

## **Chapter 16**

### **Issues and Challenges of Deploying Biblical Principles in Conflict Resolution in Nigeria**

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#### **Introduction**

Conflict is as old as humanity, right from the time of creation when Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden; and which led to their expulsion from the Garden (Gen. 3:1-23). Conflict manifests itself in human lives, homes, organizations, communities and nations of the world. The current level of injustice, poverty-ridden policies in the Nigerian society is becoming overwhelming and unbearable as individuals, families, organizations and even churches are plagued with all kinds of conflicts.

Several scholars such as Ezerim (2010), Nwankwo (2010), Dzurgba (2010) and among others have written and proffered various solutions to conflict resolution. For example, Ezerim sees democracy as a conflict management strategy. According to him, democracy engenders peace and helps in the management of conflicts in human societies, and thus is adequate for Nigeria and other African states (2010:42). While the above suggestion is good for an idea situation, democracy has not really helped the masses in Nigeria. In spite of the twenty-five years of unbroken democracy in the nation, life is still difficult for the masses as a result of various conflicts at every level of government- Federal, States and Local Governments.

Nwankwo argues for credibility in crisis management and conflict resolution. According to him:

Credibility provides psychological or physical condition for the conflicting parties to diminish tension, and for successful intervention. It provides the environment in which the causes of conflict can be addressed and peace can be envisioned, negotiated and achieved. It engenders confidence and commitment of parties to a peace process, enabling societies to progressively resolve conflict successfully without violence as well as manage crisis officially when it occur in such a way as to achieve reconciliation. It is only in the atmosphere of credibility that broken human relationships can be mended, their victims of crisis can be empowered to work for the healing of their trauma; that the awareness of perpetrators to take responsibility for their action can be increased; and communication between or among the parties

that will restore both their humanity and relationship can be facilitated (2010:400-1).

Dzurgba in his case advocates for a multidimensional approach of resolving conflict. These include; persuasion, dialogue, negotiation and agreement among others (2010:18-9).

Incidentally, none of the above scholars has approached the solution from the biblical point of view. Therefore, this paper examines conflict resolution from the biblical perspective with a view of recommending biblical solution to various conflicts in the nation, particularly, religious conflict. A historical method is used to examine Genesis 13:1-12 and Acts 6:1-7. The two texts are analysed and relevant principles are drawn.

### **Conceptual Clarification of related Words**

#### **Conflict:**

The definition of conflict is not easy to come by as different scholars have defined the word from different perspectives; *The Longman Contemporary English Dictionary* has the following definitions:

- a state of disagreement or argument between people, groups, countries, etc;
- a situation in which you have to choose between two or more opposite needs or influences;
- fighting or war;
- a situation in which you have two opposite feelings about something;
- a situation in which you cannot do your job fairly because you will be affected by the decision you make; or a situation in which different people want different things (p. 281).

Dzurgba, looking at conflict from a sociological perspective defines it “as a social problem in which two or more persons, families, districts, communities, states or nations are at war with each other” (Dzurgba, 2010, vii). Adeniyi (2016:4) defines conflict as “any condition or state of struggle, opposition, incompatibility, interference, divergence of interest, tension, division, in difference among human beings in their process of interaction among themselves.” Nwankwo (2010:395) sees conflict as “any condition of disharmony which could be in individuals, in groups, between individuals or/an group. According to Motty (2016:5 – 6), he sees “conflict as normal in human relationships; it is not necessarily destructive depending on how we handle it. Conflict is inevitable in human interaction. It comes with different experiences, expectations and interests.” Samu defines conflict “as a state of being at odds with another person over what you think, want

or do” (2017:93). He explains further that conflict can be a small disagreement or a major dispute; and it leads to hurt feelings or damaged property (2017:93).

From the above definitions, conflict in this paper is understood as a clash or disagreement that occurs in individual’s lives, families, groups and communities. The focus of this paper is the clash of interest as exemplified in the stories of Abram and Lot on the one hand, and the Grecian Jews and the Aramaic speaking Jews on the other hand.

### **Resolution:**

Resolution is the noun form of the verb ‘to resolve’ which according to the *Longman Contemporary English Dictionary* means:

- a) to find a satisfactory way of dealing with a problem or difficulty;
- b) to make a definite decision to do something;
- c) to make a formal decision, especially by voting; and
- d) to separate something into its different parts (p.1207). It is assumed from the above meanings that problem or conflict abounds in human society. Therefore, for peace to reign, deliberate and conscious efforts must be made to find a satisfactory way of dealing with issues. This understanding of resolution is in line with Dzurgba’s definition. He says:

Resolution is an act of finding a satisfactory way of dealing with a problem or difficulty. It is an act of finding a satisfactory method or approach in solving a problem or difficulty. It is the settling of a problem ..., an act of finding a solution to a problem or a conflict (2010;128).

### **Principle:**

*The Longman Contemporary English* has different ways of using the word ‘principle.’ These include:

- moral rule – a moral rule or set of ideas which makes you behave in a particular way, or strong ideas about what is morally right or wrong, that you try to follow in all that you do.
- rules of a process – a rule which explains the way something such as a machine works or which explain a natural force in the universe.
- belief – a belief that is accepted as a reason for an action, way or thinking etc.
- man/woman of principle – someone who has strong ideas about what is morally right or wrong.

The biblical principles in this paper connote those principles that are rooted in the Bible; that are morally right, and which will bring about a lasting solution to the problem of conflict in families, homes, organizations, and nation among others.

**Peace:**

*The Longman Contemporary English Dictionary* has a few definitions for peace:

- a) a situation in which there is no war between countries or in a country;
- b) an agreement that ends a war;
- c) a feeling of calmness and lack of worry; and
- d) a situation in which there is no quarrelling between people who live or work together (p. 1041). The understanding of peace in the Holy Bible is appropriate here. The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom* and it means completeness, soundness, welfare and peace. Specifically, it has six different meanings:
  - 1) Completeness in number - Jer 13:19; Amos 1:6.
  - 2) Safety and soundness in body - Psa 38:4; Isa 38: 17; Job 5:24.
  - 3) Welfare, health and prosperity – Gen 43:27; Exod 18:7; Judges 18:15.
  - 4) Peace, quiet, tranquility and contentment – Isa 32:17; Psa 4:9.
  - 5) Peace, friendship - This can be done in terms of human relations (Jer 20:10, 38:22; Psa 41:10) or peace with God, especially in terms of covenant relations with Him (Isa 54:10; Num25:12; Ezek 34:25).
  - 6) Peace from war - Job 9:15; Job 25:2 and Lev 26:6) (Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979: 1022-3).

The equivalent of *shalom* in the New Testament is *eirene* which also has six different meanings:

- 1) A state of national tranquility: expectations from the rage and havoc of war – Rev 6:4, Acts 24:2-3.
- 2) Peace between individuals, that is, harmony and concord (Mat 10:34, Lk 12:51, Acts 7:26, Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 7:15, Gal 5:22, etc).
- 3) Security, safety, prosperity and peace (Lk 19:42; Heb 7:2) etc.
- 4) The peace of the Messiah (Lk 1:79, 2:14).
- 5) The peaceful state of the soul which is peculiar to the Christian (Rom 3:6; 2 Pet 3:2, etc).
- 6) The blessed state of the upright man after death (Rom 2:10) (Thayer, 1979:182)

Olarinde, (2010:302) examines peace from the traditional Yoruba culture by identifying few Yoruba words that explain the concept of peace. These are: *idera* (comfort), *itunu* (peace of mind), *itelorun* (contentment), *ifokanbale* (lack of worry or rest of mind) and *alaafia* (sound health or well-being).

From the various definitions and concepts on peace, it is clear that peace is more than just the absence of war or conflict. The starting point of a lasting peace begins with individuals whose hearts or minds are free of unnecessary anxiety. In other words, every community or state or nation is made up of individuals and if the hearts of such individuals are troubled, certainly it will have a negative effect on the whole community. In the same vein, if the individuals in a community or

nation have rest of mind, it will have a positive effect on the entire community. Conclusively, peace is a key component in any form of conflict resolution.

### **Types of Conflict in Nigeria**

There are different types of conflict in contemporary Nigerian society. Dzurgba identifies three of them namely religious, political and domestic conflicts (2010:13 – 26). Motty (2016:27 – 54) has a long list of the types of conflict. These include: interpersonal, intrapersonal, cross-cultural, administrative, ethnic, economic, political, social and religious conflicts. Adenyi (2016:33 – 37) classifies conflicts as personal, group, communal, state, national and international conflicts.

This paper dwells on religious conflict in Nigeria. Ordinarily, religion is expected to be a means of drawing humans closer to God Almighty and bringing about unity of mankind. Unfortunately, religion had led to all kinds of conflict in the nation over the years. Even though Christians are enjoined to be at peace with all men irrespective of their race, age, genders among others and to avoid all forms of conflict yet, it has been one conflict after another over the years. Perhaps, the main source of the conflict is centered on the understanding or misunderstanding of Nigeria as a secular state (Alamu 2024:163-4). Alamu further describes religion in Nigeria with emphasis on its advantages and disadvantages. He says:

In Nigeria, there are three main religious practiced viz: Indigenous Religion or African Religion, Islam and Christianity. Religion as a faith based process has impacted on the behavioural attitudes of everybody and governance which makes Nigeria a secular state. However, the paradox here is the fact that the ‘geography of religion is the geography of politics in Nigeria’ (Alamu, 2024:72).

In other words, while the adherents of Indigenous Religion spreads across the country, the adherents of Islam are mainly in the northern part of the country while the adherents of Christianity are in the southern part of the nation. Therefore, in an attempt propagate their religion, the adherents of both Islam and Christianity do experience conflict from time to time. Some of the cases of religious conflict include:

Jimeta Yola (Maitatsine riots) in 1984; Maitatsine riots in Gombe (1985); religious conflict in Ilorin (1986); Kafanchan (1987), Tafawa Balewa (1991, 1995,2001); Zangon-kataf (1992); Tiv-Jukun, Tiv-Kuteb (1992-1993); Kuteb-Chamba (1997-1998); Igbira-Bassa (1986-2000), Tiv and others in Nasarawa state (2001); Jos (1994,2001-2003, 2008); Ikulu-Bajju (2001); Mangu-Bokkos (1992-1995); Bukuru- Gyero (1997) and Iggah-Oyikwa (2002) (Gwamna 2010:28 & Ajamu, 2015: 71-4).

Another cause of religious conflict in Nigeria is intolerance which connotes the inability or incapacity to contain the divergent /contrary religious beliefs, conviction, practice and experiences (Gwamna, 2010:46). Speaking of intolerance, Gwamna quoted Alhaji Abdullahi Adamu, the former Executive Governor of Nasarawa state saying:

Events in our country since the return to civil rule in May 1999 show that the termites of ethnic and religious intolerance are beginning to eat into the wood works of our national unity and cohesion....That while the shadow of ethnic and religious intolerance lengthens, the shadow of understanding is growing shorter.... That intolerance is beginning to blind if indeed it has not blinded us to the beauties in the culture and religion of other people where today a minor difference between individuals in any part of the country is instantly given a religious or ethnic colouration particularly in the north (Gwamna 2010: 43-4).

Unfortunately, religious intolerance breeds other forms of religious excesses which includes; fanaticism and extremism.

### **Cases of Conflict in the Bible**

There are several cases of conflict in the Bible. In this paper, only two cases will be examined: one from the Old Testament and the other from the New Testament.

#### **A. Genesis 13:1-12**

The Hebrew title for the first book of the bible is *beri'sith* which is translated "in the beginning." The structure of Genesis is understood in the following ways: one, that can be understood thematically using the phrase "the beginning." In other words, Genesis is regarded as the book of beginnings: the beginning of creation; the beginning of human race; the beginning of sin; the beginning of divine judgement as melted on Adam, Cain and the then world that was wiped away with flood; the beginning of divine promises as made to Adam and Noah (Newell, 1983:33). Secondly, the structure of Genesis is understood with the Hebrew word *toledoth* which means accounts or genealogies. In fact, the English title for Genesis was derived from the Greek translation of *toledoth*. Thus, after the creation account, other major sections in Genesis begins with *toledoth* and these include: genealogies of the heavens and the earth (2:4-4:26); genealogies of Adam (5:1-6:8); genealogies of Noah (6:9-9:29); genealogies of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1-11:9); genealogies of Shem (11:10-26); genealogies of Terah (11:26-25:11); Ishmael (25:12-18); genealogies of Isaac (25:19-35:29); genealogies of Esau (36:1-8); Esau, father of the Edomites (36:9-37:1); and genealogies of Jacob (37:2-50:26) (Ross,1985:22).

Thirdly and finally, the book of Genesis is divided into two major parts namely Genesis 1:1– 11:22 (the primeval events) and Genesis 12:1 – 50:26 (the patriarchal narrative). The primeval events are made up of the creation account (Gen. 1:1-23), the probation and the fall of man (Gen. 2:4-3:24), man under sin and death (Gen. 4:1-6:8), the world under judgment (Gen. 6:9-8:4), renewal and reopening (Gen. 8:15-10:32), the dispersion at Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), and the succession from Shem (Gen. 11:10-32). The patriarchal narratives comprise of the accounts of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

Genesis 12:1-3 is a turning point in the book. God called Abram out of a pagan world and made wonderful promises of blessing to him: God promised to make him a great nation and that he would make his name great; God promised to bless those who bless him and curse whosoever curses him; and that in Abraham all the people on earth would be blessed. Abraham obeyed God as he left for the land that God promised him.

Genesis 13 is an important passage in the book; it marks the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham as stated in Genesis 12:1-3. At this time, the LORD had blessed Abraham greatly. Genesis 13:2 says "Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold." Also, Lot, who had been following Abram in the journey equally had flocks, herds and tent (Gen. 13:5). The indication of conflict came in Genesis 13:6 which says: "But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together." In other words, both Abraham and Lot had so much wealth and possessions that the land was too small for them. Ultimately, strife ensued between Abraham's men and Lot's men. Genesis 13:7 says:

And quarreling arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.

Abram's handling of the conflict at hand remains a model for individuals, families and organisations in the contemporary society. Genesis 13:8-9 says:

So, Abram said to Lot, "let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left.

It is clear from the above passage that Abram was indeed a man of peace who believed in dialogue. He was humble enough to approach Lot and gave him the option of choosing any part of the land. All that he (Abram) wanted was peace

between him and Lot as well as between their herdsmen. He said “we are brothers” meaning that there should be no conflict or strife. Corroborating the fact that Abram was a man of faith who was equally contented with whatever side that remain for him to take, Ross says:

One might have expected that Abram, the recipient of God’s promise, would have exercised his right and chosen first. But he magnanimously offered the first choice to Lot.

Lot made his choice and thereby parted with Abram in peace. Thus, what could have been a major conflict between Abram and Lot; and between their herdsmen was settled amicably.

#### B. Acts 6:1-7

The book of Acts stands out distinctly in the New Testament writings as the only historical sequel to the four Gospels. Also, the book forms a background and setting for most of Paul’s writings.(Toussaint, 2000:349). The message of the book of Acts is centred on missions and the spread of Christianity with Acts 1:8 as the key verse. It says: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The book of Acts is divided into three major parts namely, the witness in Jerusalem (Acts 1:1-6:7); the witness in all Judea and Samaria (Acts 6:8-9:31); and the witness to the ends of the earth (Acts 9:32-28:31). (Toussaint, 2000:352-3).

Acts 6:1-7 is the concluding section of witnessing of the gospel in Jerusalem. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the early Christians in acts 2:1-13 marks the beginning of great work of God in the Church. It was thereafter that Apostle Peter preached the gospel that brought about three thousand souls to the Church (Acts 2:41). The preaching and fellowship continued and Acts 2:47 says “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 5:14 testified to the tremendous and numerical growth which the early Church experienced. It says “Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.”

Acts 6:1-7 deals with internal problem or conflict that confronted the early Church and how the conflict was resolved. As the Church grew, two groups of Jews became apparent. One, the Grecian Jews or the Hellenists, that is, those that were born in lands other than Palestine and who spoke Greek. Secondly, there were the Hebraic Jews, that is, those who spoke the Aramaic and/or Hebrew language of Palestine and who preserved Jewish culture and custom. The main



problem was the complaint or murmuring of the Hellenistic Jews whose widows were neglected in the daily administration. These widows indeed had no one to take care of them and so it became the responsibility of the Church to do so (Acts 4:35; 11:28-29; I Timothy 5:3-16).

The twelve apostles were very sensitive to the plight of the people. They responded promptly and wisely, calling a meeting to encourage discussion and thereby develop a solution. The apostles recognized their priority in the ministry of the Word of God and prayer. In other words, they recognized their limitation as they would not be able to combine the ministry of serving the tables with preaching and prayer (Acts 6:2). They, therefore, charged the congregation to choose men that would serve in the new responsibility.

The apostle spelt out three qualifications to look for in selecting those that would serve the tables. They must be full of the Spirit; they must be full of wisdom; and they must be known for exercising their gifts of the Spirit and wisdom. The entire congregation selected seven trusted men and they were presented to the apostles who appointed and commissioned them to their office. This was done by prayer and laying of hands. The laying of hands was used in the Old Testament period to confer blessing (Gen. 48:13-20), to transfer guilt from sinner to sacrifice (Leviticus 1:4) and to commission a person for a new responsibility (Numbers 27:23). In the New Testament period, laying of hands was observed in healing (Acts 28:8 cf Mark 1:41) and blessing (Mark 10:16). The laying of hands on individuals as in this context was a gesture signifying commissioning and granting of authority (Acts 6:6; 8:17-19; 13:3; 19:6; I Timothy 4:14; 5:22; Hebrews 6:2). Therefore, these seven men were appointed for responsibilities as specified by the twelve apostles. They (the seven men) received the apostolic hands which formally associated them with the apostles.

The result of the exercise was good for the entire community of early Church. Acts 6:7 says:

So, the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith (cf. Acts 1:15; 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31).

Conclusively, while many conflicts are destructive and bring about disastrous results; conflicts at other times are constructive in nature and it leads to growth and developments. Acts 6:1-7 is an example of constructive conflict. As a result of the wise decision of the apostles and which was supported and approved by the entire community; there was much progress in the propagation of the gospel.

## Biblical Principles of Resolving Conflict

This paper recognizes the peculiarity of Nigeria as a pluralistic state whereby three different religions are recognized (African Religion, Islam and Christianity). This means that each of the three religions has tenets that allow people to live together and to settle whatever conflict that may arise. Therefore, adopting the biblical principles by Christians will go a long way to reduce tension that usually exists between them people of other faith. Hence, the following principles deduced from Gen 1-11 and Acts 6 1-7 are highlighted as follows:

**Sensitivity to the need/plight of others:** The first step to resolving conflict from the biblical perspective is the sensitivity to the plight of others. Abram was sensitive enough to recognize the danger associated with lack of good land for their flocks to live on. Obviously, livestock made up the greater part of their possessions and wealth, and the region around Bethel and Ai did not have enough water or pasture for such large flocks and herds. Thus, the available land for the growing community was too small for them. As crisis was brewing, Abram was quick to say to Lot “let’s not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers (Gen. 13:8). The Hebrews word used for brothers is *’ahim* which is the plural form of *’ah*. The word is used in two ways. One, it means a brother that is born of the same mother and father (Gen. 4:2, 8, 9, 10, 11; Gen. 27:6, 11; 44:20; 49:5 or half brother as in Gen. 20:5, 13, 16; 37:2-5 and 2 Sam. 13:4, 7-8). Two, the word is used in connected with a relative as in the case of Lot and Abram (Gen. 13:8; 14:12, 14, 16) Jacob and Laban (Gen. 29:12, 15). The word is also used of member of the same tribe (Num. 16:10; 18:2, 6; 2 Sam. 19:13) (Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979: 26).

Similarly, the Apostles in the early Church were very sensitive to the complaint of the Grecian Jews that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. They responded promptly; calling the congregation ‘brothers’ just as Abram called Lot ‘brother;’ and they asked them to choose seven men from among them who would do the job (Acts 6:1-3).

**Recognition of one’s limitation** is another principle for resolving conflict. Humans and especially leaders cannot do everything. Abram in Genesis 13 recognised that he could not stop the growth that was being experienced by him and Lot together with their men. This understanding helped him to seek for solution that will prevent a serious crisis in the community.

Similarly, the Apostles were concerned about the spiritual ministry in the community. In other words, their primary focus was the ministry of the Word and Prayer (Acts 6:2, 4) of which they probably would not like to be distracted. Thus, they promptly suggested that the congregation should choose seven men whose ministry would be serving tables as deacons. The Greek word *diakonia* simply

means service and it is used in different contexts in the New Testament. It is used in the service necessary for preparation of a meal (Lk. 10:40); the word is used of the service and office of the apostles (I Tim. 1:12; I Cor. 12:5 etc.); the word means aid, support and distribution of alms and charitable giving (Acts 6:1); and finally the word is used of the office of a deacon (Rom. 12:7) (Arndt & Gingrich, 1979:184).

**Peaceful Dialogue:** This was based on the concept of brotherhood in the two texts examined. Abram charged Lot that there should be no strife between the two of them and their men because they were brothers (Gen. 13:8). The Hebrew word *rib* is a masculine noun which means strife or dispute. The strife can be in words (Exod. 17:7; Deut. 1:12); public hostilities (2 Sam. 22:44); or controversy case of law (Exod. 23:2, 3, 6). The word is used in Genesis 13:7 for dispute arising from insufficient land for pasture (Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979: 936).

The apostles in their case did not ignore the complaint of the Grecian Jews. They promptly assemble the entire congregation, called them “brothers” and charged them to select seven men that would serve in the designated position. Writing on religious dialogue in Nigeria, Alamu, 2024:183 sees dialogue as a “communication, discussion, or encounter between two or more people of religious faith to engage in resolving sensitive religious matters of religious interest so as to forestall crisis and intolerance”. Incidentally, one apostle of peace who has been advocating for dialogue especially, between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria is Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama (see Kaigama, 2012:1-244).

**Humility:** Abram was an epitome of humility. Despite the fact that he was the one called and blessed by God; and through him Lot was blessed, yet he humbled himself so as to avoid conflict. Out of humility, he allowed Lot to choose first (Gen. 13:9). There was no evidence of complaint on his part even after Lot had chosen the best part of the land. Genesis 13:12 says: “Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain...”

Similarly, the apostles in the early did not take offence of the complaints of the Grecian Jews. They did not claim that they had apostolic authority to do whatever they like. They humbled themselves by calling for a meeting of the entire community. They got everyone involved in the process of selecting those that would be saddled with the responsibility of distributing the food.

**Godliness and Contentment:** I Timothy 6:6-7 says: “But godliness with contentment is a great gain. For we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing from it.” Abram demonstrated contentment as he permitted Lot to choose before him. He had faith in God that all would be well in whatever portion of land that remained. And indeed, God rewarded him greatly after Lot parted with him. Genesis 13:14-17 says:

The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.

Similarly, the apostles in Acts 6:1-7 demonstrated the attribute of contentment as they refused to combine the office of deacons with their own. They were not greedy.

**Tolerance and Understanding:** It is imperative that Nigerians understand the plurality of religions in the nation and so promote religious tolerance and understanding. Religious leaders must lead by example by weighing seriously their utterances and actions. For example, the messages of pastors and evangelists must be tailored towards their personal knowledge of Jesus Christ and his love for mankind. Hate speech must be avoided in all ramifications.

**Seeking for peace at all times:** Christians are enjoined to be men and women of peace in their homes, communities and wherever they find themselves. The bible admonishes Christians to seek peace and pursue it (Psa 34:14). They are to speak peace to the nation (Zech 9:10) by preaching the gospel of peace (Rom 10:15). Abraham was a man of peace even in the face of provocation of Lot and his men. The apostles also demonstrated that they were men of peace; they did not use their apostolic authority to overrule the views of Grecian Jews. Therefore, Christians must hold their peace always in terms of conflict (Rev 17:28). They must see themselves as the peacemakers (Matt 5:9) and follow peace with all men (Heb 12:14).

**The Fear of God:** The fear of the LORD is a major concept in the Bible. the Bible describes it as the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7). The fear of the LORD makes a person to hate evil and avoid all forms of conflicts (Prov. 8:13; 16:6). Indeed, Abram and the apostles had the fear of the LORD in their hearts. The fear of the LORD helped them to avoid conflicts that could have destroyed their relationship with God and members of the community.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has established the reality of conflict in human society. Also, the paper has dealt with issues relating to religious conflict in Nigeria. The paper examined and analysed two passages from the Bible: Genesis 13:1-12 and Acts 6:1-7, drawing out principles that Abram and Lot as well as the early Church adopted in resolving what could had been a serious conflict. The paper concluded that while

conflict is inevitable, it can be resolved. The paper recommended that biblical principles should be adopted in resolving religious conflict in particular and any other conflict in general.

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