

## **Assessment of the Roles of The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Ensuring Peaceful Coexistence in Ibadan South West**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined the role of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in ensuring Peaceful Coexistence in Ibadan South West. The study used quantitative method. Restorative justice and Social learning theories were adopted. The study exposed that; the Church has a substantial connection in fostering peace building in conflicting regions. The methodologies employed by the Church have significant relationship in ensuring peace and harmony in the Nigerian community. Christian leaders and organizations have characteristics that are considered credible and trustworthy by the local populace to their institute roles in their different societies and as such should be used in conflict situations and peace building. Nigerians should be enlightened to view themselves as one no matter their religious disparities. The study further recommended that; Church leaders should approach politicians and instruct them the significance of good governance and challenge them; church leaders should preach and promote ethno-religious tolerance and to accommodate opposing views as part of deepening peaceful co-existence and harmony in the country; Church leaders should observe Christian politicians in order to sponsor bills of peaceful co-existence; inter-faith training of the youths should be encouraged by the Church leaders so as to instruct them about the faith of others; Church leaders should make sure they safeguard religious freedom of the populace; there is need to uphold a human rights based methodology to the safeguard of religious freedom in Nigeria; the Church should reinforce their efforts as facilitator of dialogues and mediators of conflicts between conflicting bodies; the Church should establish their advocacy by orientating and sensitizing the public about their rights and the rights of others particularly on peaceful co-existence, civic and religious rights, among others.

**Keywords:** Peacebuilding, Technologies, Christians, Faith, Science, the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

### **Introduction**

The nation Nigeria is a nation that comprises of over two hundred and fifty diverse ethnic groups. The nation is profusely blessed in different cultures and natural resources, (Ugwu, *et.al.*, 2024). The most practiced religions in Nigeria are Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion. Owing to dissimilarities in religious beliefs and tribes, there are numerous occurrences of conflicts, occasioning in damage of lives and properties, (Otubah, 2024). Conflicts are documented along the line of religions and tribes. According to Sunday

*et. al.* (2024), the numerous factors that underscore hostilities are politics, ethnicity and religion. The conflicts have been found out to be so prominent that the peace and unity of the nation is under attack. A number of these attacks can be credited to land disputes, trade disputes, militancy, political crisis, and religious crisis among others. It has turn out to be very perplexing for a individual of a tribe to live in another dissimilar tribe or religion in Nigeria without the fear of being attacked. This is probably the reason Adesomoju, (2024) labelled Nigeria a "security risk nation" to which many global societies have given caution to their populaces not to live or even come to Nigeria.

Moreover, Nigeria as a nation has been undergoing numerous conflicts, social vices, and lack of cordial affiliation among her populaces since independence, (Adeniji, 2021).

In a good number of states in Nigeria, one will always hear numerous accounts of violent conflict encompassing persons or tribes. For instance, Odi Massacre in Bayelsa state, Urhobo - Iteskiri crisis in Warri, Jimeta clash in Jos, the Baddo crisis in Ikorodu, (Egwu, 2018), Boko haram conflict in the northern states, among others. In all these clashes, several persons are displaced, properties are destroyed and lives are lost, (Adepegba, 2021). According to Obuseh (2016) affirmed that, Nigeria cannot live in harmony because "of self-centeredness". Substantiating the opinion of Obuseh (2016), Akinkuotu, (2023) affirmed that, religion is as a menace to Nigeria's peaceful co-existence. According to him, it is easy for a Yoruba to marry an Efik than for a Muslim to marry a Christian and vice versa. This as well displays religious bigotry as a threat to harmony.

The role of the church in peacebuilding and unity is reinforced by the fact that the social and political conflicts in the society questions fundamentally the message of the gospel. Peace is the serenity that flows from right order, (Church-Hill & Michael 2023). When we put right order into the structures of our society, the tranquility that results is peace, (Adepegba, 2021). On the other hand, a number of persons see peace as the absence of violence or war. In peacemaking efforts by the Church, peace is seen transformation of as the contextual and interactions into more co-destructive operational and constructive living, (Adeniji, 2021).

The above brings us to the role that church can play in guaranteeing peace and harmony in the Nigerian community. A number of researchers are of the view that, Christianity cannot play any part towards peacemaking because religion itself is debatably one of the single most major causes of war and chaos in human era. So much wickedness have been done in the name of religion, (Hanachor *et al.* 2021). Nevertheless, so much good has as well been done in the name of religion.

One of the ways through which the Church has aided in safeguarding peace and harmony in Nigeria is by appealing to the conscience of individuals through moral teachings, (Amnesty International, 2020). Conscience is a judge or guide. According to Agbogurin (2018), it is observed as, the science of moral behavior. The Church in the course of her charitable endeavors has brought relief to the depressed by refining their standards of living. In many instances, the Church has been in the frontline against injustice and crises.

Using Nigeria as a case study, the Church's peace and humanitarian endeavors has been validated as follows: Ever since the start of Nigeria civil war which lasted from 1967 to 1970, apart from public declaration in condemnation of the civil war, the church have made a number of attempts to bring assistance to the Biafran people. The Church embarked upon crusades making numerous trips abroad to appeal to international humanitarian agencies to come to the rescue of the Biafran's.

However, food, clothing and drugs were donated in large quantity by such humanitarian bodies as UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO, WCC and the Red Cross Society. Long before the outbreak of the war, Christian leaders campaigned enthusiastically to stop the war hostilities. (Amnesty International, 2020).

Based on the above background, it can be seen that Nigeria is a very fertile soil for religion the Church has done a lot to bring about peace and harmony of the various tribes and religious groups.

### **Research Statement**

The powers of religious players originate from their moral legitimacy, a belief that peace-building is a vital manifestation of their faith and their affiliations with key constituencies, (Adepegba, 2021). These components provide religious players with huge prospective as conflict managers and when translated into practical action can and do provide solutions to conflict, (Adepegba, 2021). Conversely, there are numerous problems in the actual role religious organizations play in ensuring peace building.

The Boko Haram crises in Northern part of Nigeria where the efforts of the religious organizations have not actually been successful, in spite of their huge influences and continuous participation in the national political procedures, (Akinkuotu, 2023). Notwithstanding the Church having a mission of peace and being principal, conflicts, particularly ethnic clashes have continued to rise in several parts of the nation.

This is a sign that perhaps there is a weakness in the approach the Church has being adopting in peacebuilding, (Akinkuotu, 2023).

Various efforts have been made to bring peace and harmony in the nation; nevertheless, those efforts have been based on the frameworks of political leadership. The weakness of these efforts to accomplish peacebuilding within cultures displays the need for use of other ways such as the Church. This is due to the possibility for the Church to instill the message of peace-building to the civilization such as Nigeria where there has been renaissance of ethnic conflicts.

On the other hand, little or no research has been carried out on the role of church in ensuring peace and harmony in societies, which is an this study will fill by examining the role of the roles of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in ensuring Peaceful Coexistence in Ibadan

South West. Based on these research gaps, this paper will assess the roles of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Ensuring Peaceful Coexistence in Ibadan South West.

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to assess the roles of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in ensuring Peaceful Coexistence in Ibadan South West.. However, the specific objectives are to:

1. evaluate the actual role the church has played in ensuring peace building in conflicting areas;
2. determine the effectiveness of the church in bringing peace and harmony in the society; and
3. find out the effective strategies that the church could adopt in ensuring peace and harmony in the Nigerian society.

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **The Church**

Today, contrary to what the Scriptures says, many persons see the Church as a building. However, the translation of the Greek word *Ekklesia*, which denotes “a gathering” or “called out ones,” is “Church.”

The Church is not the physical structure but its membership that gives a Church its basic purpose. Ironically, that when you ask most persons what Church they attend, they will naturally retort a building. In Romans 16:5, Paul says, “Greet the Church that is in their house.” (Otubah, 2024).

In its place of stating to the actual Church structure, Paul terms the assembly of disciples in their household as the Church. In Ephesians 1:22-23, Paul states, “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way,” since the Church is the Body of Christ, of which He is the head.

Since the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) until Christ’s second coming, those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and personal Savior institute the Church.

According to Akinkuotu, (2023), the term “Church” can denote a diversity of subjects, comprising the literal sense itemized below. The term “Ekklesia” literally means “calledout,” nevertheless it is vague how much of this meaning is used in regular discourse. It was a radical term employed to term an assembly of persons who had been “called-out” for a specific objective. The gospel “calls” persons to follow Christ, according to the New Testament (2 Thess. 2:13-14). We can conclude from this that an Ekklesia is a collection or gathering of persons before assessing its association to the Church of Christ.

As a consequence, any mention to a “Church” must be assumed to denote to people rather than a

definite place, building, house of worship, or small countryside chapel. (Note: This is not a scriptural use of the word “Church,” but rather an English one) (Dami, 2021). Several Believers Churches subsist today, comprising the Universal Reformed Church of Christ (NKST), the Roman Catholic Church, and others.

### **Peaceful coexistence**

At this point, it is significant to first elucidate what peace really means in order to accurately comprehend the notion of peaceful coexistence.

When everything coincides in perfect unity and freedom and there is no dispute or conflict, there

is peace. This consequently offers peace to be a pressure-free condition of tranquility and security. It is a condition of social accord and friendliness, and the absence of violence or hostility. In a community setting, the word “peace” is generally used to designate the absence of clashes, conflict, murder, kidnapping, and other misconducts. According to Saleh, (2020), “peace is described by coherence, harmony, and quietness that sponsor tranquility or peace of mind.”

Consequently, peaceful coexistence is an setting where individuals live peaceably as opposed to an unendingly aggressive situation.

Wule, (2020), defines peace as “a practice that comprises activities that are associated, either indirectly or directly, to endorsing development and reducing hostilities, inside a specific societies and in the greater international society. In the account of the Heinrich Boell Foundation, peace is defined as “the absence of all forms of fear, self-worth, identity security, a sense of belonging, and the ability to explore, exercise, and obtain one’s right to freedom and self-determination.” Akinkuotu, (2023), affirmed that; “peace is a general word in the family, Christian, non-Christian societies and civilizations.” Harmonious affiliations, liberty from conflict, lack of pressure and concern in the mind are all instances of peace. Another way to think of peace is as a condition of cease-fire between conflicting peoples. To live well and be at peace means to be peaceful, intact, and free from warfare or trouble. In the words of Aneke, (2021), “peacebuilding is a deliberate procedure targeted at sponsoring peaceable cohabitation among individuals.”

In the gospels, peace is stated in respect of Jesus’ Birth. For example, Luke 2:14, chronicled that, “the angels at Jesus’ birth announced peace to people God loved.”

Throughout Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the crowds of followers gladly shout out the message of peace (Luke 19:37–38). This paper consequently, sees the capacity of people to live together in harmony without conflict, struggle nor persecution as the real meaning of peaceful coexistence.

## Religion and peaceful co-existence in the Nigerian Society

Peace and peace-making is essential for any nation that desires growth at all levels. Peace is the total sum of all that man may desire. As such, it is a condition that is required for social, political as well as economic development and natural integration.

In this context, peace is a state of harmony characterized by lack of violent conflict and the freedom from fear of violence. Therefore, peace suggests the existence of healthy or newly healed interpersonal or inter-natural relationships, prosperity in terms of social or economic welfare. The English word "peace" evolved from the Latin word "pax" meaning "freedom from civil disorder." The Hebrew designates "shalom" meaning peace as 'not just the absence of conflict', but the presence and abundance of righteousness, wholeness, justice, liberation and salvation. In summary, it denotes things as they should be and shall be in divine purpose for humanity (*Church-Hill & Michael 2023*).

It is disheartening to say the least that regardless of the facts that the main religions in Nigeria preach peace, what we see over the years from Muslims and Christians in Nigeria is far from peaceful coexistence. Owing to the daily occurrence of crises and conflicts in every nook and cranny of the nation makes one to feel that the word "peace" is a mirage. No doubt, all human beings want peace and mutual co-existence in their respective communities/societies but the means and steps to attaining it continues to be the problem. One may also say that religion and peace are two difficult entities, yet religion is inseparable from peace because peace is believed to be the product and fruit of religion.

The basic question at this point, however are why is there no religious peace and harmony in Nigeria? What can and must be done to engender unity, without which there cannot be peaceful co-existence and national development? We must start by examining the constitutional provisions for religious peace, harmony and co-existence. The Constitution stipulates that the country shall be a secular state. It shall not adopt any official religion. This means that religion should be a personal and private affair. Unfortunately, many Muslims and Christians in positions of leadership have consistently violated that constitutional stipulation by using religion as instrument to manipulate innocent citizens for their selfish interests resulting in social upheavals.

Similarly, Christians and Muslims should live together peacefully. This is to engage intentionally and purposefully with people and groups whose religious practices are fundamentally different from one's own (*Church-Hill & Michael 2023*). In the view of *Adesomoju (2024)*, the benefit of this is not only that it minimizes the livelihood of religious conflicts and violence that have been so much a part of human history but such reflective engagement also allows us to focus on the showed concerns for basic human dignity found in the teachings of many of the world's religions. What is crucial to note is that both Islam and Christianity preach emphasis various convictions to the extent that a lot of their adherents seem not to know the core teachings of their respective religions, one of which contains on love and peace. What is lacking is that Nigeria needs religious adherents to practice what their religions teach. According to *Adesomoju (2024)*, there is the cultural instrument among

the Yoruba people of western Nigeria which discourages conflict among her various communities. In the extent of war, it is customary for a belligerent community to challenge another community to a fight. This they do by sending an emissary with red cloth and / or war weapons to such a community. If the community that is being challenged desires peace, it would in turn send a white cloth back to indicate that it is not ready to fight. This, therefore, calls for offering an olive branch in order to pacify the bellicose community. Once the peace overtone is embraced, peace will prevail among the two warring communities. A peace-making and building process inherent in Yoruba culture equally revolves around several traditional adages and wise sayings. These include but not limited to the following: a. Aja ma tan ko si, literally means "Nobody fights till eternity." b. Ahon ati enu nja, won si npari ija, meaning "both the tongue and the mouth do fight/quarrel and they eventually settle the quarrel." c. Ija o dola, oruko nii so'ni, meaning "conflict does not bring wealth. Rather, it stigmatizes one." d. Ma roro, agba to roro kii ko eniyan jo, meaning "do not be wicked, an elder that is wicked will have no followers." e. Alajobi kosi mo, alajogbe loku, meaning "good neighbourliness is as desirable as family membership."

The above wise-sayings form the pillar of peace, harmony and peaceful co-existence in the Yoruba community. Although the adages unwritten, yet, they have become part and parcel of the peoples culture and a veritable templates for character formation for the purpose of peace and peace-making in the society.

### **The Role of Christian missions in Nigeria**

The prosperous enlargement of the Christian missions in Nigeria began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the deeds of freed slaves from Sierra Leone, (Musa, 2022). Missionaries' endeavors carried with it the building of schools, churches, roads, hospitals and of course other institutions of government. It should be borne in mind that social transformations came with Christianity-commitment to national, moral and political development. Christianity presented highly in the sequence of events that led to the improvement of Nigerian nation, and were able to bring about definite political, economic and technological changes in the region, (Musa, 2022). Their endeavors aided to breakdown ethnic chauvinisms and to bring their in allegiance that surpasses converts ethnicities.

Therefore, patriotic Nigerians came to believe that by Christianity they were paving the way for the formation of the Nigerian nation, (Musa, 2022). The Nigeria state of their dream was one in which Christianity would flourish inter-ethnic wars would come to practicing an end, and the industrial, technological and intellectual revolutions which had Occurred in Europe would repeat themselves in Nigeria. By encouraging a general consciousness, Christianity would reduce to a minimum all other sectional loyalties such as the many incipient tribal/crisis groups that divided Nigeria, (Musa, 2022).

Before peace can be said to exist in a nation, the people must be free from all forms of conflicts like political, economic, social, or religion, (Saleh, 2020). Saleh, (2020), affirmed that, religion inculcate every facet of Nigerian life, from major greetings (we thank God) to name of businesses such as God's Grace Venture, God is Good Motors, etc. Moreso,

engaging it in conflict sceneries can provide unique opportunities to intervene in ongoing clashes or to decrease the danger that violence will erupt. Christian teachings can provide norms, standards, and motivations that support non-violent methodologies to raising and facing dissimilarities. It can also provide compassion and compassion that can sustain reconciliation and challenge solving across divisions, (Gaiya, 2017).

### **Factors Militating Against Peaceful Coexistence in Nigeria**

Numerous factors have been recognized as limitations to Peaceful cohabitation in Nigeria. Noteworthy among these them are; Clashes, starvation, disease, poverty, and death.

### **The role of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in ensuring Peaceful Coexistence in Ibadan South west**

The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) contributes to peaceful coexistence in Ibadan by promoting moral values and social integration, addressing socioeconomic issues, facilitating conflict resolution through its spiritual and community platforms, and engaging in interfaith dialogue to foster mutual understanding, although a specific assessment for the Ibadan South West area requires localized studies to fully capture the extent of its impact and identify key challenges.

### **How RCCG Promotes Peaceful Coexistence**

**Moral and Spiritual Guidance:** The church provides moral education and spiritual teachings that emphasize love, compassion, and integrity, which are essential for peaceful interactions within the community.

**Community Building and Social Integration:** RCCG chapters often serve as platforms for community gathering, fostering a sense of belonging and encouraging members from diverse backgrounds to live together harmoniously.

**Socio-Economic Support:** By addressing issues like poverty, unemployment, and drug addiction through initiatives like job training and rehabilitation programs, the church helps reduce social vices and improve overall community well-being.

**Conflict Mediation and Resolution:** Religious leaders, including those in the RCCG, can play a crucial role in mediating disputes and reconciling conflicting groups, bringing people together to resolve issues peacefully.

**Promoting Interfaith Harmony:** By fostering positive relationships with other religious groups, the RCCG can contribute to interfaith dialogue and cooperation, which is vital for a peaceful multi-religious society.

### **Methodology of the Study**

The study engaged descriptive design. Therefore, it is investigative in nature based on extensive appraisal of pertinent literatures completed earlier and comparative pictures of the various aspects of Church and peace building in the contemporary world have been debated to arrive at concluding remarks. The study forms mostly the extensive appraisal of connected

studies based on highly work. Consequently, is a qualitative or opinion paper with secondary data collected from internet, journals, proceedings, etc..

Furthermore the issue under discussion is a global menace which cuts across all the countries of the world, although, there have been little or few studies on the subject matter across the globe, this shall be referred to in discussing the topic at hand.

### **Theoretical Framework**

There are many theoretical frameworks related to our topic such as societal ecological model, the Intersectionality this framework recognizes that individuals may experience oppression and violence based on multiple intersecting identities, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Trauma-informed care, this framework emphasizes the importance of understanding and responding to the effects of trauma on individuals who have experienced violence. Restorative justice: This framework emphasizes the importance of repairing harm and restoring relationships in the aftermath of violence.

**Restorative justice:** This framework emphasizes the importance of repairing harm and restoring relationships in the aftermath of violence. Social learning theory: This theory proposes that individuals learn behavior through observation, modeling, and reinforcement. It suggests that violence may be learned through exposure to violent behavior and that interventions should focus on providing positive role models and reinforcing nonviolent behavior. (Adeshima I. Omotoyo, Obabor G. Nelson, 2022).

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### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The paper has assessed the role of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in ensuring Peaceful Coexistence in Ibadan South West. With reference to the study, it was evidently figured out how the Church influence both have positively and negatively. Through the aid of a few conclusions have been drawn that the Church offer a platform to connect with new people, share experiences and gain exposure.

It has been revealed that the Church is the only hope for Nigeria to be in a stable condition of peace and harmony. However, the Nigerian Churches had suffered greatly from victimization. Thousands of Christians have died, churches destroyed through bombs, and priests have either been slain, kidnapped or held hostage.

Furthermore, there is a demonstrable evidence based on the available literature to this paper that with the aid of mission support, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Region 21, Ibadan Nigeria adequately contribute to fostering of peace building programmes and initiatives for sustainable development in the society. Their efforts to making building in any

society cannot be over-emphasized. This is because of their commitment to preaching peace among their adherence, providing humanitarian supports to victims, mediating between parties in conflicts and possibly providing early warning signals about conflicts to the state. Therefore, the paper in conclusion perceives the contributions as very vital tool that can adequately assist the state in peacebuilding process..

### **Recommendations**

With this exposé in mind, it is necessary to recommend that:

1. The Church should aid in sustaining peace and harmony in Nigeria is by appealing to the conscience of devotees through moral teachings from the Bible.
2. The Church should also show more zeal and commitment to peace building process through strong psychological and materials supports to victims. This will enable the people feel a sense of care, relief and belonging to the society.
3. The Church should keep track of making peace between individuals. This will enable them to provide early warning signals of the deterioration of peace among the people.
4. Government should synergize with Churches in areas of funding seminars in order to encourage peaceful co-existence among the people.

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