



From Violence to Reconciliation: Theological Exploration of Scriptural Role in War, and Conflict Transformation in Nigeria

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Abstract

Africa has a long history of conflict and violence, with numerous wars and civil unrest affecting millions. Despite these challenges, religious beliefs and practices have claimed significant roles in shaping African societies and cultures, offering spiritual guidance and support during times of hardship. This research explores the scriptural role in addressing violence and fostering conflict transformation in Africa. The study aims to understand how biblical narratives and teachings can provide guidance and inspiration for individuals and communities struggling with conflict and its aftermath. The research seeks: How scriptural principles can be applied to promote reconciliation, justice, and peace in African contexts marked by violence and conflict? The significance lies in its ability to provide theological insights and practical strategies for addressing the prevalent challenges of war and conflict in Africa. By examining biblical texts and their interpretations, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of faith's role in promoting reconciliation and healing. Qualitative case study approach is adopted to examine the intricacies of religious beliefs and practices within the context of war and conflict transformation. This method allows for in-depth exploration of individual and community experiences, as well as the interpretation and application of scriptural principles. Key scriptural themes related to peace, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation are uncovered, along with biblical narratives that offer examples of conflict resolution and healing. The study analyzes how these principles have been applied in African contexts while acknowledging the challenges and limitations of using scriptural approaches to address complex conflicts.

Keywords: Conflict Transformation, Reconciliation, Theology, Scripture, Violence.

1. Introduction

Africa's history has been profoundly marked by cycles of conflict, violence, and civil unrest, with Nigeria as one of its most emblematic cases. From the Biafran Civil War (1967–1970) to recurring

ethno-religious clashes, farmer, herder crises, Boko Haram insurgency, and communal violence, millions have endured displacement, trauma, and loss of life (Falola, 2009; Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). Religion, particularly Christianity and Islam, remains deeply embedded in Nigeria's socio-cultural fabric, shaping both identity and public life. However, this embeddedness has proven paradoxical: scripture has been invoked to justify violence while also serving as a profound resource for peace, healing, and reconciliation (Dike, 2025; Gusau, 2018; Ibrahim, 2013). The ambivalence of scripture in Nigeria's conflict landscape raises pressing theological questions. On the one hand, selective interpretations of biblical and Qur'anic texts have fuelled exclusion, vengeance, and legitimization of violence. On the other, the same texts embody principles of forgiveness, justice, and peace building that could foster conflict transformation. These dual potential underscores the urgency of a critical theological engagement with scripture in order to reimagine its role not as a weapon of division but as an instrument of reconciliation and nation-building (Katongole, 2011).

This research therefore investigates: How can theological engagement with scripture transform violence into reconciliation within Nigeria's socio-cultural landscape? By interrogating biblical narratives and themes, particularly those of peace, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation the study seeks to uncover theological resources for addressing violent conflict in contexts where religion remains a central force. Methodologically, the research employs a qualitative case study approach, enabling in-depth analysis of individual and community experiences of violence and their recourse to scriptural principles for meaning and transformation. This approach highlights both the potential and limitations of theological responses to complex conflicts, offering practical and contextually relevant insights for faith-based peace building in Nigeria.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on religion and peace in Africa by advancing a theology of reconciliation rooted in biblical reflection and socio-cultural realities. In doing so, it aims to move beyond the dichotomy of scripture as either violent or pacifist, proposing instead a hermeneutical framework where scripture becomes a transformative tool for healing, justice, and peaceful coexistence.

Theological and Hermeneutical Framework

Critical Review of Scriptural Interpretations That Fuel Conflict

Nigeria's socio-political landscape is persistently marred by conflict, ranging from ethno-religious antagonisms and Farmer-Herder clashes to insurgency and communal reprisals (Falola, 2009; Ibrahim, 2013). Within this fragile ecology, scripture is frequently drawn into the sphere of violence, mobilized to sacralize grievances and legitimize aggression. This weaponization of sacred texts reflects hermeneutical distortions that transform scripture from a resource for peace and moral guidance into an instrument of exclusion and division (Adamo, 2015; West, 2016). Three interpretive tendencies stand out as particularly problematic:

One recurrent distortion is the selective citation of conquest narratives or imprecatory psalms (e.g., Deut. 7; 1 Sam. 15; Ps. 137), detached from their historical and literary contexts to portray enemies as divinely sanctioned targets for elimination. Such proof-texting collapses genre distinctions, ignores salvation-historical development, and mutates context-specific war texts into universal mandates. In Nigeria, this approach has been used to spiritualize ethnic rivalries and legitimize

political violence, thereby presenting the “other” as disposable under divine decree (Olupona, 2014; Gusau, 2018).

Another hermeneutical pathology emerges from readings that absolutize intra-group identity, whether ethnic, denominational, or religious, while delegitimizing outsiders. Politicized preaching has sometimes reduced the biblical theme of covenant to an exclusionary ideology, weaponizing claims of divine election to justify hostility. Such exclusivist readings truncate the broader biblical vision of inclusive community evident in creation (Gen. 1:26–27), prophetic universalism (Isa. 2; Mic. 4), and New Testament hospitality (Luke 10; Eph. 2; Rev. 7). This narrowing of scripture reinforces zero-sum identity politics, exacerbating Nigeria’s already fragile pluralism (Marshall, 2009; Katongole, 2011).

A further misuse involves collapsing eschatological hope into human retribution, interpreting divine vengeance as an immediate human mandate for retaliation. This hermeneutical inversion distorts passages such as Romans 12:17–21, which emphasize patience, forgiveness, and reliance on God’s justice, and instead fuels cycles of reprisal and violence. In Nigeria’s volatile environment, such readings have reinforced retaliatory violence across religious and communal lines, perpetuating generational enmities rather than fostering reconciliation (Gusau, 2018; Akinade, 2014).

A critical theological review of these interpretive distortions must therefore pursue three tasks: (i) exposing the ideological interests and socio-political motives embedded in conflict-fueling interpretations; (ii) reinstating the canonical context, literary genre, and salvation-historical trajectory of scripture to prevent distortion; and (iii) foregrounding the moral telos of scripture as oriented toward justice, reconciliation, and shalom. As Volf (1996/2019) and Thiselton (2009) argue, biblical interpretation cannot be divorced from its ethical horizon, which calls believers to peacemaking, reconciliation, and the flourishing of creation.

Scriptural Role in War and Violence

Scripture in Nigeria plays a double role: on the one hand, it offers consolation and moral guidance; on the other, it has often been deployed as a rhetorical and justificatory instrument of violence. This paradox is not accidental but arises from the intersection of hermeneutics, socio-political structures, and strategic interests. Historically and in contemporary times, scripture has been weaponized in various ways. During the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), for example, the Biafran struggle, though fundamentally political and ethnic, was overlaid with religious idioms and martyrdom narratives that sacralized suffering and grievance (Falola, 2009). Similarly, the Maitatsine uprisings of the late 1970s and 1980s, alongside Sharia-related riots of the 1990s and 2000s, demonstrated how religious rhetoric and selective use of canonical claims mobilized followers into violence (Olupona, 2014). In Jos, Kaduna, and other contested spaces, religious difference fused with land disputes, migration tensions, and political representation, where scriptural markers became tools for hardening group boundaries and legitimizing exclusion (Falola, 2009; Gusau, 2018). The Boko Haram insurgency represents the most explicit case of doctrinalized violence: leadership statements and captured materials reveal selective Qur’anic and hadith interpretations used to frame political grievances as divine mandates for violent jihad (ICG/HRW). Likewise, farmer–herder conflicts in the Middle Belt have been cast as religious persecution through the use of scriptural tropes, obscuring the underlying competition over land and resources (Falola, 2009). Even vigilante groups

and civilian militias have appropriated psalms, apocalyptic imagery, and imprecatory prayers to sacralise self-defence and counter-violence.

Several socio-political motives explain why such scriptural legitimations endure. Political elites instrumentalize religion to consolidate power or delegitimize opponents, turning sacred claims into moral licenses for policies or violence (Katongole, 2011). Scriptural narratives also function as powerful identity markers, resonating more deeply than secular appeals and generating communal compliance (Anderson, 1983; Volf, 1996). Grievances rooted in poverty, unemployment, and marginalizations are amplified when reframed through existential religious categories (Falola, 2009). In contexts of weak state authority, non-state actors—imams, pastors, chiefs, and politicians—emerge as moral entrepreneurs, justifying their authority through scripture (Juergensmeyer, 2000). For insurgent movements, theology provides a recruitment narrative, cosmic legitimacy, and moral absolution, while counter-militias mirror this sacralization to justify retaliation.

The political mobilization of scripture in Nigeria must also be understood at the intersection of religion, identity politics, and nationalism. Religion functions simultaneously as faith and as a political identity, with scriptural motifs of chosenness and divine favor reinterpreted as claims to political entitlement and national belonging (Volf, 1996; Katongole, 2011). Nationalist and regional projects have often appropriated sacred narratives, as seen in the Sharia reforms of northern states in the late 1990s, which blended scripture, regional identity, and political confrontation (Falola, 2009). Scriptural authority also interacts with customary systems of conflict management, sometimes undermining indigenous reconciliation practices but at other times providing resources for their reconstruction (Olupona, 2014; Lederach, 2005).

Scripture fuels violence because it offers culturally available and emotionally resonant resources that, when combined with state weakness and elite manipulation, provide powerful legitimization. Yet reclaiming scripture for peace requires exposing ideological distortions, restoring proper literary and canonical contexts, and promoting hermeneutics of responsibility through contextual Bible study and interfaith dialogue (Volf, 1996; Thiselton, 2009; Adamo, 2015). Practical measures include faith-based peacebuilding, accountability for clerical incitement, theological education that emphasizes reconciliation, and interfaith initiatives that reframe resource disputes outside sacralized binaries (Lederach, 2005; Tutu, 1999).

An original contribution of this research is the concept of a “scriptural palimpsest,” where communal memories, political narratives, and theological interpretations are repeatedly inscribed onto the same texts, creating layered meanings that can either perpetuate grievance or inspire reconciliation. Analyzing how these palimpsests are formed and reactivated in Nigerian contexts reveals both the dangers of weaponized scripture and the possibilities of reclaiming sacred texts for peace and justice.

From Violence to Reconciliation: Theological Re-Imagining

Theological re-imagining begins with the recognition that scripture, while historically implicated in conflict, also carries profound potential for reconciliation when interpreted through lenses of forgiveness, justice, and healing. Within Nigeria’s conflict-scarred landscape, theological discourse must move beyond legitimating grievance or retaliation and instead foreground hermeneutics that

privilege reconciliation. This does not mean romanticizing peace as the absence of conflict but affirming a justice-centered reconciliation that integrates memory, truth-telling, and the dignity of all communities (Tutu, 1999; Katongole, 2017).

1. Theological re-interpretation of scripture toward forgiveness, justice, and healing

Forgiveness in the Nigerian context cannot be abstract but must be tied to the lived realities of wounded communities. Biblical texts such as Matthew 18:21–35 on radical forgiveness and Luke 23:34 on Christ's prayer for his persecutors have been re-interpreted in Nigerian churches to emphasize interpersonal healing and social repair (Adamo, 2015). Similarly, Qur'anic injunctions to forgiveness (Q. 42:40) and justice (Q. 5:8) serve as theological counterweights to violent hermeneutics. Theologically, forgiveness does not negate justice but redefines it as restorative rather than retributive, foregrounding human dignity and communal healing. Such a re-imagining insists that the telos of scripture is not vengeance but the healing of wounds, a hermeneutic trajectory that resonates with Miroslav Volf's *Exclusion and Embrace* (1996), which proposes embrace as a radical theological response to enmity.

2. Case studies of grassroots and faith-based peace building initiatives in Nigeria

Theological re-imagining is most visible at the grassroots, where faith-based initiatives reinterpret scripture into praxis. The Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) in Kaduna, founded by Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye, embodies reconciliation by drawing on Islamic and Christian scriptural teachings to promote forgiveness, nonviolence, and community dialogue (Gusau, 2018). Similarly, the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) integrates biblical motifs of peace and Qur'anic narratives of compassion in mobilizing women to mediate local disputes, emphasizing the gendered dimensions of theological peace. In Jos, ecumenical youth initiatives such as Justice, Development, and Peace Commission (JDPC) programs have used contextual Bible study to empower communities to reinterpret scripture toward coexistence and reconciliation (Lederach, 2005; Agbiji & Swart, 2015). These cases illustrate that theological re-imagining is not confined to elite theology but animates embodied practices of grassroots peacebuilding.

3. The role of liturgy, preaching, and interfaith dialogue in conflict transformation

Liturgy and preaching constitute central sites where scripture is interpreted for collective meaning-making. Trauma-informed liturgies, memorial prayers for victims of violence, lament psalms re-read as cries for justice, and eucharistic celebrations reimagined as enactments of shared humanity become performative acts of reconciliation. Preaching that re-centers biblical visions of shalom (Isaiah 11:1–9) or Qur'anic themes of mercy reframes collective imagination away from hostility. Furthermore, interfaith dialogue in Nigeria has increasingly incorporated scriptural reasoning: joint study of Bible and Qur'an where Christians and Muslims examine texts on forgiveness, justice, and hospitality, not to erase difference but to cultivate empathy and shared moral horizons (Marshall, 2013). These practices suggest that reconciliation is nurtured not only through political negotiation but through sustained theological performance that reshapes communal imagination.

Theological re-imagining thus entails an interpretive shift: from weaponized hermeneutics to reconciliatory readings that foreground forgiveness, justice, and healing. Nigerian case studies demonstrate that scripture can be mobilized to de-escalate conflict and build bridges through

grassroots peace initiatives, while liturgy, preaching, and interfaith dialogue serve as liturgical-theological spaces for re-narrating wounded histories into reconciled futures. In this sense, reconciliation is not a political afterthought but a theological re-commitment to scripture's deepest telos, the restoration of broken relationships with God, neighbour, and community.

Socio-Cultural and Political Relevance

Scripture's public role in Nigeria must be read against the country's pluralist reality: overlapping ethnic, religious and cultural loyalties mean that sacred texts do not circulate as neutral artifacts but as social instruments embedded in identity-making, political contestation, and customary practice. Addressing Nigeria's pluralist context therefore requires three linked moves: (1) an interpretive ethics that refuses both absolutizing exclusivism and facile secularization; (2) institutional designs that translate hermeneutical insight into civic practice; and (3) culturally-anchored modalities of restorative justice that recover dignity, truth, and local ownership.

1. Addressing Nigeria's pluralist context: ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity
Nigeria's pluralism is structurally complex: multiple languages, customary systems, and competing moral worlds coexist with globalized religious forms. Scripture plays different social roles across these domains, as talisman, moral resource, mnemonic anchor and, sometimes, a political warrant. Theologically constructive engagement must therefore be inherently contextual and dialogical. Practically, this means privileging approaches that (a) decentre single-authoritative readings by promoting communal, participatory Bible/Qur'anic study that includes women, youth, and marginalized voices; (b) treat scripture as a living text whose meaning is negotiated within social practices (not simply extracted by elites); and (c) integrate indigenous moral idioms (palaver, omoluabi, igwebuike) so that reconciliation resonates culturally. This approach follows the methodological contours of contextual biblical hermeneutics and African political theology (Adamo; Katongole; Olupona), and it reframes scripture as a resource for plural civic formation rather than an instrument of identity closure.
2. Implications for nation-building, social cohesion, and restorative justice
The theological re-imagining of scripture toward reconciliation carries concrete implications for nation-building. First, reconciliation must be justice-centered: theological forgiveness divorced from accountability risks "cheap reconciliation." Restorative justice frameworks, emphasizing responsibility, truth-telling, repair and reintegration (Braithwaite; Minow) are therefore appropriate complements to theological work. Second, scripture-informed civic rituals (memorials, liturgies for victims, shared commemorations) can contribute to social cohesion by publicly recognizing harm and modeling shared moral commitments; such rituals should be designed in interfaith formats to foster cross-communal identification. Third, institutional reforms, curricula on hermeneutical responsibility in seminaries and madrasas, mechanisms to sanction clerical incitement, and support for faith-based mediation bodies link theological insight to durable governance practices. These measures help translate reconciliation from a private virtue into public policy and civic architecture, aligning with Lederach's stress on the moral imagination and Tutu's restorative praxis from South Africa.
3. Comparative insights from other conflict-ridden societies
Comparative experience offers both cautionary examples and transferable practices. South

Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission modeled how public testimony, restorative emphasis, and faith actors can transform memory politics without fully resolving structural inequalities (Tutu; Hayner). Rwanda's Gacaca courts illustrate the possibilities and limits of community-based restorative procedures: they enabled local participation in justice but also exposed risks of retribution and politicization (Prunier; Mamdani). Northern Ireland's inter-communal peacebuilding shows the value of long-term cross-community institutions and faith leaders committed to shared civic narratives (Mitchell; Bloomfield), while Colombia's mixed transitional justice system underscores the need to combine judicial accountability with restorative programming and victim-centered reparations. The comparative lesson is not simple replication but careful adaptation: Nigeria's solution set must weave together truth-telling, accountability, culturally legible reparations, and sustained intercommunal practices of encounter, always mindful of local power asymmetries.

Building on the "scriptural palimpsest" analytic, this section suggests operationalizing three programmatic interventions: (A) Community Hermeneutics Labs multi-stakeholder spaces where contested texts are read together with victims, survivors, and customary authorities to excavate violent inscriptions and surface peace motifs; (B) Faith-Secular Transitional Platforms, hybrid institutions that combine religious legitimacy with legal safeguards to oversee truth-telling, reparations and vetting of clerical incitement; (C) Ritual-Policy Linkages designing liturgies and memorial practices that feed into policy (e.g., public apologies that trigger reparations, or shared commemorations that inform school curricula). These interventions aim to convert theological re-interpretation into measurable civic outcomes: reduced incidences of identity-driven violence, better local dispute resolution rates, and higher levels of intercommunal trust.

The socio-cultural and political relevance of theological work on scripture lies in its capacity to transform memory into mutuality. This requires refusing both the privatization of faith and the instrumentalization of religion for political gain. Theologically informed policies that respect local modalities of meaning palaver, *igwebuike*, communal ritual, while embedding restorative justice principles into governance architectures offer the most promising pathway from violence to reconciliation. Empirically, future work should evaluate the three programmatic interventions above through mixed-methods pilots in contested Nigerian localities, measuring attitudinal change, incidences of violence, and institutional responsiveness.

Scriptural Palimpsest

This research proposes analytic contribution which centres on the concept of a "scriptural palimpsest." Borrowing from the manuscript tradition, where older texts were scraped off and overwritten with new ones but often remained faintly visible beneath the surface, the palimpsest metaphor captures how sacred texts in Nigeria accrue multiple, sometimes contradictory, interpretive inscriptions over time. A single passage may simultaneously function as a record of historical trauma, a rallying cry for resistance, a balm for grief, and a prophetic vision of justice.

In the Nigerian context, the scriptural palimpsest emerges at the intersection of communal memory, political narratives, and theological re-readings. For instance, biblical imprecatory psalms are invoked in churches as prayers against enemies, simultaneously recalling memories of the Biafra

War, narrating present-day insecurity, and projecting hope for divine vindication. Likewise, Qur'anic verses about struggle (jihad) may be recalled in relation to colonial encounters, reframed within contemporary grievances against state corruption, and layered with eschatological promises. These textual re-inscriptions create a thick web of meanings where violence and reconciliation coexist as potential trajectories. Studying scriptural palimpsests entails tracing how and why certain passages are repeatedly reinscribed in public rhetoric, sermons, and communal practices. It involves mapping the interpretive layers:

(1) the sacralized grievance layer (where texts preserve trauma and legitimize defensive violence), (2) the pastoral consolation layer (where texts heal wounds and sustain faith under suffering), and (3) the prophetic critique layer (where texts are re-activated for justice, reconciliation, and peace). Each layer is not erased by the next but remains latent, available for reactivation under shifting socio-political conditions.

By applying this framework, the research highlights how scripture becomes both a reservoir of violence and a resource for peace. It shows that weaponization of scripture is not simply a matter of misinterpretation but of selective re-inscription, where communal experiences are grafted onto texts to yield new legitimations. Conversely, reconciliation requires an excavation of suppressed textual layers, foregrounding peace-centred and justice-oriented readings that have been overshadowed by violent inscriptions.

This analytic lens contributes to conflict transformation studies by reframing scripture not as a static repository of meanings but as a dynamic palimpsestic surface shaped by historical traumas, socio-political interests, and theological creativity. In practical terms, it suggests that peace building in Nigeria must include hermeneutical interventions; processes of re-reading texts with communities in ways that acknowledge the violent layers but recover and re-inscribe reconciliatory possibilities.

Contributions and Originality

This research advances the study of religion, conflict, and reconciliation by foregrounding the theological role of scripture in contexts of violence while offering innovative frameworks for peacebuilding in Nigeria. Its originality lies in three interrelated contributions:

1. Developing a theology of reconciliation rooted in African socio-cultural realities

While global theological reflections on reconciliation, such as Volf's *Exclusion and Embrace* (1996/2019) or Tutu's *No Future Without Forgiveness* (1999) have shaped discourse on peace and forgiveness, they often emerge from Euro-American or South African transitional justice contexts. Nigeria's situation, marked by recurrent ethno-religious violence, insurgency, and farmer–herder conflicts, demands a contextual theology that resonates with local socio-cultural idioms. This study reinterprets scripture through indigenous frameworks of relationality and community such as *igwebuike* (solidarity in Igbo thought (Dike, 2023)), *omoluabi* (Yoruba ethic of character and responsibility), and palaver traditions of consensus. By embedding biblical motifs of forgiveness, justice, and reconciliation within these cultural resources, the research generates a theologically

grounded, socially intelligible vision of peace that speaks directly to Nigeria's pluralist realities. This contribution shifts reconciliation theology from abstraction to embodied practice, rooted in African moral worlds.

2. Bridging philosophy, theology, and peace studies for conflict transformation

The originality of this work also lies in its methodological interdisciplinarity. Existing scholarship often treats theology of reconciliation as a doctrinal or ecclesial discourse, while conflict transformation literature (e.g., Lederach 2005) emphasizes sociological and political strategies. This research deliberately bridges these domains, integrating philosophical hermeneutics (Thiselton 2009; Ricoeur 1992), theological reflection, and practical peacebuilding. By deploying a "hermeneutics of suspicion and reconstruction," it interrogates violent readings of scripture while simultaneously re-signifying biblical texts toward peace. This bridging moves beyond siloed disciplinary approaches to create a holistic framework that accounts for the symbolic, moral, and socio-political power of scripture in Nigeria. It thereby positions theology not only as a spiritual resource but as a critical partner in interdisciplinary peace studies.

3. Offering a practical hermeneutical framework adaptable across diverse conflict settings

Finally, the research makes a practical contribution by proposing a hermeneutical model, termed here the "scriptural palimpsest framework" that recognizes how texts accrue layers of meaning shaped by communal memory, political narratives, and cultural identity. This model offers a way of critically engaging violent interpretations of scripture, peeling back ideological overlays while reconstructing peace-oriented readings. Crucially, the framework is adaptable: while developed in Nigeria's multi-religious context, it can be applied in other conflict-ridden societies (e.g., Rwanda, Northern Ireland, or Myanmar) where scripture has been weaponized. Its originality lies in combining textual analysis, socio-cultural interpretation, and peace building praxis into a portable methodology for faith-based conflict transformation. By doing so, it contributes both to contextual Nigerian theology and to global debates on religion and violence.

In sum, this research contributes to scholarship and practice by articulating a theology of reconciliation that is at once deeply African, rigorously interdisciplinary, and globally relevant. It shifts theological engagement with scripture from abstract doctrinal debates to actionable hermeneutics that address real conflicts. Its originality lies not only in re-reading texts but in re-imagining theology itself as a participatory, culturally embedded, and peace-oriented discipline capable of transforming violence into reconciliation in Nigeria and beyond.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that scripture in Nigeria occupies a paradoxical position: it functions as a double-edged instrument, capable of legitimizing violence or fostering reconciliation depending on how it is interpreted and deployed. Historical and contemporary cases, from the Biafran War to Boko Haram insurgency, from sectarian riots to farmer–herder clashes illustrate how sacred texts have been selectively weaponized to sacralize grievances, justify exclusion, and sustain cycles of retaliation (Falola 2009; Gusau 2018). At the same time, scripture has also served as a wellspring of hope, a moral compass for forgiveness, and a resource for healing and solidarity in traumatized communities (Tutu 1999; Katongole 2017). This dual capacity underscores the urgent need for

theological responsibility in contexts where religion remains deeply interwoven with politics, culture, and identity.

Reconciliation in Nigeria cannot be achieved merely through political negotiations or security strategies; it requires a theological re-engagement with scripture that foregrounds its telos of justice, forgiveness, and peace. The challenge lies in dismantling hermeneutical distortions, proof-texting, covenantal exclusivism, and vengeance rhetoric while re-inscribing reconciliatory readings rooted in biblical and Qur'anic traditions of mercy, hospitality, and restorative justice (Volf 2019; Adamo 2015). Such an approach demands a hermeneutics of suspicion and reconstruction, one that interrogates ideological uses of scripture while recovering its life-affirming potential for communal healing and social transformation.

In Nigeria's pluralist context, responsible theological engagement must also be practical and dialogical. Faith leaders, churches, mosques, and interfaith organizations must reclaim preaching, liturgy, and communal worship as spaces for cultivating peace-oriented consciousness, while grassroots initiatives integrate scripture into trauma-healing, reconciliation forums, and truth-telling practices (Lederach 2005; Orobator 2018). Furthermore, interreligious dialogue offers an indispensable avenue for reframing sacred texts away from exclusivism toward mutual recognition and shared citizenship.

Ultimately, this research reaffirms that scripture is not a static artifact but a living discourse that shapes social realities. If uncritically interpreted, it risks perpetuating conflict; if responsibly engaged, it can serve as a catalyst for reconciliation and sustainable peace. Nigeria's pursuit of stability therefore requires not only political reforms but also a renewed theological imagination one that reads scripture as a resource for justice, forgiveness, and the restoration of broken relationships. Such a vision aligns with Africa's indigenous traditions of communal solidarity (igwebuike, palaver) while contributing to global conversations on religion, violence, and peace building. In moving from violence to reconciliation, scripture must be reimagined not as a weapon of division but as a shared moral grammar for healing and hope.

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