentially oppositional; they have to have an enemy. Religious Fundamentalism refers to the belief of an individual or a group of individuals in the absolute authority of a sacred religious text or teachings of a particular religious' leader, prophet and/or God<sup>6</sup>. In this way, the fundamentalist argues that their religion is free from human influence and error as well as above any form of criticism<sup>7</sup>. Their view is therefore that the religion, her doctrines and/or teaching must be forced upon others (compelled to accept such at the risk of death). In this way, logical explanations and scientific evidence have no place in these belief system if they work against their religious fundamentalist. For these adherents, religion dictates every sphere of their daily life, and they also attempt to involve the entire society into their own belief system through the use of violent force<sup>8</sup>. Generally, fundamentalism is the act of following very strictly the established rules and teachings of any religion. In Christian religion, fundamentalism is the belief that everything that is written in the Bible is absolute and completely without error. In an attempt to explain fundamentalist, Nwosu, P.U, opined thus:

Fundamentalism, as a trend, is a twentieth century development and its most outstanding feature is its violent opposition to liberal and cultural changes associated with modernism. ...fundamentalism opposes criticism, the social gospel movement, and the secularization of social and political institutions<sup>9</sup>.

Generally, Scholars seems to agree that fundamentalism began as an attempt to defend the teaching of biblical inerrancy against modern scientific and philosophical thought<sup>10</sup>. According to these school of thought, for the fundamentalist, "divine revelation could not come by way of a book that contained any errors. The holy book, therefore, must be inerrant"<sup>11</sup>. Consequently, fundamentalists oppose the teaching of evolution and the historical criticism of the Old and New Testaments. In recent times, as observed by Hopfe and Woodward, fundamentalists have turned their attention to combating the secularization of political and social norms like the push for legal protection for homosexuals<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Lionel Caplain, ed., *Studies in Religious Fundamentalism*.

<sup>6</sup> Leslie J. Hoppe, "Fundamentalism," in *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives*, ed. Karl Muller et al. (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 167; Akubor and Shabayang, *Religion, Religious Education and Nation-Building*, 257.

<sup>7</sup> Leslie, "Fundamentalism," 167; Sen Nag Oishimaya, "What is Religious Fundamentalism" (2017), <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-religious-fundamentalism.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Oishimaya, "What is Religious Fundamentalism", 1-4.

<sup>9</sup> Nwosu, "Fundamentalism in Religion from Catholic Perspective", 257.

<sup>10</sup> Herriot, *Religious Fundamentalism*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Leslie, "Fundamentalism," 167.

## **Church: Definition**

According to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, The word "Church" means "convocation<sup>13</sup>." It designates the assembly of those whom God's Word "convokes," i.e., gathers together to form the People of God, and who themselves, nourished with the Body of Christ, become the Body of Christ. The Catechism of Catholic Doctrine goes on to describe the Church thus

The Church is both the means and the goal of God's plan: prefigured in creation, prepared for in the Old Covenant, founded by the words and actions of Jesus Christ, fulfilled by his redeeming cross and his Resurrection, the Church has been manifested as the mystery of salvation by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. She will be perfected in the glory of heaven as the assembly of all the redeemed of the earth (cf. Rev 14:4). The Church is both visible and spiritual, a hierarchical society and the Mystical Body of Christ. She is one, yet formed of two components, human and divine. That is her mystery, which only faith can accept. The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men<sup>14</sup>.

It is therefore in line with the above that the Church is used in this work to mean the body of people who belief in God as the creator of the universe in unity with the Son and the Holy Spirit irrespective of their denomination.

## **The Church in Nigeria: A Brief History**

The history of the Church in Nigeria is unique in the sense that while it was well accepted in the Southern part of the Country with the missionaries bringing along with it other services like education, health care delivery system and so on<sup>15</sup>. In the northern part of Nigeria which was predominantly Islam, the colonial government gave the religion a boost by appointing and installing/imposing new emirs in predominantly non-Muslim areas and they imposed their Shari'a on the indigenous population whose way of life had been different and who previously had resisted the Fulani/Hausa hegemony<sup>16</sup>. This indirect rule system introduced by the British, turned out to be indirect promotion and protection of Islam and its Shari'a. Through it the emirs gained more powers to

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<sup>13</sup> *The Catechism of The Catholic Church* (Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa 1994), 182.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 182-3.

<sup>15</sup> Adigwe, ed., *One God, Many Religion*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Kukah, M.H, Almajiri, "What Happened On the Road to Heaven?," *Premium Times*, June 8, 2020.

rule their subjects-both Muslims and non-Muslims alike<sup>17</sup>. In this way, the spread of Christianity in the northern part of the country suffered some form of resistance<sup>18</sup>, while those that accepted it were persecuted by the ruling elite class and derogatively were referred to as Maguzawa. This is well documented in Akubor and Musa (2018) in which he noted thus,

... the Maguzawa are a remnant of the Hausa and provide a reflection of pre-Islamic Hausa society.<sup>15</sup> Scholars have also established that, after adopting a non-violent attitude toward Hausa Muslims who tried to force them to convert to Islam, the Maguzawa have always migrated to the geographical fringes of Hausaland. As a result, they have always been on the move and have registered at the bottom of virtually all social measurements in the region, including urbanization, religion, power, and status; they have been treated with contempt by their neighbors.<sup>16</sup> Maguzawa have historically lived in wards and have appointed leaders called ward heads. The ward head is often appointed by a supervising Muslim village who supervises their ward. The ward head's functions are to collect taxes from his own people and to serve as a marriage counselor and peacemaker. The Maguzawa have always tried to limit their contact with Muslim leadership, and their strategies of geographical retreat and internal problem-solving have supported this goal<sup>19</sup>.

In some cases those who accepted Christianity are branded as Infidel (*Kaafir*, *kufir* or *Kuffar*), and have been so much persecuted and denied the basic necessities of life even in their homeland, Akubor and Musa, (2018) described their situation and plight for the mere fact that they accepted Christianity thus:

Although Islam is widely practiced in northern Nigeria, the emergence of fundamentalist groups in this part of the country has led to major adulteration and manipulation of the teachings of the religion and this has gradually come to be seen as part of the basic tenet of the religion. One impact of such is the oppression of those who have refused to accept the teachings and as such have been sidelined in the scheme of progress in the society. This has led to the emergence of those who has been referred to as Kaafir (Infidel) on the one

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<sup>17</sup> Cyprian Ubaka, "What is The Shari'a," in Adigwe Hypolite (ed.), *One God, Many Religion*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Emmanuel Ayandele, "The Missionary Factor in Northern Nigeria:1870-1913," *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 3 (December 1966); UBAH C., "Administration of Kano Emirate under the British 1900-1930." PhD Thesis, Ibadan, 1973; Ubah C., "Problems of Christian Missionaries in the Muslim Emirates of Nigeria: 1900-1930," *Journal of African Studies* no. 3 (Fall 1976): 351-371.

<sup>19</sup> Emmanuel Osewe Akubor, and Gerald Musa, "The Maguzawa and Nigerian Citizenship: Reflecting on Identity Politics and National Question in Africa", *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 41, no. 1, (2018): 65-83.

hand and Maguzawa (unbelievers). In this case, while the term Kaafir, kufr or Kuffar is used to describe non-believers of the religion generally, Maguzawa is for the indigenous people who have refused to accept the religion. While the Kaafir are often left alone to leave in separate area, so that they don't influence the people and religion, the Maguzawa are relegated in the scheme of activities. These people though indigenous have been relegated to the background politically, economically, socially, and educationally. By this, they have been denied official permission to build their own schools in their communities, discriminated against and denied the opportunity for development due to their religious affiliation. Scholars have argued that these forms of discrimination and denial of opportunities is part of a plan by a certain section of the northern oligarchy to maintain control over minorities in the north. In some other cases, educational institutions that were provided to these communities through self-help and through missionaries have been taken, thus denying the people ownership and easy access<sup>20</sup>.

### **Doctrine of the Church: The Tripodal Nature of the Church**

The idea of man's relationship with God both on earth and the life after is well documented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and also celebrated at various time of the year. Thus the Catholic Church commemorates the Church Triumphant and the Church Penitent in its liturgy on two consecutive days: All Saints' Day on November 1 (the Church Triumphant) and All Souls' Day on November 2 (the Church Penitent). These terms are not used in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, an authoritative summary of the teaching of the Catholic Church published in 1994. However, the teaching these terms represent is precisely restated, quoting *Lumen gentium*:

The three states of the Church. "When the Lord comes in glory, and all his angels with him, death will be no more and all things will be subject to him. But at the present time some of his disciples are pilgrims on earth. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory, contemplating 'in full light, God himself triune and one, exactly as he is'<sup>21</sup>.

Andrea da Firenze<sup>22</sup> has argued that In Christian theology, the Christian Church is traditionally divided into: the Church Militant (*Latin: Ecclesia militans*), which consists of Christians on earth who struggle as soldiers of Christ against

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<sup>20</sup> Akubor and Musa, *The Maguzawa and Nigerian Citizenship*, 65-83.

<sup>21</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 127-300.

<sup>22</sup> Andrea da Firenze (ed.), *The Church Militant and the Church Triumphant*, fresco, Santa Maria Novella, c. 1365; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches\\_Militant,\\_Penitent,\\_and\\_Triumphant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_Militant,_Penitent,_and_Triumphant).

sin, the devil, and "the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places"; the Church Penitent (*Latin: Ecclesia poenitens*), also called the Church Suffering (*Latin: Ecclesia dolens*) or the Church Expectant (*Latin: Ecclesia expectans*), which in the theology of certain churches, especially that of the Catholic Church, consists of those Christians currently in Purgatory; and the Church Triumphant (*Latin: Ecclesia triumphans*), which consists of those who have the beatific vision and are in Heaven<sup>23</sup>. These divisions are known as the three states of the Church, especially within Catholic ecclesiology. In reference to other denomination, he wrote

In systems of theology which reject the doctrine of Purgatory, such as Lutheranism, the Churches Militant and Triumphant are together known as the two states of the Church. These divisions are often discussed in the context of the doctrine of the communion of saints; although Christians may be physically separated from each other by the barrier of death, they nonetheless remain united to each other in one Church, and support each other in prayer<sup>24</sup>.

In line with the above, Mannion France<sup>25</sup> in his work *The Church: Triumphant, Militant and Suffering*, gave a vivid description of the various strata the Church is positioned. In his analysis opined thus:

The church triumphant describes the Church in heaven. In the kingdom of God — the realm in which the holy Trinity, the angels and saints, and the abode of all those who have reached the fullness of salvation in Christ — the Church already exists. But it will have its fullest being at the end of time, when all of creation and (we hope) all human beings will be conformed to Christ and all reality will be one of divine praise and glory. The term "church triumphant" underlines the truth that in the glory of heaven all human sin will have been transformed, death and suffering will be no more, and the glory of God will have triumphed over all the imperfections of human history<sup>26</sup>.

On the second level, he wrote:

The church militant refers to the Church on earth. The term "militant" can suggest an antagonistic relationship between the Church and the world. Nevertheless, it refers to an authentic reality: that the Church on earth works to

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Francis Mannion, "The Church: Triumphant, Militant and Suffering," <https://simplycatholic.com/byline/msg-r-m-francis-mannion/>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 1-2.

overcome the imperfect and sinful dimensions of human existence. The Church's mission is not to oppose the world and society, but to work for their transformation by the convincing preaching of the Gospel and by the edifying power of the good works and example of those who are baptized into Christ. The Church's best asset is the saintly activity and example of those who have chosen the Christian way of life<sup>27</sup>.

On the issue of the third level of the Church, Mannion continued...

The church suffering refers to the church in purgatory. Purgatory is not a kind of temporary hell. It is rather the threshold, the antechamber of heaven. In purgatory, all those — whether Christian or not — who have reached the gates of death without reaching the full perfection of life represented in Christ are cleansed in a kind of ongoing baptism and are purified by the enlightening fire of the Holy Spirit. The suffering of purgatory is not one of destruction, but the suffering that comes from leaving the old self behind and taking on the new<sup>28</sup>.

### **The Rise of Fundamentalist Groups in Nigeria**

Scholars are of the view that the rise of fundamentalist groups in the Nigerian context could be traced to the fact that the Nigerian state has failed the citizenry in her constitutional responsibilities<sup>29</sup>. For instance Otegwu I<sup>30</sup>, argued that a careful study of states' functions (as spelt out above using the Nigerian situation) will reveal that in relation to Nigeria and Africa in general, the state has not been able to live up to its responsibilities to its entire citizenry. Nigerian leaders have demonstrated more determination to continue with the exploitation and underdevelopment of the country which the colonial authorities instituted before their departure. Furthermore, in Nigeria, since the independence years no conscious efforts have been made by authorities to inculcate shared socio-political images in the consciousness of the entire citizenry. Political socialization (one of states' duties to its citizens) relates to the learning, accepting and approving of customs and rules, structures and environmental factors governing political life. Consequently, states without a cohesive base have at best a deficient ability to build consensus. They can serve as coercive organizations

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Emmanuel Osewe, Akubor, "Civil Unrest in Northern Nigeria: Beyond the Literal Boko Haram," *The Constitution* 11 (2011): 71-83; Shehu Sani, "Boko Haram: History, Ideas and Revolts," *The Constitution* 11 (2011): 17-41.

<sup>30</sup> Isaac Otegwu (ed.), *The State and the Rise of Fundamentalism in Nigeria: The Boko Haram Insurgency in Perspective*, Department of Political Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.



but not as effective tools of societal and political action which require a strong normative element. In addition to the above in Nigeria there is widespread discontent and disenchantment among the various communities because of the inability or refusal of successive governments to resolve their grievances over long periods something which generates despair which impel established aspiring ad hoc leaders to organize acts of defiance or incipient lawlessness<sup>31</sup>. Extant research have established that Religious Fundamentalism especially by religious and political leaders is as old as the history of modern Nigeria (Nigeria since independence)<sup>32</sup>. However, over the years, the inability of the government and people to check the rising tide has continually led to religious violence in various parts of the country since independence<sup>33</sup>. Some of these includes: Maitatsine crisis in Kano, 1980, Bullum-Kutu 1982, Maiduguri 1982, Yola, 1984, Ilorin 1984, Bauchi 1984, Ilorin 1987, Kano 1984, Kafanchan 1987, Zuru 1980, Birnin Kebbi 1990, Katsina 1991, Tafawa Balewa 1991, Kano 1991, Jalingo 1992, Kaduna Polytechnic 1992, Kasuwar Magani (Kaduna) 1994, Gure Kahugu 1987, Kafanchan 1987, 1999, Kaduna 2000 Jos 2001, Kano 2001, Tafawa Balewa (since 2000), Nasarawa 2001. Others include Chamba-Kuteb crisis in Taraba state since 1975 Tiv-Jukun crisis, Bassa-Igbira crisis in Toto and a host of others<sup>34</sup>. From ordinary conflict and unrest, through the act of manipulation have led to the emergence of even more radical fundamentalist groups, who are no longer interested in just creating internal crises, but are currently working towards the disintegration of the country and the creation of a religious state. Thus, it is not surprising that the Boko Haram group which made itself known in 2009, has taken over parts of northern region. This group working in collaboration with other groups with similar ideas and doctrines with some sponsorship from within and outside the country have continued to launch deadly and destructive attacks on people of other faith<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, 1-115.

<sup>32</sup> Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria...*, 1-115; Akubor, *Historical Root of Religious Manipulation*, 37-50; Akubor, "Civil Unrest in Northern Nigeria," 71-93.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Aliyu Yahaya, "Socio-political Conflicts in the Central Nigerian Area: A Historical Inquiry into the Metropolitan Sharia Conflict," in *Historical Perspectives on Nigeria's Post-Colonial Conflicts*, ed. Olayemi Akinwumi, Okpeh, et al (Lagos: Historical Society of Nigeria, 2007), 1-50.

<sup>34</sup> Akubor, *Historical Root of Religious Manipulation*, 35-50.

<sup>35</sup> Dikwa Musa, "How 3 Northern Governors Created Boko Haram" – <https://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2020/03/01/how-3-northern-governors-created-boko-haram-musa-dikwa/>. 2020.

## **Fundamentalism in Modern Nigeria and the Fate of Northern Minorities: Historicizing Boko Haram and Related Groups**

Experts<sup>36</sup> traced the emergence and activities of the Boko Haram group to the “Taliban” raids in 2003. In term of space, the group first settled at Bukarti Village in Bursari Local Government Area claiming to be disciples purely devoted to praying and learning of the Quran only for them to commence training by an oasis in Janama (Kanama) in Yunusari Local Government Area from where they commenced attacks that led to the death of some police officers<sup>37</sup>. The Boko Haram, believes that Western education is Haram, an Arabic word for forbidden/sin and its adherents are taught that it is their duty, as pure Muslims, to ‘cleanse’ society of all influences of Western education and replace it with sharia.

Evidence shows that according to the group that western education is the cause of corruption, inequality and injustice bedeviling the society and must be forbidden. Believed to have started in Maiduguri, an ardent Boko Haram member must be ready to pay the supreme price to defend this cause<sup>38</sup>. Many of the members as a result of this belief tore their degree, Higher National Diploma and other certificates and renounced Western values, as a demonstration of their faith<sup>39</sup>. The Sect therefore fought against anything that represented the state/government or western literacy, attacking police stations, schools and other symbols of government.

Proffering detailed account on the background to the formation of the new fundamentalist group in modern Nigeria as well as their *modus operandi*, Dikwa M (2020) wrote

The creation of Boko Haram started in 2000... When Olusegun Obasanjo became the President of Nigeria in 1999, he appointed service chiefs – all from the North Central zone – Benue, Plateau, Kogi and Kwara states. Incidentally, all of them were Christians. The development prompted three northern governors to come up with the idea of creating and raising Islamic militants to fight for Islam because they felt Obasanjo did not appoint their own (what they described as pure Hausa/Fulani northerners as service chiefs). From there, they created Islamic militants. Those governors contributed N100m each to buy working equipment, uniforms and so on for the militants. Immediately, Nigeria started experiencing religious crisis. After they contributed the money,

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<sup>36</sup> Akubor, “Civil Unrest in Northern Nigeria,” 71-93; Sani, “Boko Haram: History, Ideas and Revolts,” 17-41.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

those organised Islamic militants started religious crisis in Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa, Zamfara, saying they wanted Sharia. The aim was to intimidate and oppress the Christians. They started attacking churches and killing people. Any time elections took place and they did not favour them, they would burn churches and attack their members. They never went to offices of political parties or the Independent National Electoral Commission office to carry out their attacks<sup>40</sup>.

On the activities of the militant group and focus, Dikwa (2020) continued:

On February 18, 2006 in Maiduguri, those boys came out and said they wanted Sharia law and that a governor in the state then did not cooperate with them. And because of a cartoon that was designed in Denmark in 2006, they protested and burnt down 66 churches in the state and killed many Christian men, women and children. After that, they started moving from house to house, church to church... in July 2009, the insurgents "burnt down 27 churches and killed many Christians. At that time, they only killed security agents and Christians. From 2009 till 2014, they were attacking churches – going from house to house, slaughtering Christians. They started attacking people, including Muslims in 2014 when they felt their leaders had deceived them by not backing them to fight 'infidels' in the North. Four reverends were slaughtered in 2009.<sup>41</sup>

The result is that the Christian church and minorities in these occupied areas are often the target. This position has been made clear by Adjoa Osafo-Binfoh thus:

Nigeria has long been home to people who subscribe to different religious beliefs. Yet, in recent years the conflict between the different religious groups, especially Christians and Muslims, has become increasingly violent and more frequent. The growth of Islamic fundamentalism seems to be the catalyst of much of the violence in the region. This has been especially so since the establishment of a terrorist organization by the name of Boko Haram in 1995, who carry out attacks in their quest to establish a 'pure' Islamic state. The organization promotes fundamentalist ideologies, meaning that subscribers of the organization are often unwilling to be tolerant of those who do not adhere to the same beliefs as them<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Dikwa, "How 3 Northern Governors Created Boko Haram," 2.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Adjoa Osafo-Binfoh, "The Rise of Fundamentalism in Nigeria," <https://www.hart-uk.org/blog/rise-fundamentalism-nigeria/2020>.

In the case of the northern part of the country, these minorities include those who may be of the same linguistics background with the people but do not belong to the religion of the fundamentalists, as well as those of other ethnic stock residing in the area. In the northern part of Nigeria, the fundamentalist groups most often are supported by some power politicians and religious leader for selfish interest. Akubor opined thus,

...Available historical document has it that what later became the beginning of religious insurgence in northern Nigeria could be traced to the period between 1979 and 1989, at the beginning of armed Taliban uprisings against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The success of this group in forcing the Russians out of their country was deemed a feat to be emulated by those against foreign occupation. During this period, intelligence report in Nigeria had it that there was the infiltration of Nigeria by foreign Islamic fundamentalists. A renowned Islamic scholar and leader of a popular Islamic school believed to have escaped arrest in either troubled Sudan or the war-ravaged Afghanistan. The unidentified Islamic scholar was for eight months allegedly hidden by another scholar in Katsina. The arrest of this scholar and his host was seen by the people as an attempt to undermine the religion and teachings of the scholar, whom they regarded as Message of God. This sparked off riots in various parts of the north. This was to mark the beginning of trouble for the people of the federation<sup>43</sup>.

In line with the above, Osafo-Binfoh wrote:

...Although relations have been particularly fraught between these religious groups throughout Nigeria, nowhere has witnessed more suffering than the central and northern regions, where discrimination against Christians is rife. Areas of particular concern include the states of Borno, Yobe and Kano states where it is alleged that Boko Haram have been responsible for scores of attacks. As of April 2013, these three states had collectively seen no fewer than 902 casualties as a result of Boko Haram instigated attacks since 2009. Acts of violence that have and continue to take place include suicide bombings, massacres and the deliberate targeting of churches<sup>44</sup>

Although the above have shown the beginning of fundamentalism in Nigeria, however further studies have opined that the role of the fundamentalists and fundamentalism became “legalized and Institutionalised” with the entry of the Nigerian state into the Organisation of Islamic Conference in 1986. This was under the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida, when he made Nigeria

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<sup>43</sup> Akubor, “Historical Root of Religious Manipulation...”

<sup>44</sup> Adjoa, “The Rise of Fundamentalism in Nigeria...”

a permanent member of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) in Fez, Morocco in January 1986<sup>45</sup>. This gave more impetus to the victimization of one religious groups by another. Under what it perceived as “The perception that government policies are discriminatory against Christians”, Iheanyi M. Enwerem<sup>46</sup> argued that this was the beginning of the restrictions which the government placed on Christian evangelism without, in CAN's opinion, placing similar restrictions on Islam. In his view this was in line with the position of the leadership of CAN's Northern Zone which argued thus:

Our schools and colleges have been taken over by government and yet we see schools and colleges established under the umbrella of another religion [that is, Islam] being sponsored and entirely financed and administered by government; we have been denied access to the use of the electronic media in certain parts of the country and yet another religion has the monopoly of rendering a near-24-hours religious broadcast in the same areas; some States have deliberately refused to accept and recognize the growing population of Christians in the States, thus depriving the Christians not only of their rights, but also questioning their claim to being indigenes of such states as claim to be religiously homogeneous<sup>47</sup>.

Going further under what is described as

Another discriminatory government policy was the establishment of a Pilgrims' Board. The issue of pilgrimage became politicized from the time the Regional Government of the Northern Region sponsored Isa Kaita's pilgrimage to Mecca in 1954. Consequently, confronted by the possibility of religious strife in the old Western Region, where Muslims accounted for about half of the population, and as a measure of precaution, Awolowo statutorily established in May, 1958, a Pilgrims Welfare Board for Muslims. Most non-Muslims did not object to the need for Muslims to perform the pilgrimage in fulfilment of their religious obligations, but many did object to State support and subsidy of the pilgrimage. The Christian position is premised on the view that the state must play no role in religion — since the country is constitutionally a secular one — and therefore the state must not render any financial assistance to the religious activity of any group. But should the State choose to render such assistance, Christians argue, it should not be denied to Christians who may wish to go on

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<sup>45</sup> Institute of Pastoral Affairs, “Trends in Nigerian Christian-Muslim Relations”, Notes at the occasion of the One-day Seminar held in Lokoja, Okene, Kabba between 13 and 15 November, on Contemporary Islam and Nigeria, by the Institute of Pastoral Affairs, Jos, Nigeria (1989), 1-30.

<sup>46</sup> Iheanyi Enwerem, *Dangerous Awakening: The Politicization of Religion in Nigeria*, (IFRA Books Series Africa Dynamics, 1995), 1-20.

<sup>47</sup> Adjoa, “The Rise of Fundamentalism in Nigeria...”

pilgrimages to Christian holy places in Rome and in Israel. The government's response to the Christians after much protest was to provide, from the 1980s, a 'limited government financing of Christian pilgrimages and the erection of Christian Pilgrim Boards'. Christians availed themselves of this provision. On their return from pilgrimage, some Christians add 'JP' (Jerusalem Pilgrim) to their titles to counter Muslims, who add 'Alhaji' to their name after making the pilgrimage to Mecca. As the number of Christian pilgrims increased, CAN began to scrutinize the government support and subsidy for religious pilgrimages. It became obvious to CAN that there was a disparity in favour of Muslims, and it saw this as further evidence of the government's unfairness to Christians<sup>48</sup>.

In the opinion of scholars this made Nigeria not just a member of the OIC, but also the headquarters of Islam in Africa"<sup>49</sup>. This according to this school of thought have made the area volatile especially as some people now consider themselves as victim, while others are victors, using state apparatus and machineries to oppress others<sup>50</sup>.

### **The Structure and Persons: Sitting on Time Bomb**

In term of structures and persons, the activities of the fundamentalist groups have become a threat to the existence of such as structures put up by the Christian groups are on a daily bases targeted for destruction. This may have informed the view put forward by Kukah<sup>51</sup>, in which he opined thus:

The persecution of Christians in northern Nigeria is as old as the modern Nigerian state. Their experiences and fears of northern, Islamic domination are documented in the Willinks Commission Report way back in 1956. It was also the reason why they formed a political platform called, the Non-Muslim League. All of us must confess in all honesty that in the years that have passed, the northern Muslim elite has not developed a moral basis for adequate power sharing with their Christian co-regionalists. We deny at our own expense. By denying Christians lands for places of worship across most of the northern states, ignoring the systematic destruction of churches all these years, denying Christians adequate recruitment, representation and promotions in the State civil services, denying their indigenous children scholarships, marrying

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ohieku J., *Secular State or Islamic Nigeria: Which Way, Mr. President in Contemporary Islam in Nigeria*, (Jos: Institute of Pastoral Affairs (IPA), 1989): 48.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Kukah, Mathew Hassan, "Homily at the Funeral Mass of Seminarian Michael Nnadi," Kaduna: Good Shepherd Major Seminary, 11th February 2020.

Christian women or converting Christians while threatening Muslim women and prospective converts with death, they make building a harmonious community impossible. Nation building cannot happen without adequate representation and a deliberate effort at creating for all members a sense, a feeling, of belonging, and freedom to make their contributions. This is the window that the killers of Boko Haram have exploited and turned into a door to death. It is why killing Christians and destroying Christianity is seen as one of their key missions<sup>52</sup>.

The position as posited by scholars above is made even clearer with the table below which summarizes the direct attack of persons and properties of adherents in Nigeria. Although this attack began since the early 1980's, but it has become even more intensified since 2000's, which the attackers using more deadly weapons and engaging in mass destruction of people and their properties<sup>53</sup>.

**Table 1.** Attacks on People and Places by Boko Haram 2011-2019<sup>54</sup>

s/no	Date	Target	Implement	Result
1	22 /09/ 2011	Mandala, Niger State	Unknown	Five Igbo traders killed for inability to recite Quran
2	25/12/2011	St Theresa Catholic Church, Mandalla, Niger State	Explosives	Worshippers and residents injured and killed
3	1/01/2012	Winners Chapel, Sapele Road, Benin	Planted explosives	Foiled, suspects arrested
4	5/01/ 2012	Deeper Life Church, Gombe	Guns (attack during worship inside church)	6 killed, 10 injured
5	5/01/2012	Adamawa State	Gunmen	4 Christian/Igbo traders Killed
6	6/01/2012	Christ Apostolic Church, Jimeta.Yola	Boko Haram gunmen	8 Killed
7	6/01/2012	Mubi, Adamawa State	Boko Haram gunmen	About 20 Igbo/Christians killed during a town hall meeting
8	6/01/2012	Adamawa State	Boko Haram gunmen	Killed kinsmen of murdered Christians planning burial rites

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Akubor, "Historical Root of Religious Manipulation...", 42.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

s/no	Date	Target	Implement	Result
9	7 /01/ 2012	University of Maiduguri	Boko Haram gunmen	2 Christian students Killed
10	7/01/ 2012	Larmurde, Adamawa	Boko Haram gunmen	7 Christians killed on their way out of Adamawa
11	22 /01/ 2012	St Theresa Catholic Church Tafawa Balewa	Explosives	No lives lost
12	22/01/2012	Evangelical Church Tafawa Balewa	Explosives	No lives lost
13	29/04/2012	Bayero University Kano, Old Campus	Guns and explosives	Worshippers killed including students and 2 professors
14	07/08/2012	Deeper Life Church Okene Shooting Churches In Kaduna, Wussasa and Sabon Gari		Islamic militants attacked a Church, Killed worshippers 80 injured, Islamic militants bombed three churches
15	07/06/2012			
16	20/01/2012	Kano	Boko Haram gunmen	Attacked businesses belonging to mainly Christians
17	06/02/2014	Gwoza in Borno	Boko Haram gunmen	Christian settlements attacked
18	2016- 2019	Christian villages in Benue	Boko Haram gunmen	People Killed
19	2016 -2019	Churches in Benue state	Guns and explosives	Worshippers killed
20	21/02/2020	Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), Garkida, Adamawa	Boko Haram gunmen	Church Burnt
21	21/02/2020	Living Faith Church, Garkida, Adamawa	Boko Haram gunmen	Church Burnt
22	21/02/2020	Anglican Church, Garkida, Adamawa	Boko Haram gunmen	Church Burnt, vehicle destroyed

Apart from the fact that structures belonging to the Church have been systematically targeted for destruction, attempts were also made to capture people of the faith in large numbers and sold into slavery, slaughtered or forced into marriage. For instance, in 2015, Ese Oruru, a 14-year old girl was kidnapped in Delta state, taken to Kano state and forced into marriage without the consent of



her parents to one, Yinusa, a trader and water vendor and forced to convert to Islam<sup>22</sup>. While this act was condemned by well-meaning Nigerians and the international world, a presidential Aide in the present administration saw it as something glorious<sup>55</sup>. Also, there is the case of the missing 219 Chibok girls, kidnapped in 2015 and 110 Dapchi in 2017 from their schools in Borno and Yobe States. Elders and pastors of the church are also kidnapped and killed<sup>23</sup>. In March 2016, Christians in Kaduna mourned the Rev Iliya Anto, one of three men abducted by armed men as they travelled along the Kaduna-Abuja Expressway to clear a piece of land on which to build a seminary. Rev Anto, Rev Emmanuel Dzigau and Rev Yakubu Dzarma, all ministers in the United Church of Christ in Nigeria, were abducted on 22nd March. The kidnappers subsequently killed Rev Anto's, whose decaying body was found in the bush on 30th March and that same evening the two other clergy were freed and taken to hospital. Furthermore, while Fr. Clement Ugwu of St. Mark Catholic Church, Enugu State was kidnapped and later killed, his counterpart, Fr. Paul Ottu of Enugu Diocese was shot and killed on August 1<sup>st</sup> along Agbudu Road, Agwu by unknown assailant respectively. Similarly, in Benue State, Fr. Joseph Gor and Fr. Felix Tyolaha alongside 19 persons, on the one hand were murdered in 2018 during mass at St. Ignatius Catholic Church, Ukpok Mbalom Parish, Gwer East Local Government Area by suspected Fulani herdsmen; Fr. David Tanko was ambushed and killed by unknown assailant while on his way to help resolve a dispute between two ethnic groups <sup>24</sup>. In 2020, the Chairman of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Adamawa state Rev. Lawan Andimi, was abducted and later killed by the Islamic fundamentalists. In the same years, members of the Islamic Fundamentalist groups stormed the Good Shephard Major Seminary in Kaduna state, where four seminarians Michael Nnadi, Pius Kanwai, Peter Umenukor and Stephen Amos were abducted. Michael Nnadi was later killed, while Pius Kanwai, Peter Umenukor and Stephen Amos were released<sup>56</sup>. Till date, Leah Sharibu is still held in captivity for refusing to denounce her faith<sup>57</sup>. This situation seems to be in the increase at an alarming rate daily. According to Grim<sup>58</sup> by summer 2017, the toll of death and destruction carried out by

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<sup>55</sup> Unini Chioma, "Ese Oruru: Presidential Aide, Bashir Ahmed Promises Twitter User to Influence Yunusa Dahiru's Court Conviction," <https://thenigerialawyer.com> 22 May, 2020 (accessed 20/5/2020).

<sup>56</sup> Kukah, "Homily at the Funeral Mass," 2-8.

<sup>57</sup> Akubor and Musa, "The Maguzawa and Nigerian Citizenship", 65-83.

<sup>58</sup> Brian J. Grim, Todd M. Johnson, Vegard Skirbekk and Gina A. Zurlo eds., *Yearbook of International Religious Demography* (Leiden: Brill, 2017). ACN interview with Catholic Bishop Joseph Bagobiri of Kafanchan, northern Nigeria, March 2017; ACN (UK) News, 27/04/17 <<http://acnuk.org/news/nigeria-is-the-government-complicit-in-the-supply-of-arms-to-islamists/>>

Islamist groups against Christians was becoming fully apparent. Similarly, Lozano Maria<sup>59</sup>, documented that as at March 2017, over 1.8 million people in the state had been displaced as a result of the Boko Haram conflict, while 5,000 women were widows and 15,000 children had become orphans. It was also reported that there was damage to 200 churches and chapels, 35 presbyteries and parish centres. In total, 26 million people in the region had been affected by Boko Haram<sup>60</sup>.

Over the years, it has been observed that in spite of the Nigerian military's efforts to push back Boko Haram, the Islamists' ongoing attacks on Christians and the increased potency of other militants' violence meant that the outlook for the Church was increasingly uncertain. Brian J. Grim et al<sup>61</sup> reported thus:

With Boko Haram allegedly responsible for the bulk of the violence, the evidence indisputably shows that, during the period under review, the Islamists held firm to their declared aim: "The Nigerian state and Christians are our enemies and we will be launching attacks on the Nigerian state and its security apparatus as well as churches until we achieve our goal of establishing an Islamic state..." It followed a March 2012 Boko Haram declaration of a "war on Christians" aimed at eliminating them from parts of the country: "We will create so much effort to have an Islamic state that Christians will not be able to stay."<sup>62</sup>

Similarly, The Tablet<sup>63</sup> in line with the view of Brian J.G et al opined thus:

Having sought to eliminate Christianity from the region, it can clearly be indicated that Boko Haram is guilty of genocide in parts of northern Nigeria, warnings of which were made by Catholic clergy as far back as 2014.5 While the government had, at the time of writing, succeeded in wresting Maiduguri from the control of Boko Haram, the threat had by no means passed, with the city falling victim to repeated suicide attacks.

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<sup>59</sup> Lozano Maria, "Report on ACN Communication Trip to Nigeria, March 2017; ACN interview with Catholic Bishop Joseph Bagobiri of Kafanchan, northern Nigeria, March 2017," ACN (UK) News, 27/04/17 <<http://acnuk.org/news/nigeria-is-the-government-complicit-in-the-supply-of-arms-to-islamists/>>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Grim et al. (eds.), *Yearbook of International Religious Demography*.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> The Tablet, 02/07/14 <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/940/0/boko-haram-engaged-in-genocide-against-christians-in-northern-nigeria-as-attacks-killings-and-abductions-continue>.

The views and reports of both The Tablet and Brian et al cited above, have been authenticated by the report obtained from field research and released by Action Aid, which reported thus;

During their spring 2017 visit to northern Nigeria, the Aid to the Church in Need delegation was handed a dossier from Church leaders showing that in the Diocese of Kafanchan, southern Kaduna, 988 people had been killed since 2011. The report also showed that over that same period 71 mostly Christian-majority villages had been destroyed, as well as 2,712 homes and 20 churches. They heard that the diocese had been targeted by Fulani herdsmen, Islamist fighters described as forming a “sister organisation” to Boko Haram. After late 2016, there was an upsurge of Fulani violence against Christians in the diocese. The attacks in spite of the Nigerian military’s efforts to push back Boko Haram, the Islamists’ ongoing attacks on Christians and the increased potency of other militants’ violence meant that the outlook for the Church was increasingly uncertain. By summer 2017, the toll of death and destruction carried out by Islamist groups against Christians was becoming fully apparent. In March 2017, an Aid to the Church in Need delegation flew into Maiduguri, capital of the worst-affected state, Borno. ACN were told that 1.8 million people in the state had been displaced as a result of the Boko Haram conflict. They also learned that 5,000 women were now widows and 15,000 children had become orphans. There was damage to 200 churches and chapels, 35 presbyteries and parish centres. In total, 26 million people in the region had been affected by Boko Haram<sup>64</sup>

In most parts of the northern states, the situation has continued to create refugee crises. For instance, by February 2020, the governor of Bauchi in the north-eastern part raised alarm that due to insecurity, the state is currently accommodating people escaping from various crises zones so much so that the population in the state has risen from 4.6 million to 7.5 million, while at the same time coping with more than 1.3 million out-of-school children<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 21/02/17, <http://www.csw.org.uk/2017/02/21/news/3462/article.htm>; John Newton, Nigeria: The Church under Attack, (Aid to the Church in Need (UK), May 2017), [http://acnuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/322671-ACN-1705-Nigeria-Report\\_v5-FINAL.pdf](http://acnuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/322671-ACN-1705-Nigeria-Report_v5-FINAL.pdf); ACN (UK) News, 27/04/17 <http://acnuk.org/news/nigeria-is-the-government-complicit-in-the-supply-of-arms-to-islamists>.

19 Global Christians News, 07/05/17, <https://www.globalchristiannews.org/article/boko-haram-released-82-chibok-school-girls-in-a-prisoner-swap/>.

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.nairaland.com/5703523/yakubu-gowon-leads-leads-prayer-rally>.

## **Redefining and Reinterpreting the Church Suffering**

The situation in Nigeria presently is such that some Christians are asking if the situation does not really reflect the case of the church suffering than the Church militant. In the view of the Christians (with particular reference to Catholic Christs), the argument is that perhaps, the persecution of the Church in Nigeria is as a way of reparation for the sins of the people and their purification and preparation of the heavenly glory. For most Nigerians, the Church Penitent/Church Suffering or the Church Expectant, which in the theology of certain churches especially that of the Catholic Church, consists of those Christians currently in Purgatory is presently Nigeria and the state of the church. To modernist scholars, this situation best describe the Nigerian state and its inability to redeem her people from constant hardship, terrorism and hopelessness in the face of tyranny. Noble Laurent Wole Soyinka (1993), had giving his view of Nigeria under the purgatory system thus;

A Nation of some 90 million people is being wound round the finger of a Master Player whose mental state is seriously in question. His cohorts insist that the nation is on the path to democracy, but surely the signpost reads to all but the purblind: Transition to Hell. Purgatory is our present interminable manoeuvring between the U-Turns, Diversions and Cul-de-sacs in a lunatic maze subjected to the daily improvisations of a - surely by now - recognisably irrational designer who is firmly locked onto a monomaniac goal: survival in power<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, Michael Chiedoziem Chukwudera a young Nigerian creative, in his work Purgatory An Igby Prize essay on being young in Nigeria, noted thus:

...While being young in Nigeria is not the end of the world and has its pros, it is definitely not as good as it should be. It is not impossible to have your dreams come true as a young Nigerian living in Nigeria, but the yardstick is hardly based on merit, and so sincere hard work is not enough. There is always a lot of things wrong with a system where hard work and excellence is ditched in favour of average people who have higher hands... *Being young in Nigeria is mostly like purgatory — you realize after graduating from school, that there is in fact, long years of another phase of brutal struggle and relearning.* The optimism inherent in the Nigerian people keeps a lot of us going, hopefully. But this same optimism has kept us more laid back and tolerant than we ought to

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<sup>59</sup> Soyinka Wole, "Nigeria's state of purgatory verdict," <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/nigerias-state-of-purgatory-wole-soyinka-winner-of-the-nobel-prize-for-literature-condemns-the-1494572.html>. Tuesday 29 June 1993 (accessed 22/05/2019).

be and that is neither too good. Being young in Nigeria can and should be better than what it is<sup>67</sup>.

Also, Emmanuel Ufuophu-Biri, public analyst and commentator has described the situation as worse than purgatory, in fact he described the situation in Nigeria as HELL<sup>68</sup>. According to the source:

...The nation has witnessed more darkness as a result of the ineptness of the public electricity company. Unemployment has been on the increase; terrorism has crept in to stay; crimes such as arm robbery, human ritual killings, kidnapping, human trafficking, political violence, public infrastructure vandalism, secret cult terrorism, examination malpractices, rape, corruption among public office holders and politically motivated crimes, among many others, have increased geometrically. The image of Nigeria has nose-dived thus making us a laughing stock in the international arena. The Naira that was once a global prestige has, today, almost become a national disgrace, making it one of the least rated currencies in the world. So, the last 20 years has been good for a few Nigerians, but has been a hell for most Nigerians<sup>69</sup>.

## Conclusion

Generally, the paper has been able to examine the activities of the fundamentalist on the growth and expansion of the Church in Nigeria especially the northern part of the country. This situation has made life unbearable for the Christian adherents in that part of the country so much that the general believe is that in line with the teaching of the Church the people and Church may be undergoing some form of purification especially when seen in the light of the fact that Purgatory has been described as not a kind of temporary hell, but the threshold, the antechamber of heaven. This is because in purgatory, all those — whether Christian or not — who have reached the gates of death without reaching the full perfection of life represented in Christ are cleansed in a kind of ongoing baptism and are purified by the enlightening fire. In the thinking of the authors, the situation is replicated in the Nigerian situation.

It is in line with the above, that the Church in Nigeria have requested the faithful to wear black outfits on Ash Wednesday which heralds the 40 days

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<sup>60</sup> <https://kalaharireview.com/purgatory-eab361c9a9e1>.

<sup>61</sup> Ebenezer Adurokiya, "20 years of civil rule has been hell for Nigerians," <https://tribuneonlineng.com/20-years-of-civil-rule-has-been-hell-for-nigerians-ufuophu-biri> *tribuneonlineng.com*, Jan 2, 2020.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Lenten season in protest to the consistent insecurity challenges in the country. The directive was communicated in a statement by Catholics Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) respectively, reads:

As a mark of mourning all our brothers and sisters who have been victims of the most recent wave of violence against Christians, we are all dressed in black today and offer our prayers and penance for their repose. We invite the universal church and all Christians to join us in prayers for our dead brothers and sisters and for peace and security in Nigeria...We equally appeal to the international community to come to the aid of the Nigerian Government in the fight against terrorists, who want to destabilise our country. The repeated barbaric executions of Christians by Boko Haram insurgents and incessant cases of kidnapping for ransom linked to the same group and other terrorists have traumatised many citizens.<sup>70</sup>

While the aforesaid directive hinge on expressing the Church's dissatisfaction over the spate of insecurity in the country, it arguably doubles as a clarion call for the "Church Militants"- (lay faithful on earth; striving towards perfection) to rise and fight for their rights in the face of the government's seeming cluelessness at addressing the menace of insecurity. It is in line with this that the paper submit that the government should as a matter of urgency put in place structures that will really strengthen the provision of the Nigerian Constitution which seemingly prohibits the government from adopting a particular religion as well as protect the fundamental human rights of Nigerians (Module II) which recognizes the rights of the citizens to religion and by extension association<sup>71</sup>. This is the only way, the unity of the country can be sustained.

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<sup>70</sup> Ezeamalu Ben, "Insecurity: Nigerian Catholics to wear black on Ash Wednesday, Premium Times, Abuja," <https://www.premiumtimesng.com>. 24 Feb. 2020.

<sup>71</sup> The 1999 Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria, Federal Government Press.

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[http://acnuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/322671-ACN-1705-Nigeria-Report\\_v5-FINAL.pdf](http://acnuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/322671-ACN-1705-Nigeria-Report_v5-FINAL.pdf).
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