Religion: A Tool for Conflict Resolution and Peace in Nigerian Society

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Abstract : Conflicts have always been part of human societies. So long as there is interaction amongst individuals or societies, there are bound to be conflicts as a result of the fact that interests among individuals and societies vary. The issue of conflict has become one of the regular headlines in the daily news of the Nigerian and global media today. Nigerian polity has suffered from one conflict or another, ranging from religious, civil, political, cultural, regional and ethnic violence. It has been found out that, the most disturbing part of these acts of conflicts in Nigeria and around the globe is that most of them have traced their roots to religion. Even some perpetrators of these acts of conflicts most of the time justify their actions with religion, thereby wrongly making religion an object of conflict and violence. In this regard, the study seeks to project religion as a potent tool for conflict resolution because it has a way of permeating through the hearts of men. It has a special responsibility of identifying conflicts and proffer solutions. It also has to provide theological reasoning as to why and how these conflicts come about and how they can possibly be solved. Religious actors are known to contribute to the processes of structural reform necessary for the restoration of productive social relations and political stability after a period of conflict and human rights abuses. The study examines the modalities for projecting religious conflict management strategies in Nigeria using an analysis of relevant documents as well as Black's Social Control Theory and Thomas-Kilmann's Model of Conflict Management as its theoretical frameworks. It recommends for a religiously-based means of conflict resolution in Nigeria. Religious individuals and faith-based organisations, as carriers of religious ideas are implore to play active roles in conflict resolution and peace-building in Nigeria by creating conducive environment for peaceful talks, mediation and reconciliation. This will enhance social cohesion, provides solid foundation for peace, progress and development in the society.
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