

**A HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA: GROUNDS FOR A
MUTUAL CO-EXISTENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS**

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Bede E. Inekwere

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Bede E. Inekwere, Candidate

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A HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA: GROUNDS FOR A
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APPROVED:

Jane Naomi Iwamura, Chair 5/15/2015

Zayn Kassam, Committee Member 5/15/2015

Joshua Capitanio, Committee
Member 5/15/2015

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been submitted
as an exercise for a degree at any other institution,
and that it is entirely my own work.

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ABSTRACT

In the last decades, religious clashes in Nigeria have caused a worrisome social disorder that has made co-existence and collaboration between Nigerian Christians and Muslims difficult. Nigeria has had to contend with challenging obstacles that seem to defy all available solutions. This dissertation centers on the role that the faith traditions of Islam and Christianity can play in ameliorating the situations by drawing upon theological models that encourage a more peaceful co-existence among religious groups in Nigeria.

As a step towards facilitating a culture of dialogue and peace, the aims of the present research include: (1) To understand the history of recent conflicts in Nigeria; (2) to analyze the factors that influence the Christian-Muslim antipathy; (3) to examine the Vatican II declaration regarding the Church and its relation to non-Christian religions (*Nostrae Aetate*) as a possible model, and; (4) to investigate a new understanding of the Islamic religion and society as articulated by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. *Nostrae Aetate* and Khan's theological vision, although expressions of Catholic and Islamic faith, respectively, offer valuable resources for Nigerian Christians and Muslims who are working towards greater peace and understanding amidst the conflict.

The dissertation concludes with the presentation of practical measures that encourage interfaith harmony and cooperation among Nigerians. While religion has been a source of conflict in recent times in Nigeria, it can also serve as a more positive guide and influence.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

i. Preamble: A Personal Experience

In December of 1980, in the Northern town of Kaduna state of Nigeria, an ugly incident occurred that nearly took the life of my nephew. It was sparked by the Maitatsina, an Islamic sect that struck and set upon other Muslims and non- Muslims, leaving an enormous death toll of people and destroying an unquantifiable volume of property. My nephew sustained a lot of injuries, but luckily, his life was spared.

My personal experience, which I would like to share with readers, is this: in those days, I was in high school and I used to visit my nephew during school breaks and holidays at Kaduna. In the house where we lived, I had a Muslim friend by name Yakubu who was of the same age, height and grade as me. We enjoyed good times, attending the same extramural classes at the nearby college, playing, and sharing meals together. Even after graduating, we keep in touch with occasional visits at festivals and celebrations. We really loved each other. I could even remember at times when Yakubu worshiped with me in the church and, in turn, I followed him to the mosque on Fridays occasionally. Religion was not an issue and we enjoyed this period without paying much attention to what differ our faiths.

Things, however, changed between us on the day that one of the nearby churches was set ablaze by Islamic youths during a time of massacre and atrocities whose impacts and memories have continued to undermine good inter-religious relations in Nigeria. During that ugly incident, to my surprise, I saw Yakubu, my bosom friend among the leaders of this outrageous act. I was hurt by his conduct. The immediate cause of their

violent behavior was not clear, but they left the impression that their frustration was linked to the rising number of Christian churches and the cross-carpeting of Muslim youths to Christianity. Fear was being entertained amongst Muslims that Christians must be challenged and if nothing is done about this issue, many more Muslim youths will be converted to Christianity. However, it happened that after I called Yakubu's attention, I was almost licked. Later on he said that those churches and infidels deserved to die because it was the will of Allah. What God, I asked, would wish such incidents to happen to his children? From then, it dawned on me that the depth of this crisis had taken roots in the country. Nonetheless, my nephew has always had a positive mindset toward the Muslim adherents.

For each time there were religious clashes in the North and people condemned the Muslims and their religion, to my shock, my nephew – despite his ugly encounter – always defends Islam by saying: “there are good Muslims as well.” In view of my encounters with Yakubu and the arson committed by Muslim youth years ago, coupled with the sporadic religious clashes, I decided to become more educated about Muslims and their religion in order to assist others to do the same in the hope that better understanding could light the path to harmonious inter-religious co-existence between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria.

ii. Research motivation

My years of formation and training in the seminary, coupled with my work as a pastor of Nigerian descent not only inculcated in me the missionary zeal but also triggered in me the quest to examine the religious conflicts in Nigeria. The questions of precisely why these conflicts occur demand systematic programs of research. I will

approach the subject matter not only from my vantage position as a priest but from my experiences as a philosopher, theologian and educationist. The driving force behind all that I do is the hope that my efforts might make small contribution to bettering Nigeria and the world in which we live.

According to William Cavanaugh, “understanding and defusing violence in our world requires clear moral vision, of not only the faults of others but our own”¹ In view of that opinion, it becomes absolutely necessary to have knowledge of faith traditions other than one’s own. In Nigeria, “the pre-and post-independence politicization of religion has been the bane of the nation’s body politic, and this has streamed down to thwart every potential for meaningful development, ideal living conditions and peaceful and harmonious co-existence by the people across complex ethnic and religious backgrounds.”² As a researcher, engaging in comparative religious studies has trained me not only to be critically engaged in the beliefs and practices of various traditions, but also opens the possibility for transformative learning experiences.

For centuries, Christians and Muslims in Nigeria have managed to live together, they have shared the same language and the same space without infringing on each other’s boundaries or abusing their respective faiths. This situation has occasionally been disrupted by communal and sectarian clashes. However, since the 1980’s hostility between the two groups has increased to the point of volatility. Both the Christian and Muslim tradition have much in common, as well as significant differences. Fidelity to

¹ William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford University Press US, 2009), 230.

² Nwanaju, *Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria*, xxxi.

one's religious tradition while remaining open to another's faith perspective remains the challenge.

iii. Back ground of the Study

The greatest factor, according to Gustav Niebuhr, “is the growing sense of awareness that we have religious diversity in our midst.”³ Speaking before a crowd that included representatives of twenty different religious traditions, John Paul 2nd called it a “sign of hope” at the turn of the twenty-first century. But is worthy of note that working across religious lines tends to worry some well-meaning people, who fear that conversation among believers in different traditions inevitably will lead to a wearing down of important differences; the unique teachings that comprise Christianity or Islam, for example. Yet the best aspect of this collaboration, it seems to me, is not about erasing differences but trying to understand and allow for them.

One should therefore, embark on this sign of hope that has to do with the willingness of people to acknowledge the vitality of the beliefs that separate adherents of different faiths rather than their lethal potential. It is the demand of Islam to “counter human failings and to attempt to maintain desires of “peace and love.”⁴ It is about living in the globalized world and ever-widening contact with people who would have been unknown to our grandparents and perhaps our parents as well. Niebuhr further noted that: “he has not learned the lesson of life who does not every day surmount a fear.”⁵ Dealing with religious differences therefore, is the Roman Catholic charge. There is nothing easy about it. The traits of creativity, openness to new experiences, and desire for

³ Gustav Niebuhr, *Beyond Tolerance: How People across America Are Building Bridges between Faiths* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), xxii.

⁴ Omar, *Rethinking Islam*, 90.

⁵ Niebuhr, *Beyond tolerance*, xxv.

change, combined with the energy and vitality that associate with dialogue, are all elements of the distinctive capabilities of the Catholic Church in the process of building peace that hold critical seeds of hope.

Our people need to learn how to create a shared vision of common values and a shared hope for the future.”⁶ The Catholic Church’s perspective of Christian-Muslim relations is part of this new vision of interreligious interaction. Nigerian Christians and Muslims can recognize their diversity and specific visions in the Vatican 11 declaration of relationship of the church to non-Christian relations, *Nostra Aetate*,⁷ of 28 October 1965 embodies the above initiative. The Roman Catholic Church reaches out to people of other religions with the understanding that the spiritual values in any religion can be shared with others, for the purpose of building up better persons and better human society. Thus Christians are urged not only to witness to their own faith and way of life, but also to ‘acknowledge preserve and encourage these spiritual and moral values found among other believers (N.A 2) Accordingly, Chapter 3 examines the Catholic Church’s model for a healthy Christian-Muslim relationship.

The quest for inter-religious harmony has to affirm the need for a renewed understanding that will inspire the Catholic Church’s role effectively to facilitate leading Christians and Muslims to a culture of dialogue and cooperation towards promoting the common good. Dialogue, however, is not something that Christians want to “impose” on other religions. Thus, “the general goal of dialogue is for each side to learn and change

⁶ Dr. Munib A. Younan, “Can Religion Solve Conflicts in Middle East?”, n.d., http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2010/09/can_religion_solve_conflicts_in_the_middle_east.html.

⁷ The declaration of the relation of the church to non-Christian religions went beyond Christianity to discuss Catholicism’s relationships with other faith, the monotheistic Judaism and Islam as well as Eastern faith traditions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. The documents acknowledge great respect especially for Jews and Muslims, who share with Christianity a common father in Abraham.

accordingly.”⁸ Christians offer it as a language and a method of rapprochement between the different religions in our globalized “multi-faith” and “multi-cultural” society. It is a framework that respects other religions in as much as it acknowledges the action of the Holy Spirit among the adherents of those religions.

A culture of dialogue is something that Christians can contribute to inter-faith work. In many countries of the world, dialogue takes place among members of various communities, despite occurrences of violent clashes. Interreligious relations are also assuming an important place in religion and theological studies. Thus, for Nigerian Christians and Muslims, interreligious dialogue is indispensable. Today we are learning our lessons from hard facts and bitter happenings. The greater part of mayhem that has been inflicted on the nation is the resurgence of Sharia law and the massacres undertaken by the Boko Haram sect. In the aftermath of June 17, 2011, when the National Police Headquarters was bombed, the need for a tool for enabling different relations to engage with one another has become ever more acute in the interest of social cohesion and national security. Only a spirit and an attitude of dialogue can create the environment in which different religions can relate to one another in a spirit of mutual respect.

In the last decades the troubling situation of religious clashes has caused worrying disorder and bloodshed, and makes co-existence and collaboration of Christians and Muslims difficult, despite committed efforts by some members of the two religions to improve relations. Therefore any imbroglio in Nigerian relations would pay heed to these diverse and interconnected causes. Further, historical analysis will be necessary, in order to determine whether the past conflicts and views still weigh on the present experience

⁸ Leonard Swidler, “Understanding Dialogue,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 43, no. 2 (March 1, 2008): 13.

especially as they relate to the Nigerian context. To achieve our objectives therefore, applying a theological and pastoral approach will pull together the various dimensions and promote dialogue and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. This is the task at hand, the road that leads to day break which all must take to achieve Nigerian goals.

iv. The Aim of the Research

This work sets out to understand the reasons for religious conflicts in Nigeria and to address the underlying causes of the frequent clashes, so that a resolution could be found through dialogue, respect, tolerance and understanding. With such complexity in mind; addressing religious tensions in Nigeria needs both religious and political solutions. The study will equally examine the contribution that a new understanding of Islamic visions of religion and society articulated by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's theology of non-violence can make with the interpretation of Islam as a peaceful religion to the Roman Catholic Church's initiative regarding Christian-Muslim dialogue in Nigeria. Emphasis will also be laid on how the traditional teachings and practices of Christianity and Islam will be offering more to the solution than to the problem of violence in Nigeria.

Blind faith leads to fanaticism hence there is the need to be humble and have an open mind to learn good things from other religions and discard wrong irrelevant things from our own religion. Others should be helped to do the same. This process would possibly lead all to the truth as well as social harmony. The future of democracy in Nigeria will be determined to a large extent by the ability of the government to overcome the politicization of religion. This work is optimistic that when the government renounces its politicization of religious fanaticism, then the different religions will understand their

social role as binding the people together. When this is done, then the religious fanatics will beat their swords into ploughshares, their spears into pruning hooks⁹ and eventually all will certainly turn to the table of dialogue. Finally, this research may possibly appeal to the government, in being conscious of its responsibility to the citizenry, and in understanding the consequences of evading such responsibility for peace among religions and for political stability.

v. The Research Methodology

The method of this research, primarily will take cognizance of the History of Religious discipline, under which this research takes off. Therefore, the basic method of this research is to identify the historical context of conflictual relations between the two faiths, and entails an examination and critical analysis of the relevant literature on the subject. Within this literature review, priority is given to the textual analysis of commentary on religious issues. The basic literature to be reviewed is the ecclesiastical documents, especially those that have commented on the traditional conflicts between the two traditions. Another important method that would be useful to this research is the historical method. The usefulness of historical analysis has to do with understanding the areas of continuity and discontinuity between the past heritages and today's manifestations, and the nature of the challenges faced by Christian-Muslim relations today in previewing the future. This research intends to do a broad and succinct historical survey of the early Christians and Muslim documents down to the post Vatican II church, though not following a very strict historical chronology in its research.

vi. The Research Structure

⁹ Isaiah 2: 2-5.

This study is structured into five chapters based on the distinctive attribute of each topic. The first chapter undertakes a brief historical survey of Christian-Muslim relations since the 1980s. The second chapter discusses the past era of Christian-Muslim dissensions in more broadly specified manner. Thus, it will attempt an emblematic study of the conflictual history, by focusing on significant events and voices. Chapter three focuses attention on the Roman Catholic Church's perspective of Christian-Muslim relations in view of discovering whether it offers a useful model that can contribute to more positive relations. Chapter four attempts to highlight the role that Islam and Christianity can play in getting Nigerians live out in their lives the tenets of our national ethics. Attempt will be made to explore major contemporary interpretations of Islam and specific themes that cast light on the two traditional codes of conduct that will help to resolve issues between them.

The last chapters examine how Nigerian Muslims perceive Christians and review the contemporary invitations to new relationships between them. Finally, it offers a recipe for improved Christian-Muslim relations. Here, religion is examined as an authentic source of resolution which would remain true to its sources by dismantling corruptions.¹⁰ Each chapter begins with a brief introduction and ends with a brief conclusion. This study then offers a general conclusion, which summarizes all the findings of the research as well as containing some useful guidelines and suggestions arising from our specific discoveries.

¹⁰ Peter S. Ovat, *Ethical Revival in Nigeria* (Gogaps Production and Services, 2002), 46-47. He subdivides corruption into economic, social, political and moral. Economic evils are corruption with capital C, bribery, embezzlement of public funds, economic sabotage, persistent unemployment, and over concern with money making. Social evils are domination over the weak, callousness towards the poor, the friendless... Moral evils are abortion, contraception, divorce, dishonesty, and sexual permissiveness.

vii. The Research Statement

Islam and Christianity have resources for peace and solidarity that can bring religious harmony and development of peoples in civic life. In Nigeria, which is composed in equal measures of adherents of these two traditions, religion can be linked with this positive role. Since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has continued to miss opportunities to translate its immense potentials into real national progress. In the last two decades and more, the failure of the political system has sparked crises in the social and economic realm, and has opened the door to bitter antagonism and intolerance among communities. This complex religious and political context has created divide's, polarized Christians and Muslims and led to the destructive use of religion to promote selfish political and ethnic interests.

One of the “greatest points of religious disagreement is the imposition of Sharia or strict Islamic law”¹¹ and the inclusion of Nigeria in the membership of the organization of the Islamic conference (OIC). The imposition of Islamic law in several states has also deepened religious divisions and caused interfaith violence to erupt and separatist aspirations to take root.

Penalties can be devastating, for example, having a hand removed for stealing thirty US dollars... In the year 2000, more than 2,000 people died in fighting between Christians and Muslims in the Northern state of Kaduna when Sharia was first introduced; about half of this Northern state is Christian, unlike most of the Muslims North.¹²

According to reports commissioned over the years, “most of this violence fractured across religious lines often has more to do with local politics, economics and rights to

¹¹ Martin J Gannon and Rajnandini Pillai, *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys through 29 Nations, Clusters of Nations, Continents, and Diversity* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2010), 328.

¹² Ibid.

grazing lands.”¹³ Thus, it has caused worrying disorder and bloodshed, and makes co-existence and collaboration between Christians and Muslims difficult, despite committed efforts by some members of the two communities to promote shared life and improve relations. An appalling large number of Nigerians are dissatisfied with issues and trends of Christian-Muslim violence issues and trends and feel that it is a yoke to be shaken off.

In 2002 another 220 people died “in fighting between Christians and Muslims over the issue of having the Miss World Pageant in Nigeria during the month of Ramadan. Such occurrences, while not the rule, are not rare.”¹⁴ The incident raised the question of the role of the international community regarding increases in religious hostilities in Nigeria and their professed readiness to promote peace, reconciliation and economic growth. In dealing with the complex situation in Nigeria, therefore, local and international issues are interrelated and have to be understood and taken into account.

¹³ Njadvara Musa, “Christmas Weekend Violence Kills 38 in Nigeria”, n.d., http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2013769419_apafnigeriaviolence.html.

¹⁴ Gannon and Pillai, *Understanding Global Cultures*, 328.

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM CO-EXISTENCE AND COMPETITIVE RIVALRY SINCE 1980

INTRODUCTION

The year 1980 is important for this dissertation, because this is the year when a new round of violence erupted between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. Thousands died and property was destroyed in the Maitatsine riots and the ensuing mayhem. Sectarian and inter-communal conflicts that lead to murder and destruction have continued to take a vicious toll in Nigeria.

Despite these incidents, there have been instances of good relations between the adherents of Christianity and Islam, who, in everyday life, “live together” There have been positive models of encounter within the shadow of intense violence. However, the introduction of Sharia law in parts of northern Nigeria states has further strained the relationship between Christians and Muslims. The extent of the influence of Islam and Christianity in the daily, social, economic and political lives of the people makes religion a significant consideration in Nigeria and for this dissertation. As Isidore Nwanaju observes. “There is a radical move of these two traditions from the ordinary realm of worship and belief, to active participation and involvement in the sphere of human life and venture in Nigeria. This is where their relevance, which cannot be overlooked, for this study lies.”¹⁵ Thus it is important to examine the impact that these religious traditions have on the general religious terrain in Nigeria and to rigorously ponder a way forward.

¹⁵ Isidore Nwanaju, *Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria* (Berlin: Logos, 2008), 1.

While seeking to describe the situation of Christian-Muslim relations, this study will search for those things that will unite the adherents of these two traditional religions that can have a positive role in peace negotiations in Nigeria. Existing resources and frameworks rooted in Christianity and Islam can play a relevant role in this endeavor, which I will examine. The challenge is to craft a valid model through which Christians and Muslims can “turn human existence into human co-existence”¹⁶

1.1. BACKGROUND OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN NIGERIA

1.1.1. Nigeria and its geographical location

The entity known as Nigeria,¹⁷ officially, the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a country on West African coastal region, in the Sub-Saharan region of Africa. Nigeria represents both the hope and the despair of Africa, a continent ruled by European colonial powers for much of the 19th and 20th centuries. As a modern political entity, Nigeria came into existence in 1914 when the British amalgamated three of their West African colonial territories: the Colony of Lagos, the Southern Nigerian protectorate, and the Northern Nigerian protectorate. Each of the three territories, in turn, had been constructed by the British out of a diverse collection of indigenous kingdoms, city-states, and loosely organized ethnic groups through treaties or outright conquest.

Nigeria is diverse in its ethnic distribution as in its religious plurality, a reality that portrays the general picture of Africa. “It is a picture, which shows that the forms of

¹⁶ Nissen, P *Mission is a Must, Intercultural Theology and the church*, (Amsterdam, NY: Rodopi, 2002), 3

¹⁷ Nigeria is divided into four regions, comprising 36 States and the federal Capital in Abuja. The regions are South-South (Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo); South-East (Imo, Anambra, Enugu, Abia, Ebonyi); South-West (Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti, Ondo); North (Kwara, Kogi, Niger, Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, Borno, Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Kebbi, Zamfara, Sokoto), cf. also <http://www.Nigeriaworld.com>

ethnic, cultural, and religious identification are as old as Africa itself.”¹⁸ Nigeria itself was ruled by Britain until 1960 and has been an independent nation for 54 years. Today, there are regional divisions: Central Nigeria which accounts for such states as Kwara, Kogi, Niger, Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, Borno, Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Kebbi, Zamfara, and Sokoto. South-East, which includes Imo, Anambra, Enugu, Abia, and Ebonyi States; as well as North (North-East and North-West), and South-South, which comprises Cross River, Akwa-Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, and Edo states; South-West, which consists of Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti, and Ondo states.

There are no accurate census figure for the Nigerian population but recent estimates, put the country’s population at about 127.1 million people, who constitute a little more than 25% of the total African population and it is Africa’s most populous country. Thus,

the million’s of people in Nigeria belong to many ethnic groups, some of which run into million’s while others are just a few thousands in numbers; each of the ethnic groups has its own distinctive ways of life which include differences in custom, tradition, costumes and language.¹⁹

In many cases the differences are minor, but in some cases such differences could be described as the epitome of West Africa, as it occupies about a seventh of the settled and productive area of West Africa. It can rightly be said that it is the largest and most important country of Africa. It is the 13th largest country on the continent

¹⁸ Isidore Nwanaju, *Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria* (Berlin: Logos, 2008), 21.

¹⁹ J. G Ottong, “Culture and the People of Nigeria,” in *Nigeria: The people and their heritage* (Calabar: Wusen Publishers, 1987), 41.

1.1.2. Government of Nigeria

Nigeria remained a colony of Britain until it gained independence in 1960. Two large rivers, the Niger (from which the name of the country was derived) and the Benue, form a Y that divides the country into three parts. Each of the three parts is dominated by one of the three main ethnic groups: the Yoruba, the Hausa-Fulani, and the Igbo. Nigeria is a democratic country but was under the rule of a military junta for almost 29 years. When General Abdulsalam Abubakar became the president in 1998 he forthrightly described the nation's plight in the following way: "currently, we are the world's 13th poorest nation. Given our resource endowments, this sorry state is a serious indictment."²⁰ In 1999 he handed over power to a democratically elected president, Olusegun Obasanjo.

Ironically, it was President Obasanjo who, as military ruler in 1979, supported the first democratically elected government in Nigeria's history. Unfortunately that government was short-lived, and military rule returned after 1983. At his swearing in ceremony on 29 May 2003 for a second term in office (2003-2007), President Olusegun Obasanjo admitted that he did not achieve much in his first term, especially from the point of view of eradicating corruption in Nigeria. The April 2007 election of President Umaru Yar'Adua had many logistical problems but marked the first time that political power was transferred from one civilian government to another and bodes well for Nigeria's post independence future

1.1.2.1. Diverse Culture

²⁰ Gannon and Pillai, *Understanding Global Cultures*, 312.

Archaeological evidence attests to millennia of continuous habitation of parts of what is now Nigeria. One of the earliest identifiable cultures according to Martin J.

Gannon et al, is that of the:

Nok people who inhabited the northeastern part of the country between 500 BCE and 200 CE. The Nok, “were skilled artisans and ironworkers whose abstractly stylized terra cotta sculptures are admired for their artistic expression and high technical standards. High-quality bronze art at Ife and Benin City in the southwestern parts of the county also predated the arrival of Europeans into the region. Over the century’s successive waves of migration along trade routes into Nigeria from the north and northeastern part of the African continent swelled the population, which eventually became organized along tribal lines into kingdoms, emirates, city-states and loosely organized ethnic groups.”²¹

This was the setting the early European adventurers, notably Portuguese navigators, found when they first made contact with the people of the coastal regions in the 14th century CE. The heterogeneity of Nigerian society is physical, social, religious, and linguistic. Each ethnic group is concentrated in clearly defined geographical areas that its people have occupied for centuries. The same is true of the sub ethnic groups. Nigerian society can be viewed as a socio-cultural system. “It is a system with Sub-systems and the sub-systems could be understood in terms of the various ethnic groups in the country.”²² Each ethnic group, while consisting a part of the Nigerian society has its own peculiar cultural characteristics that distinguish it from the other ethnic groups. At the same time, each group constitutes a small society with its own traditional social organization based on its culture.

It is the diversity of cultural patterns and the multiplicity of ethnic groups in the country that has depicted the unity of the Nigerian Federation as “Unity in Diversity”.

²¹ Gannon and Pillai, 312.

²² J.U Obot, “Nigeria: The People and Their Heritage,” in *Culture and the People of Nigeria* (Calabar: Wusen Publishers, 1987), 45.

Due to diversities of culture, Nigeria can be considered as an experiment in nation building. Numerous problems are associated with nation building in the context of a plurality of cultures. Such problems include the issue of lingua franca. There is no common vernacular language for all. The English language is the language of the former colonial powers that has occupied the place of a common lingua franca. It has therefore aided national integration since there was no common language for the people. Cultural diversity has engendered the problems of ethnic prejudices and stereotypes among Nigerians; it promotes discrimination, favoritism and nepotism. There is a lack of unanimity of purpose among Nigerians as members of a single nation, and this has negative implications for the emergence of national consciousness and the sense of patriotism

1.1.2.2. Ethnic Groups

The diversity of the Nigerian culture is one of its hallmarks. It is estimated that there are “up to 300 ethnic and sub ethnic groups, with as many distinct languages and dialects. Often a dialect is clearly understandable only to the inhabitants of a town and its immediate environs.”²³ Some show considerable racial intermingling with people of Mediterranean stock. There are few Europeans among the population; Chief among the tribes are the Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri in the North; The Hausa-Fulani occupy most of the area to the north of the Niger and the Benue, an area more than twice as large as the southern regions combined. The Yoruba-speaking ethnic groups also dwell beyond the

²³ Martin J. Gannon and Rajnandini Pillai, *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys Through 29 Nations, Clusters of Nations, Continents, and Diversity* (SAGE, 2009), 313.

Nigerian border in the Benin Republic. The Yomba, Edo, Ibibio, Tiv, Annag, and Urhobo are located in the South.

The Ibos are primarily located to the east side of the Niger. Although they are more densely concentrated in their primary geographical area, they are more fragmented politically than the Yoruba or the Hausa-Fulani. The Ibos are notable for their business acumen and strong work ethic. In most cases differences in physical features among ethnic groups are not significant enough to reliably distinguish a member of one ethnic group from another although some cultural similarities exist between the tribes, such as kinship ties in determining social and political status, many differences divide them.

In the past, permanent facial markings were used to distinguish members of one ethnic group from the others. Their primary purpose was to identify friend or foe in warfare rather than to serve as bodily decoration. The practice of facial markings has been largely abandoned in modern times. Today names and attire are more reliable indicators of ethnic membership than physical attributes.

1.1.2.3. The Social Structure

With so many different ethnic groups and languages, it would seem that defining the contours and structures of this highly heterogeneous society is impractical.

“Admittedly it is difficult, but it is not impossible. There are several reasons for this.

First, despite the great number of ethnic groups, four of them Yoruba (21%), Hausa-Fulani (29%), and Ibo (18%)- comprise nearly 70% of the Nigerian population.”²⁴ As the Hausa and the Fulani have intermixed over the centuries, they are now commonly

²⁴ Gannon and Pillai, *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys Through 29 Nations, Clusters of Nations, Continents, and Diversity*, 314.

regarded as a homogeneous group. Second, the correspondence between language and ethnic group varies. Several groups may speak essentially the same language and have similar cultural characteristics but prefer to identify themselves as separate entities in terms of differences that span centuries.

Nigeria has a long way to go in terms of interethnic harmony; interethnic mistrust is deep and is a primary reason for the repeated failure to establish a viable Western-style democracy in Nigeria since independence. It gave the military an excuse to establish authoritarian regimes for long periods of time. Although most Nigerians are patriotic and genuinely want their country to work, deep-rooted ethnic allegiances often take precedence over national allegiance. In the distant past, members of the sub ethnic groups fought bitter fratricidal wars among themselves. Territorial expansionism, control of trade routes, and the desire to cash in on the lucrative slave trade were among the reasons for these wars.

1.1.2.4. Multi-Religious Ethnic Group

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, at the time of 1963 census, “about 47 percent of the people were Muslims and 35 percent professed Christianity. Though these figures might suggest that few people now worship idols, the fact is that many professing Muslims and Christians remain idol worshippers.”²⁵ Agreeing with these facts, T. L; Gall, confirmed that

Nigerians widely hold to their traditional African religious beliefs in addition to subscribing to various branches of Islam and Christianity...Muslims now constitute 45 % of the population...currently, Protestants account for 26.35%, Catholics 12.1%, and African Chri-

²⁵ *Encyclopedia Britannica.*, 90.

stians 10.6%, of the population.”²⁶

But it is important to bear in mind that religion is diffused in many ethnic groups but it is relatively proportional. At the same time, many Protestants belong to churches of African origin that combine Christianity with animist belief and less than one-fifth of the population is wholly animist. Religious freedom is entrenched in the constitution and to some extent in all parts of the country, but especially in Lagos and other western states where Muslims and Christians live and work together.

The greatest concentration of Muslims is in the Northern states, where 72 percent of the people are Muslims. In the Yoruba West, Christians are slightly more numerous and in the eastern states they make up 77 percent of the population. The main Christian groups are Roman Catholic, British Methodist, Anglican and American Baptist. On the global scale according to Muhib Opeleye, “Nigeria as a nation has a substantial percentage of the world population of Muslims and Christians. This large population gives the country an advantage of being a nation to be reckoned with in the global search for religious peace and harmony.”²⁷ All these church groups as well as some Muslim sects, own and run schools and hospitals through the country. This pattern is now being modified, however, since the civil war of the late 1960s. Some states have taken over the control of schools from missionary groups.

1.1.2.5. Advent and spread of Islam in Nigeria

The founding and consolidation of Islam in Medina and Mecca in Arabia in the 7th century was followed by its spreading to different parts of the world including North Africa.

²⁶ Timothy Gall and Gale Research Inc., *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* (Detroit: Gale, 1998), 330.

²⁷ Opeleye, *Building Bridges of Understanding Between Islam and Christianity in Nigeria*, 2.

About the 11th century, Islam was introduced from North Africa into Kanem Bornu through trading contacts. It was not until about the 14th century that Islam entered Kano in Hausa land (i.e. Hausaland is comprised of Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Gobir, Daura, Zamfara and Kebbi), where it was introduced by Wangarawa traders and Muslim Missionaries who originated in Mali. The Wangarawa's according to the Kano chronicle brought Islam into Kano during the reign of Ali Yaji (1349-85). Obasi citing Hunwick (1965) quotes the Kano Chronicle as follows:

In Yaji's time the Wangarawa came, bringing Islam and numbering up to forty in all. When they come they advised the Sarki to observe ritual prayer, which he did. They appointed an Imam and a Muezzin and a man to slaughter beasts according to Islamic law; they also appointed a qadi. The Sarki gave orders that every town in Kano country should observe ritual prayer and they did so. He also built a rectangular mosque and the five prayers were celebrated there.²⁸

The early Islamic community of the 14th century, in Kano did not have much of an impact for it met with resistance from traditional religion. It was not until the reign of Muhammad Rumfa (1463-1499) in the 15th century that Islam received substantial patronage. Rumfa showed signs of deep commitment and active involvement with Islam through the observance of festival prayers and the building of many mosques in Kano. He helped to promote closer and more beneficial International Muslim brotherhood of Sunni and trade links between Kano and other Muslim states in the savannah region and North Africa. Wangarawa Muslim traders and clerics also introduce Islam into Katsina about the 14th century. But it was not until the 15th century that Islam gained a significant foothold in Katsina during the reign of Muhammad Korau (1466-1493) Because of Korau's enthusiasm for Islam, there was a large scale systematic process of islamisation which was continued by his successor. According to Clark, "Ibrahim, Muhammad

²⁸ Emma Obasi, *Historical Introduction to Education in Nigeria* (Owerri, Nigeria.: Imo State University, 1995), 92.

Korau's successor, pursued the same policy of islamisation forcing his subjects to perform the five daily prayers on pain of imprisonment."²⁹ Many Islamic clerics including Al-Maghili and Makhluḥ Ali also visited Katsina after their visits to Kano.

By the 17th century, Katsina had become an important and well reputed centre for Islamic learning and scholarship attracting scholars from North Africa and the savannah region of West Africa. The scholars gave lectures on Islamic theology, divinity, government and etymology and at times served as political advisers to the rulers. Although some Muslim traders visited and settled in Zaria and Gobir about the 16th century, it was about the 17th century that Islam gained a strong foothold in both places. A notable feature in the practice of Islam in Hausa land during the period up to the end of the 18th century was the stiff opposition to Islam and Muslim rulers by the non-Muslim Hausa (Habe) chiefs who saw the new faith as a threat to their indigenous religious and political system. As a compromise, Muslim rulers and clerics tried to accommodate the religious and political interests of the non-Muslim chiefs by integrating aspects of the indigenous Hausa religious and political practice into the Islamic faith. The situation is described by Clark as follows:

In Hausaland in the 16th century a balance had to be kept between the Muslim clerics as advisers and councilors of the king and the priests skilled and knowledgeable; the former on account of their Islamic education, the latter because of their knowledge of the mysteries of the iskoki (the spirits). The kings were "Chiefs" as it were, of both religions, a difficult position to maintain but made inevitable by the political realities of the situation.³⁰

The attitude of compromising Islamic principles and values on the grounds of expediency was very offensive to Muslim purists who insisted on the reformation of

²⁹ P Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*. 64.

³⁰ P Clarke, 66.

Islam to restore it to its pure state as handed down by the prophet Muhammad. An outstanding reformist who carried out a jihad of the sword (Holy war) in Hausaland, with the intent of purging Islam of pollution, was Uthman dan Fodio: a Fulani from Gobir. Uthman was strongly opposed to un-Islamic practices by Muslims. Subsequently, Muslims made a strong move to Islamize the whole of Nigeria. This effort succeeded greatly only in the North and could not cross across the Niger where Christianity had made a powerful force against the wave of Islam. Uthman dan Fodio passed away in 1817 and was succeeded as the Sultan of Sokoto by his son Sultan Bello. Sultan administrative acumen as a scholar and a devout Muslim, made his reign relatively peaceful. The Islamic legal system or ‘Sharia law’ was applied throughout the caliphate with the *alkalis* in control of the judicial system. It was on this well organized administrative and legal set up that the British colonialist in Nigeria built their indirect rule in Northern Nigeria after the Sokoto Empire was over-run by Fredrick Lugard from 1900-1903.

The spread of Islam to Yoruba land (i.e. present day South Western Nigeria) pre-dates the jihad of Uthman dan Fodio. “The Yoruba was known to Muslims in the 17th century or earlier”³¹ However, it appears that Islam did not gain a foothold in Yoruba land until the late 18th century. Commercial links between the Islamic states of the savannah belt and the Yoruba land was the means by which Islam spread to Yoruba land during the period. Besides the impact of the jihad of Uthman dan Fodio, the spread of Islam from the Hausa land to the middle belt of present day Nigeria was greatly enhanced by the improved road and rail-way communication networks introduced by the colonial

³¹ A Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1974), 57.

administration which facilitated trade contacts that opened the way for conversion to Islam of some middle belt people and some Southerners who live at the northern fringe. Living under Muslim ruler also conduced the conversion of some of the subject people into Islam in some parts of Northern Nigeria where Muslim rule prevailed.

1.1.2.6. Advent and spread of Christianity in Nigeria

The commission by Christ to evangelize the world gave rise to a worldwide Christian missionary activity centered on spreading the good news of the kingdom of God. In terms of historical periodization, there are two phases of Christian church activities in Nigeria. The first phase runs from about 1515 up to about 1688. The second phase dates from 1842. Even though Christianity had existed 7 centuries before Islam in the global history, in Nigeria, Islam had existed for about 6 centuries in the North before the first Christian missionaries came to Nigeria and succeeded in the South. The first wave of Christianity in Nigeria was around the 15th and 18th centuries with the Capuchin and Augustinian missionaries from Portugal, Spain and Italy around Warri and Benin regions.

The Portuguese missionaries initiated evangelical work in Benin City about 1515. Wherever the missionaries were received, they planted churches. This was followed with the opening of schools within the vicinity of the church. The schools were intended to facilitate the evangelistic work of the missionaries by providing basic literacy and religious education to the people in places where a friendly atmosphere prevailed in the relationship between the missionaries and the local people. In the words of Onwubiko, "Portuguese missionaries were most successful in the kingdom of Warri (Nigeria) where two successive kings were known to have become Christians. Here some

semblance of the Christian faith persisted for over two hundred years”.³² The educational activity of the missionaries during this phase reached a climax with the establishment of a seminary in Sao Thome in 1571 to produce indigenous priests and teachers who would propagate the Christian faith.

The second phase of Christian missionary activity in Nigeria dates from 1842 when the church missionary Society (CMS)³³ and the Wesleyans began mission work in Abeokuta and Badagry in Southern Nigeria. This was associated with the coming of different Christian churches mostly of English speaking background. Inclusive in this list in the order of arrival are the Wesleyan Methodist Mission (1842), the Church Missionary Society (1843), the Church of Scotland Mission (1846), The American Baptist Mission (1850), and the Roman Catholic Mission (1860) was the last of the big missionary organization to begin evangelical work in Nigeria. Other missions include the Qua Ibo (1887) and the Primitive Methodist (1892) etc. The early missionary activities of the Christian churches were mostly influenced by freed African slaves like Samuel Ajai Crowther, a former slave from among the Yoruba who was educated in Sierra Leone and later ordained as pastor within the CMS. His position as symbol of African church

³² K Onwubiko, *School Certificate History of West Africa* (Aba ;Jurong: Africana Educational Publishers Company ;;FEP International Private Limited, 1973), 197.

³³ The missionary movements began mostly as working class initiatives, far removed from universities, the wealthy, or the state Church. That was the case with such missionary societies as the Society for the propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in foreign parts, founded in England in 1701; the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), stimulated by William Carey, a Northamptonshire cobbler in 1792; the non-denominational London Missionary Society in 1795, founded by other Free Churchmen at the Falcon public house in Aldersgate; etc. The upper-class, evangelical Anglicans centered in Clapham founded the church Missionary Society in 1709, to live up to the challenges created by the working class group. The British and Foreign Bible Society was formed in 1804 with the specific task of ensuring the translation and printing of the Scriptures. In 1810, a Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (the ABCFM) was set up in the United States. In England, the Wesleyan Methodists founded their own society in 1813.

leadership cannot be over looked. It was on this account that many missionary bodies made inroads into Nigeria.

In Yoruba land, Henry Townsend, Ajai Crowther and other liberated slaves helped trade and Christianity to spread in the 19th and 20th centuries while in the Eastern territory the French and the Irish Holy Ghost fathers with the Holy Rosary sisters helped spread the missions. According to Nwobi Simeon, “the church missionary Society (CMS) which was the first group of Christian’s missionaries that arrived in the Northern Nigeria did not gained root because it had colonial ambition at heart.”³⁴ This implies that the Western Colonial missionaries pursued economic gains for their own interest also. Chinua Achebe notes what happened in the case of the Christian missionaries in Igbo region of Nigeria; “the white man is very clever. He came quietly and peacefully with his religion...Now he has won our brothers, and our clan no longer acts like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.”³⁵ Further outlook today is that Islam is the religion of the people of Northern Nigeria and as such, other ethnic groups in the South East, like the Igbo, did not consider Islam seriously as a peaceful religion.

Subsequently, according to Celestine Obi, “since God willed all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, he sent the missionaries to (Eastern) Nigeria to lead the peoples...into his caravan of the family of God.”³⁶ He further presented a statistical report on the progress of evangelization throughout the era with archival facts³⁷ regarding the rate of the growth of the church in the lower Niger mission during the

³⁴ Simeon Okezuo Nwobi, *Sharia Law in Nigeria: What a Christian Must Know* (Owerri, Nigeria: Totan Publishers, 2000), 4.

³⁵ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994), 176.

³⁶ Celestine Obi, *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria, 1885-1985: A History Published to Mark the First Centenary of the Catholic Church in Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province Within the Former Lower* (Onitsha: Africana-FEP Publishers, 1985), 2.

³⁷ Celestine Obi, Archives Spiritaines, BOX 101. 1.1a Files, nn 3-5, and 8; BOX 101 1.1b.

prefecture of Joseph Shanahan (1905-1916). The rapid growth of the faith is not limited to the Catholic denomination. Other Christian denominations were also thriving very well. Bishop Joseph Shanahan (1905-1916) summarized the growth as illustrated below.

Table 1.1.³⁸ Some denominations in Nigeria and its Foundation

Denomination	Foundation in Nigeria	Central Location	Adherents
Church of Missionary Society (CMS)	1856	London	165,000
Presbyterians	1840	Wales	27,000
Wesleyans	1896	London	1,000
Methodists	1893	England	32,000
Qua Ibo Church	1887	Belfast	20,000
Delta Pastorate	1864	Nigeria	85,000
Baptist Church	1908	USA	4,300
Russellites	1923	England	5,000
7 th Day Adventists	1917	USA	1,200
Delta Native	1918	Nigeria	14,000
African Church	1891	Lagos	25,000
Salvation Army	1920	England	600
Christ Army	1924	Lagos	19,900
Church of Sudan	1910	South Africa	1,000
Episcopian Church	1923	USA	1,000
Faith Tabernacle	1923	USA	5,00
Total			398,000

³⁸ Celestine Obi, p. 156 (Archives Spiritaines, BOX 101, 1.3b. Files, nn. 3-8).

In Northern Nigeria, missionary work began but failed until the imposition of colonial rule early in the 20th century.”³⁹ Thus in spite of persistent efforts, a succession of missionaries failed to secure permission from Emirs to preach Christianity. The ban of missionaries’ entry into Muslim territories was introduced by the government out of fear of a general Muslim uprising which could endanger the British presence. Lord Lugard had assured the Emirs that there would be no interference with their religion and that Christianity would not be forced upon them. He expressed his fears and suspicion, thus, “I see no reason why religion be it one sort or another should be forced upon the liberated slaves. I see much in it to exasperate the Mohammedan Master who considers himself robbed of his property that we may further a religious propaganda hostile to his creed.”⁴⁰

1.2. CO-EXISTENCE AND CONFLICTUAL RELATIONS

In Nigeria, there have been tensions and violent clashes between Christians and Muslims, as well as positive encounters. This is why the religious situation in the country is designated as being that of the co-existence of both good and conflictual relations; of positive and less positive attitudes. Since 1980, conflicts and violence have intensified but there has not been much progress in the outcome of dialogue and peace encounters. The situation has created difficulty for both traditions in having religious harmony and continual understanding in building up a stable society. In view of the above factor I now attempt to describe some key expressions of these relationship patterns.

³⁹ Bengt Sundkler, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge UK; New York, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 253-257.

⁴⁰ Celestine Obi, (Colonial office, C.O. 446/10, No. 23453, Lugard, Jebba, June 16, 1900) 82

1.2.1. Peaceful Co-existence

Being aware of the challenging character of Nigerian nation-state, it is possible to say that it has enjoyed much harmony of life within its national frontiers. Nigeria is the most populated African nation, and its three ethnic groups dominated the regional lines, namely the Hausa-Fulani in the north of the country, the Yoruba in the southwest and the Igbo in the southeast. But, none of these regions forms a homogeneous ethnic concentration. In terms of religious sociology, Nigeria is a home to Islam, Christianity, African traditional religion, as well as differing shades of agnosticism and atheism. Islam and Christianity constitute the dominant religions with equal measure of adherents. This composition in which a large Muslim population lives together with about the same number of Christians within a national frontier, according to Henri Teissier, is in itself unique, making Nigeria, the “greatest Islamo-Christian nation in the world”⁴¹ Islam came before Christianity in Nigeria, having entered and spread through the north of the country in the 8th century through Sahara. It has remained the dominant religion in northern Nigeria.⁴² Christianity, after the unsettling initial mission in the coastal kingdoms of Warri and Benin in the 15th and early 18th centuries⁴³, gained successful entrance and spread southward in the 19th and 20th centuries.

⁴¹ Teissier Archbishop of Algeria observed this statistical information after his visit to Nigeria, which was well explained in John O. Onaiyekan, “Being Church in an Islamo-Christian Society: Emerging patterns of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa-a Nigerian Perspective,” *Concilium* 1 (1992), 48.

⁴² The North of Nigeria is a desert region- the home of the Hausa, the Kanuri (formerly, Bornu kingdom) and the Fulani who, over 200 years ago, conquered the independent city-states of Hausa and kingdoms and sought to establish a purer form of Islam in the territory. It includes as North, the non-Hausa indigenous peoples of Middle Belt who were also incorporated into the Hausa-Fulani Empire.

⁴³ Joseph Kenny, *The Catholic Church in Tropical Africa 1445-1850* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1983), 58-59. The initial presence of Christian mission, between 15th and 18th centuries, came through the Portuguese trade opening, and this brought in the Capuchin and Augustinian Missionaries into the ancient kingdom of Warri and Benin. Kenny describes the relationship between the kings of Benin and Warri and the missionaries, which were at times friendly and at times obstructive, depending on the dispositions of the reigning king. Whatever the case, this first contact did not last beyond the 18th century.

However, beyond the mere dominating presence of Muslims in the North and Christians in the South, members of both religions live together and interact in many respects within the diverse cultural and geographical divides in Nigeria. The core north inhabited by the Hausa-Fulani peoples, is mainly Muslims, but some parts of it (such as Kaduna and Adamawa) have a sizable minority of Christians, drawn from ethnic northern Christian and Southern Christian migrants. The south prides itself as largely Christians, but has also many Muslims. This strong Christian loyalty is mainly maintained in the East (among the Igbo people) and South (the South-South peoples). The Yoruba people in the South-west are equally split into half Christians and half Muslims. The Middle Belt, in the North-central geo-political area, is divided between the concentration of Muslims westward and Christians, eastward.

As such, while this geographical divide could be broadly and loosely characterized as the “Muslim North and Christian South”, it cannot be strictly described so, since Nigeria’s multi-ethnic and multi-religious identities are considerably mix. The ethno-religious mixed is an important resource for the good relations that Nigerian Christians and Muslims enjoy. They normally try to cope with their religious divides, although their ethnic and religious difference have often been and continue to be manipulated to satisfy ambitions for political power or other personal goals. John Onaiyekan, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, has described the level of harmonious interaction Christians and Muslims enjoy in many areas of life:

The fact is that most of the time, Christians and Muslims live together in peace in Nigeria. They are together in the markets and business houses, in the offices and work camps, in the armed forces and the police, in the political parties and social clubs. The children and youth study and live together in the same schools and institutes of higher learning. Often members of the same family include adherents of both faiths. Nigerians are generally fervent

in their religious convictions. But they also have a broadminded fervent in their religious difference... Therefore, most of the time, our religious differences are taken for granted.⁴⁴

This desire for interreligious co-existence includes the tradition of inviting Christian and Muslim clerics to pray together on some civic occasions, such as Independence Day celebration, and all revere God in each other's form of prayer.⁴⁵ Such spiritual encounter has not been fruitless, as they encourage people to unite for other religious events. For instance, families invite friends to their religious festivals, such as Christmas and the Muslim Id-el-Fitri, and messages of good will and gifts are normally exchanged. It is difficult to deny the desire for a harmony of life from the motivations behind these open and more positive interactions. Christians and Muslims of the ethnic Yorubas and those of Edo state exemplify this harmonious co-existence more than their counterparts in the northern part of the country. In the former, families constituted of more than one religious identity are largely peaceful, and their religious loyalties are not lived in tension with their family loyalties.

Taken together, it can be said that the deep commitment Christians and Muslims have lived together irrespective of their religious convictions in a mutually good relations. Despite this positive experience of interreligious co-existence, however, there have been tensions and violent conflicts responsible for massive loss of lives and of multi-million naira⁴⁶ worth of property. There arise then, the need to take a serious view of the common prejudices that constitute part of Christian-Muslim rivalries

⁴⁴ John Onaiyekan, "Muslims and Christians in Nigeria: The Imperative of Dialogue," *Sedos Bulletin* 33, no. 11 (2001) 280

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* This is a multi-religious prayer. The feeling among people of different religions to be united before in God in prayer is a very important aspect of the spiritual dimension of interreligious dialogue.

⁴⁶ The "Naira" is the name for Nigeria's local currency, introduced in 1973 to replace the pounds. It is circulated in Nigeria in banknotes and coins as legal tender and solely issued by the central bank of Nigeria (CBN).

1.2.1.1. Peace-spoiling Elements in Christian-Muslim Relations

The unification of northern and southern Nigeria by the British colonizers was effected by Sir Frederick Lugard in 1914. This was marked by bringing together the different peoples of Nigeria into one political unit⁴⁷ without considering the complex circumstances of ethnic composition. Itsey Sagay captures the pre-colonial picture of what is known today as Nigeria in the following way:

In the beginning there was no Nigeria. There were Ijaws, Igbos, Urhobos, Itsekiris, Yorubas, Hausas, Nupes, Kanuris, Ogonis, Qwaris, Katafs, Jukars, Edos, Ibibios, Efiks, Idomas, Tivs, Junkuns, Biroms, Angas, Ogojas, and so on. There were kingdoms of Oyo, Lagos, Calabar, Brass, Itsekiri, Benin, Tiv, Bornu, Sokoto Caliphate (with loose control over Kano, Ilorin, Zaria, etc) Bonny, Opobo, etc. Prior to the British conquest of the distinctive nations making up the present day Nigeria, these nations were different peoples and communities independent of each other and of Britain.⁴⁸

Except by colonial diplomatic and military might, the original discrete units were reportedly prepared to survive as independent peoples and kingdoms.⁴⁹ By enforcing a series of treaties with conquered and negotiated local kingdoms and chiefdoms, Britain secured a formal recognition of its claim of influence over the territory of Nigeria at the Berlin Conference in 1885, against similar ambitions of France and Germany.⁵⁰

The amalgamation experience has often been criticized locally, from the perspective that it was motivated by the desire to satisfy British convenience and not to serve the best interests of Nigerian peoples, especially as the British did not do enough to harmonize the immense diversity that identify the loosely merged communities. This

⁴⁷ Michael Crowther, *The Story of Nigeria* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 19. The British Colonial administration amalgamated the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria to form the nation-state known as "Nigeria".

⁴⁸ Itsey Sagay, "Nigeria, Federalism, the Constitution and Resource Control," *Guardian*, 25 May 2001, 8.

⁴⁹ Crowther, *The Story of Nigeria*, 19.

⁵⁰ I.F Nicholson, *The Administration of Nigeria 1900-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 5.

colonial mistake has consistently been recognized, by local and foreign commentators, as part of the problem of the on-going crisis of nationhood. The tragedy of the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) was a lesson decried by the British scholar to be learned from.

According to John Ferguson “what happened in the Nigerian- Biafran war is that we are all guilty: Britain, for setting an example of imperialism and racism, for bringing together discrete parts into a political entity without really uniting them. . . .”⁵¹

Nevertheless, the prospects of Nigeria were not tied to the 1914 blunder. The Nigerian people had opportunity to take their destiny in their hands, but have continued to be caught in the vicious cycle of violence.

1.2.1.2. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970)

The Nigerian Civil war further deepened the suspicion that has marked inter-ethnic and interreligious relations in Nigeria. The civil crisis, sometimes called the “Biafran War”, is described by the veteran expatriate, D.J. Slattery as “the saddest chapter in the history of Nigeria since receiving independence from Britain in 1960.”⁵² Slattery cannot be more correct, because no episode has ever threatened Nigeria’s corporate existence as the three years of war.

But the crisis was nurtured by six years of bitter hostility and violence that trailed the post-independence politics. With intra-ethnic and regional hostility, which resulted from the irregularities that marked the 1959 federal elections, national life became defined by high level corruption, political uncertainty and civil unrest. The tense atmosphere reached

⁵¹ John Ferguson, “Lessons of Biafra,” *The Christian Century* 85, no 33 (1968): 1016. Ferguson was a British Classics professor and theologian who had lived in Nigeria ten years before the civil war, as head of the department of classics at the University of Ibadan. His knowledge of Nigeria is not in doubt.

⁵² Denis Slattery, *My Life Story* (Lagos: West African Book Publishers, 1996), 135.

new heights with the violent clashes that followed the 1965 regional elections in the West. As Ola Balogun writes, “all these crises that followed 1962 only served to hasten the process of collapse of the political class.”⁵³

In January 1966, some young army officers (mostly Igbo’s) staged a coup d’état, and assassinated prominent politicians and military officers, including the prime minister, who was a northerner and Muslim. Indeed, as one chronicler indicated, “the ethnic distribution of the casualties...led to the allegation that it was an Igbo coup.”⁵⁴ This viewpoint accounted for the massacre of the Igbo’s resident in the north, from May 1966, resulting in violent killing of 30,000 Igbo’s and displacing 2 million, most of whom were forced to migrate to the Igbo majority Eastern region. The civil crisis degenerated into a tragic civil war, following the announcement of secession of the eastern region from Nigeria, by Col, Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, who declared the territory: “Biafra.”⁵⁵ The civil war caused tens of thousands of more deaths. “It was a war the like of which Nigeria had never known; a war in which the nation’s human and natural resources were abused, wasted, vandalized, impoverished and even desecrated. It was a war with its train of arrogance, callousness, corruption, mercenaries, agony, refugees, starvation, kwashiorkor and death.”⁵⁶

Apparently, it was magnified by its ethnic and religious interpretations. But, in truth, the foreign involvement in the war exposed the level of duplicity some Western

⁵³ Ola Balogun, *The Tragic Years: Nigeria in Crisis, 1966-1970* (Benin City Nigeria: Ethiope Pub. Corp., 1973), 22.

⁵⁴ The casualty list includes the prime minister and the Sarduana of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello, both from the North, Chief Samuel Akintola and the minister of Finance, Festus Okotie Eboh, both from the West. Others include military officers; four from the North, two Westreners and one from the East. C.f Arthur Nwankwo, *Nigeria: The Challenge of Biafra* (London: R. Collings, 1972), 11.

⁵⁵ The text of the declaration of Independence in Forsyth, *Biafra Story*, 94-95.

⁵⁶ A Makozi, *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria* (Yaba Lagos: Macmillan Nigeria, 1982), 90.

powers can engage with in pursuit of their interest. As Slattery witnesses, “into the scene came the big powers-Russia, Britain, France and America, selling their war materials to both sides.”⁵⁷ Moreover, Balogun describes how the supply of arms to Nigeria and the “intervention in favor of the secessionist side were motivated by hopes based on some material calculations.”⁵⁸ Arguably, this foreign factor helped to prolong the war.

With the end of the war in 15 January 1970, General Yakubu Gowon sought to reconcile with the east. He promised the aborted reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Igbo’s into one Nigerian nation.⁵⁹ Over fifty years after the tragic war, it has become clear to Nigerians that the country has not been able to heal what was destroyed in just thirty months, since the ethnic peoples of the defunct Biafra, especially the Igbo’s, still feel alienated from the unified Nigeria. The Nigeria civil war exemplifies how a conflict in Nigeria can have interconnected causes. Its immediate cause was political, and its fundamental motivation was the deep-seated ethnic suspicion.

1.2.1.3. The Missionary Factor

The deep animosity that has traced Christian-Muslim relations was sown by the complex Islamic and Christian missionary forces of expansion and domination. The history of Islam in Nigeria changed decisively with the jihad of Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio, in the early nineteenth century (1804-1810).⁶⁰ While the traditional Muslim

⁵⁷ Slattery, *My Life Story*, 136.

⁵⁸ Balogun, *The tragic years*, 101-106.

⁵⁹ For detailed information, see Yakubu Gowon, “The Dawn of national reconciliation (Victory Message to the Nation), 15th January 1970,” cited in A.H.M Kirk-Greene, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Sourcebook 1966-1969*, 2 vols; (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 457. For an assessment of these promises, see Forsyth, *Biafra Story*, 280.

⁶⁰ Dan Fodio waged a jihad against the Hausa rulers and the Muslim society of the present Northern Nigeria (1804-1810), seeking to reform the faith of Muslims, which he considered to be polluted by “ungodly” Hausa rulers. This might be the only way to justify a jihad against a Muslim society, at which the traditional Sunni frowns.

society of pre-19th century was not expansive as such, modern Islam has gained remarkable followers since Dan Fodio's reform. On the other side, Christianity has recorded increasing growth since its second wave of mission in the 19th century, to the extent that it has been able to measure with Islam almost on equal terms statistically. These early periods of consolidation were marked with competition and rivalry. For example, the encounter between the expanding Christianity and Islam in the Niger-Benue confluence resulted in conflict. It predicted what Christian-Muslim relations will be and even defines relations today. John Onaiyekan, believes that growth of the Christian is an issue in the on-going Christian-Muslim rivalry. For, in the space of about 150 years, "Christianity has made phenomenal progress in our country, catching up with and almost overtaking Islam that has been around for many centuries..."⁶¹

Besides the above expansionist strategy, the methods employed in the respective religious spread represented the other negatively, not least as 'unbelieving'. Such typical pre-Vatican triumphalism found in both Christians and Muslim strategies led both sides to view each other's missionary work as simply a menace. This heritage of mistrust is very much alive, and yields to manipulation by unrelenting corrupt and ambitious politicians. Sanneh offers a point of reflection for Christians and Muslim missionary traditions in Nigeria. He contends that, although both the Islamic jihadists and Christian missionaries somehow derided the traditional religions in their respective exclusive missionary schemes, but both religions could not displace its contributions in their process of indigenization.⁶² If this view is taken seriously, it may reinforce the need for

⁶¹ Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission* (Enugu CIDIAP Printing press, 2004), nos. 21-31; Onaiyekan, *Muslims and Christians in Nigeria*, 279.

⁶² This view has been convincingly argued in Lamin Sanneh, "The Domestication of Islam and Christianity in African Societies: A Methodological Exposition," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 11 (1980): 1-12.

Christians and Muslims to embrace the rational path in dealing with their common legacy of rivalry.

1.2.1.4. Nigerian Political Factor

Politics is the way in which a people organize their social life with respect to the system of rules and procedures for regulating that mode of social relationships. It revolves around three basic components, the state, the people or political community and the management of resources of the state to ensure the good life. For Makozi, “politics is any planned activity to promote the welfare of all members and all groups within a society.”⁶³ The bases of politics are the fact that the human person is both an individual and a social being that lives and relates with other human beings. It is often observed that whenever there are two or more human beings who must interact among themselves to attain a goal, there can be occasions of strain and estrangement, and politics must then come in to direct their relationship in order to promote and facilitate the attainment of the goal.

In the contemporary Nigerian context, politics shows until recently a consistent bent of the domination of the position of leadership by the northern section of Nigeria consisting predominantly of Muslims. Biafra lost the 1967-1970 secession war and this swept the Easterners by the wayside of leadership. The West, mainly (*Yoruba*) was slow in competing for the country’s leadership position. Constitutionally speaking, the top posts of Nigeria are for everyone from any part of country and from any region. This is the demand for equal opportunity of the public in the choice of leadership. There was for

⁶³ A. O Makozi, “Religion and Politics in Independent Nigeria: A Historical Analysis,” *The Nigerian Journal of Theology.*, 1988, 3–26.

a long time (1966-1999) the situation of a handover from one northern Muslim to another. This however has stopped. Equal opportunities must be given to all to assume the position of presidency. Hence, the traditional practice of the choice of leaders based either in gerontocracy, monarchy, or hereditary succession need to end.

Such an ending to how a leader is selected is necessary for the above methods do not give all a chance to participate in leadership. “Worse still, they do not help in the selection of military intervention in politics in many African nations.”⁶⁴ For military rule, being dictatorial, violent, unjust, illegitimate and lacking the participation of the members is against the spirit and substance of communalism that is keeping the eye for the national interest. The ability of the people to change their leader as and when due is the central core of democracy or any other system that will be satisfactory for a people with civil and national interests. The process of representation must be the one with the system of choice and continuity and that should be considered most. Perhaps the challenge, in Africa and Nigeria in particular, is to develop a system that is known, practicable and workable to the people. Such a system must be able to have its roots.

Table 1.1 Nigeria’s past Presidents and their religious affiliation

No	Name	Zone	Ethni origin	Religion	Mandate	Duration
1	Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa	North East	Hausa	Muslim (Bauchi)	Federal Parliamentary Electoral victory	1st Oct. 1960-15 th Jan. 1966
2	Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi	South East	Igbo (Umuahia)	Christian (Catholic)	1 st Military coup d’etat & Invitation	1 st Oct. 1960-15 th Jan. 1966
3	Gen. Yakubu Gowon	North Central	Biron (Pankshin)	Christian (ECWA)	Military Coup d’etat	29 th July 1966-29 th

⁶⁴ A. O Makozi, 142.

						July, 1975
4	Gen. Murtala R. Muhammad	North West	Hausa (Kano)	Muslim	Military Coup d'etat	29 th July 1975-13 th Feb. 1976
5	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo	South west	Yoruba (Abeokuta)	Christian (Baptist)	Military appointment following the 1976 aborted coup	13 th Feb; 1976-30 th Sep 1979
6	Alhaji Shehu Shagari	North West	Hausa-Fulani (Sokoto)	Muslim	Presidential Electoral victory	1 st Oct; 1979-31 st Dec' 1983
7	Gen. Muhammadu Buhari	North West	Hausa Fulani	Muslim	Military coup d'etat	31 st Dec; 1983-27 th Aug; 1985
8	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	North Central	Nupe (Minna)	Muslim	Military coup d'etat	27 th Aug; 1985-26 th Aug; 1993
9	Chief Ernest Shonekan	South West	Yoruba (Abeokuta)	Christian (Anglican)	Military Appointment	26 th Aug; 1993-17 th Nov; 1993
10	Gen. Sani Abacha	North central	Kanuri (Kano)	Muslim	Palace Military coup	17 th Nov' 1993-8 th June 1998
11	Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar	North Central	Nupe (Mina)	Muslim	Military appointment following Abacha's sudden death	8 th June 1998-29 th May 1999
12	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	South West	Yoruba (Abeokuta)	Christian (Baptist)	Presidential Electoral victory	29 th May 1999-29 th May 2003
13	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	South West	Yoruba (Abeokuta)	Christian (Baptist)	Presidential Electoral Victory	29 th May 2003-29 th - May 2007

14	Shehu Musa Yar'adua	North central	Hausa (Katsina)	Muslim	Presidential Electoral	May 2007- May 2010
15	Good Luck Jonathan	Middle Belt	Ijaw	Christian		2010- May 2015

As the above table indicates, Nigeria was under military rule for about 29 years; three and half years were headed by Christians while Muslims ruled for over 25 years. The Southern Christians had about a 10- years shot at the top job in 46 years of Nigerian independence. The study seems to support, in a clear manner, allegations that since the 1980's, the Muslims' tendency to cling to the tradition of retaining political power, with a ratio of 2: 1. The fact that both Christians and Muslims are concerned with how political authority is accessed, and probably they both stretch out for the same thing, speaks volumes about the nature of their relationship.

1.2.1.5. The Socio-Cultural Factor

Due to the cultural pluralism in Nigeria, many people have found it very hard to work together for the good of the nation. Ethnic interests have continued to override national interests in such a way that national policies have often been coloured by sectional tendencies; Nigeria is a land of plenty with natural resources that could help to build the nation to a higher standard of living but still many are suffering from various kinds of injustices as a result of inequalities in the distribution of the nation's wealth. Certain sections of the country have continued to receive special governmental attention since independence, to the neglect of others. The northern parts of the country, comprised mostly of Muslims, have gained more than the Southern area whose residents are predominantly Christians. The evidence can be shown by the number of government

establishments and infrastructural facilities present in these places⁶⁵. Such imbalances in the distribution of national wealth have always generated a sentiment of hatred in the affected areas to the country that denies them their own legitimate rights. Many ethnic nationalities that make up the country now reek with anger, rage and the determination to become autonomous if the situation does not change.

The nation itself seems to have gone mad as it slides dangerously into the state of atavistic brutality that makes both the oppressor and the oppressed victims.

1.1.2.6. The Nigerian Oil Factor

In terms of natural resources and sources of revenue, Nigeria is rich in oil production. Sales from the oil bring in much revenue to the nation, but still many of the citizens are poor and many remain below the poverty line. According to Ida Walker, “oil brings in a great deal of wealth, but the general population of Nigeria does not benefit directly from the oil industry. The unemployment rate was reported by the country’s Federal office of statistics to be over forty percent in late 2002...sixty percent of the Nigerian population fell below the poverty line”⁶⁶But many people mistakenly think that Nigeria is doing well economically.

⁶⁵ Historical evidence seems to support this view, but only to an extent. The wider discussion of natural resources politics e.g the Niger Delta has been recorded in several studies such that it serves no useful purpose discussing it here. However, what can be said is that by the mid-1980s, the enormous wealth that had accrued from the country’s oil deposits had been mismanaged by the leaders mostly and the implications of the downward plunge in the country’s economy had become manifest. It was indeed not long afterwards that the country began serious negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. For more on this, see Adebayo Olukoshi, (Ed.) *The Politics of structural Adjustment in Nigeria*, London: James Currey, 1993. Furthermore, Sir Theodore Adams, warned as late as 1914, almost 40 years after the amalgamation, the people in the North regarded themselves as belonging to a separate country and that enforced co-operation with the South could lead to demand for “ a Pakistan” See, Abdul-Rahooof Adebayo bello, “*Jos crisis and Ethnic Animosity in Nigeria: A historical perspective*, Unpublished manuscript.

⁶⁶ Ida Walker, *Nigeria Philadelphia: (Mason Crest Publishers, 2005)*, 42.

As the revenue from petroleum continued to grow, Nigerians began to rely heavily on such revenue. According to Tom Mbeke “oil has replaced agriculture as the mainstay of Nigerian economy”⁶⁷ This vast oil reservation is located in the Southern Eastern region of Nigeria, specifically in the area known as the Niger Delta. However, the oil revenue has not been either smooth sailing or an easy venture due to hostilities arising especially in and around the Niger Delta region where the great majority of the oil deposits are located. Due to corruption, only a few individual and corrupt leaders’ benefits from the oil revenue, leaving many Nigerians unhappy and dissatisfied with the manner in which the country’s oil revenues are utilized.

Again, the most recent conspicuous case is the Niger-Delta conflict that has claimed many casualties, live and property. Not to be forgotten is the Movement for the survival of the Ogoni People’s leader (MOSOP) Ken Saro Wiwa and eight members of his group, who were condemned to death by hanging by the Nigerian military government in 1995 in response to the group’s defense of what they thought as their rightful demand. Despite the inequalities witnessed between states and tribes, the few privileged individuals at the source of the nation’s wealth tend to create a world of their own amidst of the misery of the masses. The vicious circle of poverty continues to revolve in the way that the rich continues to become richer. The situation has generated sentiment of apathy and indifference in many youths towards the government and its projects. Many youths have angrily turned to becoing kidnappers, engaging in armed robbery and being hired as assassins. .

⁶⁷ Tom Mbeke-Ekanem, *Beyond the Execution: Understanding the Ethnic and Military Politics in Nigeria* (San Jose; New York: Writer’s Showcase, 2000), 16.

1.2.1.7. *The Socio-Economic Factor*

The impact of crippling socio-economic realities in interreligious relations heightens rivalry.⁶⁸ Since the 1980s, Nigeria has been politically unstable, resulting in an economic crisis, which creates a disturbing social gap between the overwhelming majority who live below the poverty line and the corrupt elite who selfishly appropriate common funds. This situation climaxed during the years of military rule (1983-1999) when the economy seemed to enter into steady decline.⁶⁹ Political power struggles among the various political classes in Nigeria at that period obsessively focused on economic gains and survival, sparking popular reactions against social injustices, conditions of unemployment, poverty, lack of educational opportunity, and lack of access to scarce resources, such as land and water. Economic distress exacerbated ethnic and religious crisis, as communities competed and continue to compete for resources, with the result that any minor misunderstanding gave and gives way to religious violence.

M. H. Kukah and T. Falola have suggested that it is some economic and cultural contexts that have pitted the ethnic Kataf (Christians) against their ethnic Zango (Hausa-Fulani) neighbors.⁷⁰ This position has been justified on number of accounts. The feature of socio-economic motivations is that, in nearly every riot, the economically and socially under-classed youth's loot shops and destroy businesses under a religious pretext

1.2.1.8. *Ethnic-Religious Politics.*

⁶⁸ Nkom, "Religious and Communal Crisis in Kaduna State," 78.

⁶⁹ George Ehusani, *Nigeria: Years Eaten by the Locust* (Ibadan: Craft Books, 2002), 29-34. Ehusani reflects on a period scattered by a succession of military dictators, each more adept than the other in selfish enrichment. No wonder the years 1993-1998 are particularly described as "Years Eaten by the Locust."

⁷⁰ Kukah and Falola, *Religious Militancy*, 215-220.

Ethnic-religious and regional base of the political parties which emerged most probably, as part of the decolonization process hardened regional and ethnic lines in Nigeria. The nation has been deeply immersed in the ethno-religious conflicts since its independence in 1960,⁷¹ and thus, have failed to realize its national vision. The three largest ethnic groups, the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo (anchoring the regional bases of North, Southwest and Southeast, in that order), with their traditional Islam and Christian affiliations became natural players in this religious politics. Other ethnic groups align themselves to the above big three. The national council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) was an Igbo party; the Action Group (AG) and the Northern people's Congress (NPC) represented the interest of the Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani respectively. Political activity came to be recognized with the struggle for domination of one region or ethnic group over others. Thus with these regional based political parties, the welfare of the nation was sacrificed at the interest of the regions or groups.

Indeed, the desire for power and prosperity in Nigeria seem to drive people into politics, and most politicians find it expedient to use ethnic and religious symbols to pursue these benefits. This situation has been having damaging effect for Christian-Muslim relations, ranging from failing in state's neutrality in religious matters to politicians manipulation of religions. This trend has continued through the post independence period till today. The regionalization of National Wealth has helped to escalate this ethnic hostility. Most aspirants to the public office have as their primary

⁷¹ On October 1, 1960, Nigeria hurried into independence after some shaky negotiations for the federations of the major units, namely North, West and East, as envisioned by the 1954 federal constitution and 1960 Republican Constitution. There was no serious effort to heal the ethnic differences; hence, power struggles among the ethnic nationalities which defined the 1959 elections has remained the status quo. For an outsider's viewpoint, see Forsyth, Biafra Strory, 14-15.

concern how much they can grab of the national cake, for themselves and for their ethnic groups. The struggle for the control of Federal government has been extremely combative. The Mamser Report of Political Bureau stated that:

Elections were rigged in the most blatant fashion, census figures were manipulated to give political advantage to the competing regions, violence, corruption, arson and brigandage were employed in the mad desire to win or retain power both in the regions and at the centre....undeveloped, parasitic and corruption-ridden economy inherited from the British fared very badly and dashed all hopes of meaningful development.⁷²

Individual members of the ethnic groups have manipulated and intensified regional and statist sentiments for personal and social class struggles, thereby undermining the growth and development of the Nigerian nation. Since independent then, one of the greatest problems facing Nigeria is how to promote national loyalty in a multi-ethnic society as ours. The politicization of ethnicity and religion has established tribalism as an institution in the national life and polity. This entails that there is no end to such factor until people begin to see themselves as Nigerians before their regional or ethnic interest. The fact that both Christians and Muslims are concerned with how political authority is accessed, and probably stretch out for the same thing, speak a lot about the nature of their relationship.

1.2.1.9. Educational Gap between North and South

The so-called deprivation of western education in the North must be understood against the background of the alliance between the Colonialists-Emirates aristocrats. It was the positive response of the southerners to Christian mission that resulted in their successful exploitation of educational opportunities. As it were, a more Western-educated Christian south seems to have seen more progress than the culturally advanced Muslim

⁷² O Awolowo, *The People's Republic* (Nigeria: Oxford University Press, 1968), 62.

north spared of Christian missionary intrusion. Christian evangelism was inextricably linked to Christian education. Therefore, the evangelistic orientation of Christian missionary education and its rejection by the Muslim rulers in the north and Lugard's support for the emir's stance of non-interference formed a stumbling block to the establishment of Christian mission schools in the Muslim north. Hence, the Muslim north did not have early enough the indigenous personnel with the western European type of formal schooling required for employment in the burgeoning colonial administration and commercial houses.

Sir Hugh Clifford who succeeded Fredrick Lugard is quoted to have said in an address he made in 1920 to the Nigerian Council that "after two decades of British occupation, the northern provinces have not yet produced a single native of these provinces who is sufficiently educated to enable him to fill the most minor clerical post in the office of any government department."⁷³

There is then, the need to take a serious view of the common prejudices that constitute part of Christian-Muslim rivalries. Educational imbalance has been one of the reasons for stigmatization of Christians as pro-west secularists.

While the northern Muslims complain that the colonial disparate approach left them cheated in the area of Western education, they miss out the fact that the southerners owe their exposure to Western education to missionaries, not to colonial authorities. The apparently negative experiences of colonialism being suffered by victims notwithstanding, misconception is rife over the impact of the colonial enterprise on the relations between Christians and Muslims. Much education is needed, on the part of the

⁷³ Segun Adesina, *The Development of Modern Education in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria), 1988), 21.

Muslims, for the right distinction to be made between western colonialism and Christianity.

1.2.1.10. The External Sponsored Influence

In Nigeria, careful attention to the contributions of external forces in the disagreements between Christians and Muslims opens a number of concerns. A concern with whether the foreign aids that favor Islamic da'wa and Christian missionary efforts serve to engender hostility toward others, since it will help us to think ethically about what makes for the common good.

Modern Islam in Nigeria- has access to global Islamic networks for missionary works, the islamisation of knowledge, international Islamic agencies, even the philosophies of Islamism. Through its relations with the outside Islamic world, Saudi Arabia and Iran began to come to Nigeria to propagate their form of Islam.

According to John Paden, the Sarduna of Sokoto, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello (d. 1966) received a number of financial “grants for the cause of Islam”⁷⁴ mostly for its continued spread. This led to Sarduna's creation of the Jama'atu Nasril Islami (JNI) an association for the Victory of Islam through the advice of Abubakar Gumi the former chief Islamic judge of Northern and promoter of Saudi Wahhabism. The JNI became the strategist of the Muslim religious-political vision of the Sufi traditionalist establishment, linking Nigerian Muslims with global Islam, mainly by financially providing access to Islamic literature in Nigerian languages, and building of mosques.⁷⁵ In addition to the Wahhabi

⁷⁴ John Paden, *Ahmadu Bello, Sarduna of Sokoto: Values and Leadership in Nigeria* (Zaria: Hudahuda, 1986), 543. The sum of 60,000 and 40,000 Nigerian pounds for the work of spreading Islam and the building of the Lagos Central Mosque respectively, among other financial supports, collectively estimated to count in millions of pounds.

⁷⁵ Paden, *Ahmadu Bello, Sarduna of Sokoto*, 549.

ideas originating in Saudi Arabian, Iran worked its way into Nigerian Islam through the leadership of the Muslim Students Society (MSS). Iran's Islamic vision is characterized by a division between moderate and extremist admirers. However, its revolutionary ideas found promotion in the radicalized (Sunni) Muslim Brotherhood led by the political reform activist, Ibrahim El-Zakzaky (b. 1963). This movement has very much influenced opposition to Nigeria's secularity among some Muslims through their Islamist activism of the 1990s. Today Iranian 'Shi'ite literature is available to the Muslim students and unemployed youths, who are often involved in most of these riots in the country.

In November, 1989, the desire to reinforce the propagation of Islam led to the convening of an International conference on 'Islam in Africa' with its headquarters in the Nigerian capital Abuja, sponsored by the major world Islamic movements. Their agenda for gathering is in view of uniting the Ummah or Muslim community with an agenda to facing the common enemy; especially in "getting Sharia established in Nigeria whether alive or dead."⁷⁶ Obviously, these specific missionary views of Muslims and their religion are less positive, although most Christian missionaries to Africa would rather insist that they have generally been hostile. It is difficult to divest this typical sense of Islamic solidarity and sensitization from the sense of solidarity and sympathy Nigerian Muslims show with the emotions and resentments of their co-religionists worldwide. Any moment they hear that Muslims are being killed or abused elsewhere; they take up arms against Christians in their neighborhood.

1.2.1.11. The Religious Dimension

⁷⁶ Daily Sketch, 14 December 1989, 8.

Religion can be both an integrative and divisive factor in any society. When the divisive elements of religion are not properly handled and brought under strict control, they create tensions and unrest in a society. Often, these manifest themselves in form of religious riots and intolerance. However, the above studies have been reflecting on the underlying non-religious forces in the mutual relations of Christians and Muslims. Thus, there is the need to re-direct attention to the religious motivations that leads to such actions. This paves the way for the possibility that believers attitudes towards others are shaped by their respective deep religious convictions. In Nigeria as elsewhere, religion is fundamental and dominates people's lives and behaviors. Both P. Udoma⁷⁷ and S. Ilesanmi⁷⁸ share this religious perspective in their respective studies on the dynamics of religious expressions in Nigeria. For the former, it is the major contributor, and for the latter, religious symbols structure people's concerns.⁷⁹

The reality is that this compelling force of the religious mindset cannot be united from the religious background of the story of the ethnic compositions of Nigeria. For example, most of the Hausa-Fulani people link their identity to the religio-political revolutions of Uthman Dan Fodio and most Igbo people are rooted in Christian civilization.⁸⁰ Underneath these two religious affiliations are the traditional religions from which many experienced their conversion. So for the majority of people in Nigeria, religious faith is vital part of their identity. It is needless to say that intense religious convictions can also lead to extremism. This specific dimension can explain why certain

⁷⁷ Patrick Udoma, *The Cross and the Crescent: A Christian Response to Two Decades of Islamic Affirmation in Nigeria* (London: Saint Austin Press, 2002), 195.

⁷⁸ Simeon Ilesanmi, "The Myth of a Secular State: A Study of Religious Politics with Historical Illustrations," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 6, no. 1 (1995): 105-117.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 114

⁸⁰ Simeon Ilesanmi, 114.

religious disagreements remain extremely charged, and easily slide into religious violence. Understanding this link may help us moderate the most savage effects of religious violence in Nigeria.

1.2.1. 11.1. Major Christian Organizations

In Nigeria Christians have many organizations but the positive development within the Christian community is that they have a joint Christian dialogue initiative in the name of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). The CAN is an Association of Christian Churches with distinct identities, recognizable church structures and a system of worship of “one God in the trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”⁸¹

The ecumenical front was created formally in 1976, with the aim of uniting the Christian voice and action in relating with the government and interreligious matters, especially the challenge of Islam. The needs, notwithstanding, it is noted that ecumenical interest in Nigeria preceded the formation of CAN.⁸²

1.2.1.11.1.1. Mainline Christian Organizations

The mainline Christian churches, include these Catholic Church and the mainstream Protestant churches; Anglican, Methodist, and reformed churches. These churches entertain an inclusive sense of religious pluralism, which affirms the primacy of the Christian faith and respectful encounter with Muslims.

⁸¹ CAN’s self-definition in “Constitution of Christian Association of Nigeria, Article 2” This constitution of CAN was unanimously adopted at the Extra-Ordinary Meeting of its National Assembly held at the National Ecumenical Center, Abuja on 17 June 2004.

⁸² Three ecumenical visions preceded the current CAN: the 1948 gathering of Middle Belt Christians (originally those of plateau and Benue States) aimed at a common front against Northern Muslim political influence; the 1964 Northern Christian Association, which unfortunately, remained under the watchdog of the northern ruling class etc

Generally, they maintain a firm protectionist position on the secularity of Nigeria, including secular constitution and state. They believe in interreligious dialogue with Nigerian Muslims, as the only way to co-exist in peace, and endeavor to engage them through specific initiatives to a greater or lesser degree with one another. The Catholic Church in Nigeria leads the way in this vision of Christian-Muslim interaction, having seen it as part of its work of witnessing to Christ, to live her faith in dialogue with others.

Hence, the Catholics Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) makes it an important strategy, for the mission of "promoting dialogue among Christians of other denominations, and between Christians and adherents of other religions."⁸³ Its department of 'Mission and Dialogue' seeks to engage Muslim representatives in various forms as an imperative. Yet, there is great concern about Muslim affirmation in all its forms, as well as about religious fundamentalism. For instance, regarding fundamentalism, the president of the CBCN, Arch-bishop Onaiyekan, recently noted:

The growing stand-off between Christianity and Islam is a major concern... fanatical religious rhetoric fill the air waves and satellite stations all over Africa from both Christians and Muslim centers of intransigence... We need to handle Christian-Muslim rivalries carefully so that we may still be able to live in peace with one another⁸⁴

This concern is shared by other Christian churches; a concern which extends to extremists within the Christian fold. Over the years, these Churches have responded to Islamic militancy with a sense of pacifism in dialogue but this time, the center can no longer hold, for there is no more other cheek to turn. It is therefore not surprising to see a

⁸³ Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, "Presenting the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria" The Bishops' forum is clear in its position on committed dialogue with Muslims, as shown in its Statements.

⁸⁴ John Onaiyekan, "Mission Ad Gentes in Contemporary Africa," (Rome Missionaries of Charity, 2004).

mix of Christian identities in the recent riots, especially during the Sharia conflicts of the 2000s.

1.2.1.11.1.2. Evangelical Movements

The Evangelical churches, as well as newer religious movements in Nigeria, which come in various forms and interpretations of Christianity, aim to witness to Christ in an exclusive manner, under the deep influences of American Evangelical models. They largely present an exclusive and uncompromising posture in their view of other religions, particularly Islam. As Kukah notes: “these Christian fundamentalists have tended to set themselves on a collision course with Islam, arguing that Muslims need to be converted since without Jesus Christ there is no life for anyone.”⁸⁵

Due to their rejection of interreligious dialogue with Muslims, their members, sometimes, engage in provocative proselytizing, and print offensive adverts and pamphlets, which have directly caused a number of Christian-Muslim clashes in Northern Nigeria. These movements prefer to take confrontational position in situations of religious disagreements with Muslims. It is clear that J. Kenny has Christians who imbibe this fundamentalist orientation in mind, when he categorized some “unacceptable approaches of some Christians “that must be shunned; among them are “Fight them” and “there is no salvation for Muslims”⁸⁶ Such indictment slogans are insensitive to other religious faith commitments.

1.2.1.11.1.2.1. Major Muslim Organizations:

⁸⁵ M H Kukah, “Politicization of fundamentalism in Nigeria,” 231

⁸⁶ G. J. O Moshay, *Who Is This Allah?* (S.I.: s.n., 1990), 196. Moshay simply argues that Muslims worship a god different from the Christian God. See Kenny “West Africa and Islam,” 146.

In Nigeria, there are about hundred Muslim groups or more Islamic associations in their community. However, attention will be drawn to the significant visions of Islam in Christian-Muslim relations.

Table 1.2 Islamic Groups that have shown Radical disposition

Name of Organization		Doctrine/belief Espoused	Recruitment Base	Activities Undertaken	Extent of Spread	Associated Violent Incidences
1.	Isawa Movement	Particular devotion and reverence for Jesus as the central figure in the revelation of Allah	Opened to all Interested members of the community	Very secluded in their belief about Isa (Jesus)	Kano, Kaduna, Katsina Sates	1980s
2.	Islam in Africa Organization (IAO)	Islamic Dawah (Spread of Islam) –Change can only come through Islam	Politician and Elite Muslims in Government	Production of Literature for Muslim in Africa	Nigeria, Gambia, Mauritania, Senegal, Libya, Tanzania, Sudan and Tunisia	1991
3.	Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) (Nigerian Muslims Brothers) IMN/NMB Yakubu Yahaya and Zakzaky Katsina Nuhu Yahaya a younger brother to their leader.	Rejection of secular state National flag, National Anthem and Pledge	Young people from higher institution of learning	Interested in the setting-up of an Islamic Republic in Nigeria. Involved in Kafanchan riot 1987 Involved with many clashes with police	Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Bauchi, Kaduna, Sokoto, Jigawa, Taraba, Yobe, and Niger state	Anti-tax riot in Potishum State Aug. 1989. Involved in clash with police in Okene, Kogi state, in Nov, 1989. Most serious clash was in 1991 in the city of Katsina.
4.	Jamaatu Izalat Al-Bida Wa Iqamatus al-sunna Izala Dan Izala	Movement of Orthodoxy against heterodoxy. -- against the Muslim Sufi brotherhood Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya -not partisan	Yan Izala Politicians Top government functionaries minor traditional rulers in the north Members from educated youth, civil servants, and the poorer classes of society	Concerned with purification of Islam- eradication of every trace of shirk. (Innovation) and any Customs or traditions that are regarded un-Islamic interested in the implementation of Sharia to the letter.	HQ Plateau state Jos Branches- Plateau, Bauchi, Kaduna Benue, Kogi, Yobe and Borno state.	1978- Clashes with Muslim Sufi groups (Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya in 1980s and 1990's

5	Jamatul Taqwiyyat-Islamiyyat	Love Brotherhood harmony	Elite group	Promote love brotherhood and religious harmony in Nigeria	Lagos 7 States in Southern Nigeria	1992
6	NACOMYO National Council of Muslim Youth Organizations of Nigeria	Propagation of Islam among youths through preaching. Defense of the course of Islam and Muslims with the government	Federation of about 100 youth organizations	Vocal in the issues of Islam in the country	All over the Federation	1987-Defence of anti-masses policies of the government-Fighting of Muslim course with the Govt. -Defense of Muslim rights
7	Hezbollah Movement Nigeria	Ideology is based on Shia tradition of Islam in the concept of "Willayat Al-Faqih" Put up by Iranian Islamic scholar/ clergy	Muslims who have sympathy with Iranian revolution	Initiate the Iranian culture in dressing and aggressive attitude	Presence noticed in the north and some areas in the south west	1985 -Islamic revolution- Total Islamic state- Islamization of politics- Condemnation of Western political system
8	Tablib Group	Life of pious living. Have taken out of poverty and their peculiar way of dressing	Youths and Middle aged groups	Aggressive preaching and moving on foot from one community to the other	Kwara state and some neighboring states, especially Oyo	Violence in Kwara and encroachment into Ogbomosho around 2002
9	Nigerian Taliban	Calls for the 12 states of Nigeria to declare Sharia and stop what they call the "Christianization" of Kano	Youths	Aggressive Preaching	Kano and Kaduna states	Violence in Kano in 2003
10	Al Sunna Wal Jamma (Followers of the Prophet	Have no respect for property right and are experienced in weapon handling	Youth and highly educated people	Aggressive Preaching	Yobe state	Violent disturbances in 2003 in parts of Yobe state
11	Kala Kato or Qur'aniyyun	Belief only in the Quran. Repudiation of Hadith and Ijma	Among Youths	Aggressive Preaching	Mainly in Kaduna state, especially Zaria	Small violence in Zaria in August 2009
		Unless there was a prayer over it before it was killed				
12	Boko Haram	Complete repudiation of Western education and civilization	Youths including women	Aggressive preaching and attack on those who do not share their doctrine	Bauchi, Yobe but there are claims that it is spreading fast to north and south	Major violent riots in Bauchi & some north parts. Leader was arrested, later on killed.

1.2.1.11.1.2.2. *The Sufi Orders*

The Sufi orders have dominated Nigerian Islam since the Islamic revolution in Nigeria (18th century). In Northern Nigeria, the rival Qadiriya and Tijaniya are the two most powerful brotherhoods, constituting the majority of the dominant Sunni of the Maliki tradition. The Qadiriya is the oldest order in Nigeria. The Fulani jihad's leaders were moulded in it, and its most revered member, Dan Fodio, (known as Shehu), established it as the orthodox interpretation of Islam, with the center in Sokoto⁸⁷

The Tijaniya, which is thought to be the largest Muslim society in Nigeria, has its base in Kano and their members always feel the animosity of Fulani domination of the Hausa. The Tijaniya split between its traditional strand and the reformed one that was inspired by Ibrahim Niass, a Senegalese Shehu (an intercessor) who revived the group during his visit to Nigeria in 1937. The reformed Muslims permit the enjoyment of modern technologies and goods. As Parrinder, has mentioned: "they allow worldly comforts and these, with philosophical liberalism, provide an attraction for modern educated people."⁸⁸ For this, they were criticized by the Qadiriya as materialists.

The rival Sufi brotherhoods were forced to resolve their conflicts in the 1970s and form one identity known as the Darika, a Hausa form of Sufi brotherhood due to the rise and threat of the puritanical Izala movement group. The Darika believes in saint veneration and long prayers, including praying more than five times daily. The challenge of the Puritans reduced the Sufi influence, but they are still a force, since they constitute the pillar of the Sunni establishment of Nigerian Islam.

⁸⁷ Geoffrey E Parrinder, *Africa's Three Religions*, 2nd ed. (London: Sheldon Press, 1976), 209.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

1.2.1.11.1.2.3. The Puritan Izala Movement

The Izala movement or the society for the Eradication of innovation and the establishment of the Sunna) was founded in 1978, by Abubakar Gumi on the basis of the puritanical Saudi Wahhabism. Gumi, who became the icon of anti-Christianity, was angered at what he considered to be the compromising of Islam by the Sufi brotherhoods. The Izala by its doctrine is an anti-Sufi movement of the Sunni tradition, positioned to the “...eradication of what it perceives to be innovations that are heretical and therefore un-Islamic”⁸⁹.

Its main concern is to strip the Muslim community of superstitious innovations, which it considers as blurring the original Islamic identity. Thus, the society positioned itself with Wahhabi doctrine of *tawhid* (monotheism), which recognizes God as the sole object of religious devotion, and views any act of worship to any other entity as *shirk*, or ascribing partners to God. Other Muslims who rejected his teachings are considered unbelievers.

1.2.1.11.1.2.4. The Maitatsina Movement

The Maitatsina was a militant Islamic sect responsible for many riots in the 1980s, in Kano. Alhaji Muhammad Marwa was known as its leader. He was said to come originally from Cameroun, but has had a long presence in Kano. The sect was considered unorthodox, having rejected some Islamic practices of facing the *qibla* (the *Ka'ba*) in Mecca when praying or the authority of the hadith (the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad).

⁸⁹ Y.A Qadri, *A Study of Izala: A Contemporary Anti-Sufi Organization in Nigeria* (Nigeria: Orita, 1985), 120.

Marwa came down too hard on the ‘materialism’ of the orthodox Islam and the flare for modern technology culture like television, radio, or watches etc. that was promoted by the reformed Tijaniya in Kano. His fanatical group, having been indoctrinated into an imaginary exclusive brotherhood, killed fellow Muslims, seeking as Hickey noted; to “...sweep away the accretions which he believed had polluted Islam in the new materialistic Nigeria”⁹⁰

1.2.1.11.1.2.5. The Jama’atu Nasril Islam

The Jama’atu Nasril Islam (JNI), or “Association for the Victory of Islam” was established in 1962, by Ahmadu Bello, the late Sarduana of Sokoto and Premier of the Northern Nigeria, to coordinate Islamisation efforts in Nigeria and unite all Muslim currents in the country. It became the channeling point of funds for the propagation of Islam-for publication of Islamic literature, building of mosques and schools, etc.

The powerful influence of the JNI as the representative of the Muslim community in Northern Nigeria was weakened as a result of the conflicts between the Sufi traditional establishment and the Izala. Following the weakening of the influence of the JNI, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA) was established in 1973, in Kaduna, to be a body that represents the Nigerian Muslim community, with four representatives from each state, under the automatic’ leadership of the Sultan of Sokoto. The SCIA has been wielding strong political religious influence in all Christian-Muslim conflictual issues.

1.2.1.11.1.2.6. The Muslim Student Society

⁹⁰ R Hickey, “The 1982 Maitatsine Uprisings in Nigeria: A Note,” *African Affairs : The Journal of the Royal African Society*, no. 331 (1984): 155.

The Muslim Students Society (MSS) is a radical Islamic movement of young Muslim students. It is responsible for much of the uproar in the Northern universities and colleges since the late seventies and early eighties. It was founded in Lagos in 1954 by Babs Fafunwa, who once was the Minister of Education. This society began as a moderate organization and soon assumed a national stature, and became affiliated with the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, which was established in 1972 under the aegis of the OIC⁹¹

The 1970 members were influenced heavily by Gumi while subsequent ones seemed to have imbibed the Iranian revolutionary ideology.⁹² The MSS rejected the Nigerian constitution, saying that it is anti-secular. It demands only Islamic rule under the Sharia law. Its members threatened against Sharia opposition during the 1978 Constitution Assembly, and protested with banners that “No Sharia No peace, No Sharia, No Constitution, No Sharia, No Muslims, No Nigeria”⁹³ The 1980 riots that were sparked by the members of MSS in Abu Zaria led to the arresting and jailing of many students and even the many who were expelled threw up the intransigent Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, who later popularized Iranian Shiism

1.2.1.11.1.2.7. The Nigerian Muslim Brotherhood

⁹¹ Joseph Kenny, “Shari’a and Christianity in Nigeria: Islam and a ‘Secular’ State,” *Journal of Religion in Africa Journal of Religion in Africa* 26 (1996): 344.

⁹² M. H Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Spectrum Books, 1993), 244.

⁹³ Lamin Sanneh, “Sacred Truth and Secular Agency: Separate Immunity or Double Jeopardy? Shari’ah, Nigeria, and Interfaith Prospects,” *Studies in World Christianity Studies in World Christianity* 8, no. 1 (2002): 40.

The Nigerian Muslim Brotherhood is a politically activist reform movement, led by El-Zakzaky, influenced by Khomeini's Iranian Islamic Republic and the religious-political philosophies of Hasan al-Bannah and Sayyid (Qutb) (mixture of Shunni and Shia). Following Iranian models, Sheikh El-Zakzaky believes in an Islamic state under Sharia rule. His programme insists that "the state superstructure must be Islamized first on the pattern of the 1979 Iranian revolution before the Sharia could be introduced"⁹⁴

This entails that, first the secular constitution would be replaced with an Islamic one. Hence, his Shiite fundamentalist group, composed of the young Muslims, rejected "the Nigerian constitution, flag and legal institutions, accepting only the Sharia." While El-Zakzaky accuses the established Brotherhood for accepting Nigeria's secularization of the society, he faulted the pro-Sharia movement of the 1990, because it attempted to introduce Islamic laws under an un-Islamic environment.

The above organizational challenges between the two traditions have many implications. The differences existing among the diverse vision of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria indicate some important issues that need urgent attention. One such issue includes the question of the legal reference for the country, religious leadership, extremism and the incitement of religious hatred by the religious leaders. Christians and Muslims must critically respond whether their differences should be attended with dialogue or confrontation and whether religion should aim to witness or influence. These issues are affecting Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria. Addressing them requires a critical review of our program of interreligious dialogue to enable a shift of focus from

⁹⁴ Ibid., 38–39.

the present situation of conflicts to the quest for Christian-Muslim solidarity needed to face the challenges of common life.

1.3. THE BEGINNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

1.3.1. Introduction of OIC and Sharia Law

Several efforts have been made by the government in power to Islamize Nigeria through a number of programmes. One of such effort is the issue of the Organization of Islamic Conference. (OIC) The year was precisely January 8, 1986 when the news of the alleged membership of Nigeria in the Organization of Islamic Conference filtered into the ears of Nigerians. However, voices of dissent have been rife from well meaning Nigerian citizens especially the Christians. According to John Odey, the OIC issue is an acid test of President Ibrahim Babangida's wisdom who dispatched a team of government officials to attend and enlist Nigeria in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), "outside the civil war that engulfed the Nigerian state ... there is no other issue that has so far threatened the peace, unity and stability of this country more than the OIC issue"...⁹⁵ For the Muslims, politics in Nigeria means holding the claim that they are greater in number and in any country in which the majority of the population is Muslim, politics means Islamic politics. Due to these facts Muslims feel deprived of their right in Nigeria as a secular state, and they are making every effort to impose Islamic principles in the country

⁹⁵ Cf. Fr John Odey, "Nigeria and The challenge of Leadership: will Babangida Give or Keep", 21.

The up-shot of this alleged deal is that it has divided Nigerian political citizens into two camps, those of Islam and Christianity. While the adherents of the former try to throw some light on the benefits of membership, the latter saw the venture as an attempt to Islamize the whole nation. The view of the alleged enrolment of the entire citizens of Nigeria as members of O.I.C. smacks of religious violence and imperils the political stability of Nigeria. The reason is obvious. To “accord any religious group a right which directly and indirectly, involves other religious groups in a heterogeneous society as Nigeria is to light in unquenchable conflagration of religious strife and intolerance.”⁹⁶ Thus, the thirst to keep religion and politics in the same level increased daily in the Islamic circle despite the fact the Nigerian constitution defined that the government of the Federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as a state religion. There was every indication that the Muslim section of the polity was not yet satisfied with the level of Islamic involvement in the life of the generality of the people.

Sequel to Organization of Islamic Conference is the Sharia law controversy. The first outburst of this tension was with the sharia question on the constitution of Nigeria. But it must be borne in mind that the basis of the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio was the establishment of an Islamic state based on the sharia. According to Ibrahim Sulaiman, “the jihad was meant to bring tyranny to naught, to bring dignity and honour to Muslims and save them from humiliation of having to live under the influence of un-Islamic power”⁹⁷ The dispute over the question of the status of Sharia in the post-colonial

⁹⁶ Anthony Ekwunife, *Politics and Religious Intolerance: The Nigerian Experience* (Spiritan Publications, 1992), 26.

⁹⁷ Ibraheem Sulaiman, *The Islamic State and the Challenge of History: Ideals, Policies, and Operation of the Sokoto Caliphate* (London; New York: Mansell Pub., 1987), 15.

pluralistic society of Nigeria has recently shifted from the level of debate to public enforcement of Islamic criminal justice in 12 northern Nigerian states.

Islamic law had been there, even during the colonial period. “At this time, Sharia was practiced alongside with the system of British Indirect rule through emirs and chiefs, whereby the British instituted regional and provincial governments parallel and superior to that of the native authority.”⁹⁸ With independence, the program of the Islamization of Nigeria was vigorously pursued. The Jama’tu Nasril Islam (JNI) and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs constituted essential vehicles for the realization of this project. The Muslim argument in support of extending the scope of Sharia to include penal code is religious, and is based on the notion that “Sharia governs a Muslim life from sunrise to sunset, from cradle to the grave.”⁹⁹ Yet, it is hard to find any religion that is not a way of life. In Nigeria pious Muslims have been living their life peacefully without religious penalties for centuries and have never been any less Muslims simply because of non-application of the total Sharia. The conquest of the caliphate by the Colonial army itself was not able to deal definitely with the sharia issue, and so it continued to be a major aspect of our political engineering.

In the nature of Sharia advocacy, there are key issues to re-examine in terms of incompatibility with the constitution. Former Chief justice of Nigeria and prominent Muslim scholar, Mohammed Bello, confirmed the obstacles Sharia application will face:

The first is the legal supremacy of the 1999 Constitution...the next...is section 36 (12)...it should be stated here, for the avoidance of doubt, that the Sharia law as stated in the Quran, Hadith and other sources is not a written law, within the meaning of Section 36 (12) of the 1999 Constitution...there is yet another....Section 38 (1) of the Constitution ensures for

⁹⁸ Isidore Nwanaju, *Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria* (Berlin: Logos, 2008), 186.

⁹⁹ Ibraheem Sulaiman, *The Islamic State and the Challenge of History: Ideals, Policies, and Operation of the Sokoto Caliphate* (London ; New York: Mansell Pub., 1987), 149.

every person the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, whereas under Sharia, ridda (Change of religion) is a capital offence.¹⁰⁰

Since Sharia law regulates the total life of a Muslim, the question that comes to mind is should it be placed side by side with the secular laws of the state? In addition, should non Muslims be bound by it especially in areas of Muslim domination in a pluralistic Nigeria? In short, the problem seems to be one of divided loyalty to the National Constitutional laws of the state and loyalty to the religions of the nation. These and other similar arguments could help Muslim thinkers and leaders to reconsider the full application of Sharia law in the light of shared Constitutional life and its practical consequences. Tunisia for instance, may be an interesting model to examine with respect to this issue. As a matter of fact, revealing a historical survey of this problem from the colonial period to Nigerian Second Republic will be of great exposition to this violence.

1.3.2. The Colonial Period and Sharia Law

For various reasons the British colonial rule is resented by both Christians and Muslims. The more sticking arguments have to do with their religious interest. This reason applies to the resurgence of Sharia, as the local Islamists argue that the Sharia is the right of Muslims which was denied to them by the colonial administration, and to introduce it in its totality would be to reclaim this right. This trend is also present among Christian circles in the view that the colonial rule nurtured the worst in religious relations, in having advocated for separate administrative and legal systems for northern and southern Nigeria. The colonial policy of 'Indirect Rule'¹⁰¹ empowered the existing

¹⁰⁰ Mohammed Bello, "Obstacles Before the Sharia," *Tell*, March 6, 2000.

¹⁰¹ This means the utilization of local political systems and agents to rule the colonized people.

Muslim central administrative structure, and formally recognized the imposition of the Fulani emirs and the Sharia law on non-Muslim ethnic and religious minorities in the north. In addition, the Christian mission was disallowed in predominant Muslim territories, under the policy of ‘non-interference’.

Indeed, it has been suggested, and rightly, that these were meant to serve the British diplomacy, since, anything less, could have vindicated the suspicion that the British intention was to Christianize the north.¹⁰² In this regard then, the colonial relation to religious identities deserves some critical and sympathetic assessment. The simple fact is that “the colonial administration promoted inequality, in its pragmatic fostering of Islam. In seeking to preserve only the humanizing aspects of Sharia legal codes, it emboldened the northern Muslims assertion of either domination or separateness and disregard for shared life in one Nigeria.”¹⁰³ The issue is not on why a different scheme that subjected the southerners to direct administration in both political and legal authorities was used, but that the colonial rule should not have promoted a climate that framed Christian missions a ‘menace’ to Islamic missionary advance. More should have been done to discourage anything that makes adherents of the two traditions to see each other as ‘enemies’.

1.3.3. The Second Republic and Sharia Law

Nigeria inaugurated a second democratic experiment in 1979, when the military government of General Olusegun Obasanjo transferred power to an elected civilian

¹⁰² This is rooted in the conspiracy hatched by the German explorer, Staudinger, meant, perhaps, to cut an edge over the British before the Sultan of Sokoto on “The Royal Niger Company”.

¹⁰³ Sanneh Lamin, “‘Sacred Truth and Secular Agency: Separate Immunity or Double Jeopardy? Sharia, Nigeria and Interfaith Prospects.’ *Studies in World Christianity*” 8/1 (2002): 34-35.

government led by the executive president, Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979-1983). Nigeria's second republic was born amid great expectations. Indeed, with the coming of the Second Republic and the controversies surrounding the introduction of Sharia into the constitution, some forms of religious militancy seem to have begun in the country and continue up to this day. The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the political party in power, under President Shehu Shagari used the tools of political expediency to foster the Sharia agenda.

During this second republic it appeared that unlimited development was possible but it is unfortunate that the wealth was misused. The NPN, struggled to stand up to oppositions through the establishment of presidential liaison offices in all the states in the nation. However this action was interpreted by the allied Governors as a breach of the policy to enhance cordial and effective cooperation between the federal government and the state governments, irrespective of the party in control. The same sort of problem was witnessed in the conflict over revenue allocation when the NPN controlled the federal government and used the excessive revenue allocation power accorded the presidency to humiliate most state governments on a party basis.

A substantial allocation of revenue was also made at this time for the promotion of Islam, especially in the north. A clear indication is shown in the unbridled spending of Ministers, political officials and party financiers. "No wonder, Nigeria relapsed economically in the Second Republic and declared Austerity Measures in 1981, two years after the inauguration of the Second republic. It was the era of fragrant expenses."¹⁰⁴ The hunger and poverty that characterized the last days of the second republic prompted the

¹⁰⁴ Nwanaju, *Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria*, 188.

armed forces to take over power in December 1983 and that brought Major General Muhammadu Buhari to power. Buhari justified his coup and subsequent actions by citing the troubles of the second republic and the declining economy. General Ibrahim Babangida assumed power following a bloodless coup in August 1985. At first he presented to the public and the media the image of an affectionate and considerable leader. He released political detainees and promised that public opinion would influence his decisions and those of the Armed forces Ruling Council, the supreme governing body. The public however, demanded an end to military rule. Babangida outwardly supported a return to civilian government in 1992 but worked to undermine the process in order to retain power.

An attempted coup led by Orka in 1990 was unsuccessful, but it brought certain grievances, a depressed economy, corruption in the government and a fear that civilian rule would not come about in 1992, to the attention of the world. Babangida's transitional program to civilian rule actually failed to come about. On the 26th August, 1993 he disengaged from governance and handed over to Ernest Shonekan on 27th August 1993 with the Interim National Government. On 17th November, 1993 Abacha's palace coup toppled Shonekan. Abacha became the head of state and his military regime took over from 1993-1998. His regime ignored due process of law, press, freedom, individual liberty and human rights. The government used violence as a weapon against opponents and critics.

The decisive turning point in military disengagement came with Abacha's sudden death in June 1998. Incidentally, following president Abacha's, death, General Abubakar Abdulsalami, stepped in. His eleven months regime (June 1998-May 1999), despite

having confirmed the ambiguous clause in the amended 1999 Constitution which sought to raise the status of the Sharia courts- is important for supervising the political process that transferred power to the elected civilian regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo.

1.3.4. Olusegun Obasanjo's Regime (1999-2003) and revival of Sharia Law

Chief Obasanjo was a Christian of Yoruba, an ex-military head of state, who won the multi-party elections as Nigeria's new president. His election looked hopeful for Christian-Muslim relations, given the initial warm support he received from both communities. President Obasanjo's candidacy even had the blessing of the northern oligarchy, a loyal antecedents¹⁰⁵ probably negotiated by Generals Abubakar and Babangida. Choosing him was expected to settle the row over the monopolization of power by the north (not helped by General Abacha's removal of Chief Shonekan) and the grievances of political alienation of Christians would have been once more assuaged.

But this optimism lost grounds five months into Obasanjo's tenure, as his new democratic reforms began to be put in shape, causing a change of mood in the north politicians from support to opposition. This opposition increased when it became clear that Obasanjo's reforms were threatening the political concerns of a few northern elites. The principal areas of reform are the Federal appointments, public accountability (which saw the creation of a commission to tackle corruption, targeting mostly corrupt public officials and ill-gotten wealth). In the area of human rights, a commission was instituted to investigate cases of violation. The justice Chukwudifu Oputa, of the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission (HRVIC) was charged with examining the

¹⁰⁵ That Obasanjo succeeded where his tribesman, M.K.O. Abiola failed, required something more. His previous alliance with the Northern agenda is important for understanding his Northern support. After all, his main rival Chief Olu Falae shares virtually all the privileges and chances he has as a Southerner.

gross violations of human rights in Nigeria in the period between January 15, 1966 and May 28, 1999,¹⁰⁶ Making the findings of the commission public, the Justice said, “We wounded one another in communal clashes and religious riots. We are therefore equally guilty. While the powers -that be- have to apologize to Nigerians, we the citizenry have also to apologize to one another. This will be the first step in the right healing process of reconciliation.”¹⁰⁷

For smooth implementation of the above order, many officials were invited including three ex-military leaders to appear before the panel. But it is unfortunate that the three ex-military rulers refused to honor the invitation citing reasons¹⁰⁸ that have remained unconvincing. The lawlessness seemed to be a reaction to the Obasanjo’s new reforms which seems to threaten those political elites involved who sees this strategy as leading to their political irrelevance. The attention to the above re-discovery and reconciliatory approaches to heal the past wounds changed when a series of acts of communal violence exploded again with the revival of the Sharia crisis which caused riots in many parts of the country. It seems that the announcement of the introduction of Sharia law for Zamfara by state governor Ahmed Sani Yerima on 22 October 1999; at the same time that the Oputa panel was at work coincided with the change of mood among the northern political class. While the Sharia fuelled crisis was occurring the northern

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Lanre Ipaye, “The Significance of the Oputa panel,” Recall 3 (2000):89. Other members of the fact-finding panel are Alhaji Abubakar, A Kura, Rev. Fr. Mathew H. Kukah, Mrs. Elizabeth Pam, Mallam Mamman Daura, Dr. Tunji Abayomi, Mrs. Modupe Areola and Mr. T.D. Oyelade, the secretary.

¹⁰⁷ Daily Champion, Lagos, may 30, 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 90. As Ipaye reported, General Buhari, who was invited over the 1984 abduction of Alhaji Umaru Dikko declined, because he believed the panel lacks jurisdiction over events that occurred abroad. Ibrahim Babangida rejected the summons to defend himself against his alleged complexity in the 1995 murder of Dele Giwa, the Founding Editor-in-Chief of Newswatch magazine. General Abdusalami refused to appear before the panel to respond to his indictment for looting the national treasury on the reasons of his presidential immunity, lest he divulge state secrets.

political and religious leaders attempted to rally to the Islamists cause by establishing the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria (SCSN). Its duty was to promote adoption of Sharia in other states of the Federation.

By December 2001, the Sharia penal laws were being passed and applied in 12 northern states. The imposition of Islamic law in several states has also deepened religious divisions and caused interfaith violence to erupt and separates movements to take root. “Penalties can be devastating, for example, having a hand removed for stealing thirty US dollars...”¹⁰⁹ Thus it has caused worrying disorder and bloodshed, and makes the co-existence and collaboration between Christians and Muslims difficult. An appallingly large number of Nigerians are dissatisfied with these conflict issues and trends and feel that it is a yoke to be broken which does not bode well for a future of peace for the country.

The above clashes prompted local and international criticism. When President Obasanjo was confronted over the issue, he was content on telling journalists in United States and Italy that the action of the Sharia states was unconstitutional and termed it a political agenda targeted against his government, and he insists such actions would die a natural death. Obviously his prediction did not turn to reality, as more northern states implemented the Shari’a laws. In 2003 multi-party elections were exploited to heighten the spectrum of religion in politics and it was not a surprise that the revival of Sharia became a focus in political front. “No wonder, the northern candidate and the strongest challenger of President Obasanjo, Muhammadu Buhari, campaigned under the platform that “Muslims must not vote for non-Muslims”¹¹⁰ for he believed that a Muslim cannot be

¹⁰⁹ Gannon and Pillai, *Understanding Global Cultures*, 328.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Shola Oshunkeye, “Buhari and the Abachas’ N500 Million Deal,” *Tell*, 3 February 2003, 36.

under a Christian ruler. But Buhari's strategy did not favor him as President Obasanjo was re-elected for another four year term. The Sharia law issue subsided but the far-reaching consequences of the application of Shari'a in one-third of Nigeria's states for the nation's secularity and plurality remains.

1.3.5. The Resurgence of Sharia Law and Controversy

The introduction of the Sharia legal codes in some states of the country promoted religious intolerance that is still witnessed till today in Nigeria. Religious intolerance has manifested itself as a deliberate and violent move to stamp out what some members of a given religion believes to be an error in the religious thought and practices of the adherents of their own religious traditions as well as other religious thought and practices of the adherents of other religions within their geo-religious environment. "It is a blind refusal to study and observe as well as respect the views and tenets of other religions. It is a blind and fixated mental and psychological negative attitude towards religious beliefs and practices"¹¹¹.

The "introduction" and "re-introduction" of Sharia legal system in states like Zamfara, Bauchi, Kano, Borno and so on led to the intensification of the religious divide and heightened animosity in those areas, which were traceable to religious differences. The question of Sharia law and what role it should play within the Nigerian society has been a subject of debate and controversy since the 1970s. Back in colonial times, the colonial authority showed interest in the Islamic legal tradition preserved by the early 19th

¹¹¹ Kelechi Johnmary Ani, "The Impact of Religious Conflict on Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria," in *Boko Haram And Terrorism Religious Conflicts and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria*, ed. Simon O Anyanwu and Isidore U. Nwanaju, vol. 2 (Enugu, Nigeria, 2012), 163.

century Sokoto Sultanate¹¹², but distanced itself from the Shari'a criminal code. The Colonial model permitted Sharia to take care of Muslims civil matters, and reserved their criminal matters for the secular law.¹¹³ But the decision of Zamfara state in 1999, under governor Yerima, to introduce the Sharia criminal penal code marked a twist in the Sharia dispute.¹¹⁴ Never before had the issue been that of unilateral establishment of a Sharia state, rather, it was usually a matter of agitation for extension of the legitimacy of Sharia law under the secular constitution and it was subjected to public debate. Thus while the latest introduction of the Sharia penal code may suit the aspiration of some circles of Nigerian Muslims, it has also be shown to re-confirm the anxieties that produced the Christian resistance to what is so often regarded as Islamic affirmation.

The origins of this fear, as have been indicated previously, has to do with the bitter history of aggressive Islamization of Nigeria in the 19th century jihad of Uthman, Dan Fodio and its 20th century non-violent form under Ahmadu Bello. The action of the Sharia states has serious implication for harmonious multi-cultural religious society since “the government of the Federation shall not adopt any religion as state religion.”¹¹⁵ Yet, the Zamfara state governor, Yerima argued that the present Sharia enforcement agrees with the constitution. However, for his critics, his claim goes against the evidence, as the

¹¹² The detail in A. Christelow, “Islamic law and Judicial practice in Nigeria: An Historical Perspective,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22/1 (2002), 185-2004.

¹¹³ For the details of the British handling of Sharia legal tradition, see Sanneh, “Sacred Truth and Secular Agency,” 32-36. The simple fact is that, in 1912, along with the English Common law, the British recognized partial Sharia administered by Islamic Alkali (Qadi) courts under “Native Ordinance law” excluding criminal codes: and supervised by the office of Assistant District Officer Juridical Services to ensure they were practiced within bounds.

¹¹⁴ Quinn, *Pride, faith, and fear*, 33. On 27 January 2000, the Sharia was signed into law in Zamfara as “A Law to establish a Sharia Penal Code for zamfara state, law No. 10, 2000.

¹¹⁵ Section 10 of the federal Republic of Nigeria, “The Constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria,” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999)

governor's activities prove he has erected Islam as the official religion of Zamfara state. "Whatever is his argument, it seems that his revolution brought to the fore the ambiguity created in the constitution by the previous Islam favored Military administration."¹¹⁶

While the section Yerima invoked from the constitution empowers the states to establish their own court systems, it sets itself against section 10, which excludes recognition of one religion by states, and while recognizing all, confirms the neutrality of the state in relation to religion. That provision is the real guarantee for Nigeria's secularity and freedom of religion. That is why this is a crucial issue. In 1967, when Nigeria transferred from regional to state system, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon (1966-1975), responding to Muslim agitations approved the Sharia court of Appeal for the northern states that served as courts of first instance. Hence the issue of Sharia courts at the Federal level became a national problem that needed to be resolved by the new constitution to be drawn up for civil rule. To this end, the "Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) of 1976 had proposed the creation of a new Federal Sharia Court of Appeal in three vital provisions:

1. There shall be a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal which shall be an intermediate court of appeal between the States Sharia Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Nigeria.
2. The Court shall be composed of the grand Mufti and such a number of Muftis (not less than three) as the National Assembly may prescribe.
3. In each State of the Federation that so desires, there shall be a Sharia Court of Appeal to be established by the Constitution of the State.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Ayodele Akinkuotu, "Time Bombs in Abubakar's Constitution," *Tell*, 9 August 1999, 23. The 1999 Constitution since its publication, for containing what experts described as over 300 flaws.

¹¹⁷ Report of the Constitution Drafting Committee Containing the draft Constitution, Vol, 1, sections 3 (1 & 2) & 6 (1), 113, 115, as cited in M.h. Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan, Spectrum Books, 1993), 118.

Two main reasons were advanced in favor of the draft provision: that the current legal system was a British imposition, and a post-independence Nigeria must replace it with an indigenous system; and that to restrain Muslims from practicing Sharia at all levels of law courts in the land, would mean a denial of their religious freedom.¹¹⁸ The establishment of Sharia was debated by the Constituent Assembly (CA) headed by Justice Udo Udoma, from 1977- 1978. The majority of the Muslim delegates argued for introduction of the Sharia to all jurisdictions, and justified their plea on what they claimed as the right of Muslims to practice their faith completely. Moreover, the Muslim campaign was given further pressure by some members of Muslim Student Society (MSS) of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, who threatened chaos if the draft was opposed.¹¹⁹

Regardless of the above threat, the Christians opposed concessions to Muslim Sharia in the Federal courts. They mainly argued that concession preferentially turns Nigeria into an Islamic state, as well as risks creating a dual legal systems and funding, viz. a religious court. This position comes clearly in the following intervention of Chief Jerome Udoji, who opposed the court on religious grounds arguing that to establish a national level with national funds, a court which will only deal with the laws of a particular religion is not only giving that religion a preferential treatment, but is tantamount to making that religion a state religion.¹²⁰ The debate came to a close without approving a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal. The Constituent Assembly (CA) subjected

¹¹⁸ Proceedings of the Constituent Assembly, Official Report, Vol. 1 (Federal Ministry of information, Lagos, 1978), c. 666, 201, 663.

¹¹⁹ The copy of the MSS letter signed by its then Secretary general, Ibrahim Ya'qub in Joseph Kenny, "Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria" *Islam-Christianity* 5 (1979), 191-192.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* Proceedings of the Constituent Assembly, as cited in Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power*, 123.

Sharia appellate cases to the Federal Court of Appeal, and such cases were to be decided by three Islamic jurists. This decision failed to satisfy many pro-Sharia Muslim advocates, who protested through a walkout led by Shehu Shagari.¹²¹ The CA passed the resolution, and thus, Sharia appellate dispositions were adopted in the 1979 Constitution.¹²²

But the agitation for Sharia ascendancy was not over as the junta took away the CA's right to deliberate on the Sharia issue. The Supreme Military Council (SMC) granted an improved status for the Sharia courts in the constitution, which gives them jurisdiction over civil cases, as well as vests the states with concurrent power to establish their own court systems. This amendment was reconfirmed by the 1999 Constitution under General Abdulsalami. This latest clause is the origin of the constitutional ambiguity that Sharia revolutionists (1999-2003) decided to exploit, especially as it was imagined to hold the possibility of facilitating other agenda. Many in Nigeria believed that this latest revolution in the cycle of Sharia disputes was sponsored by foreign aid from Arab states.¹²³ The "recent shipment of arms from Iran to Nigeria remains a cause for worry"¹²⁴ as many people will readily recognize Iran to be an agent that has given the country's antecedents in the sponsorship of International terrorism.

¹²¹ Alhaji Shehu Shagari became first executive president a year later. What is significant in this is that the ex-president Shagari was the first to show allegiance to protest this same 1979 Constitution; upon which his recognition as a "statesman" is based. It is possible then to see the reason why he ran a firmly Islamic government in the light of his reaction to the Sharia debate.

¹²² Cf. Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power*, 126.

¹²³ Historical evidence seems to support this view, but only to an extent. (1) External linkages in religious radicalization can be traced to the late 1970s, when there were strong allegations of external involvement of foreign countries, mainly Libya, in the Maitatsine riots that engulfed Northern Nigeria. Furthermore, the inspector general of police has alerted the nation of plans of Al Qaeda on Nigeria. This remain a distinct possibility and with the porous nature of the country's borders, the almost non-existent facility for addressing emergencies, the weakness of its ability to manage domestic insurrection, the consequences of such an attack is most certainly devastating.

¹²⁴ Laolu Akande, "US Lauds Nigeria's Handing of Iran's Arms Shipment," *The Guardian*, December 4, 2010, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-11765935>.

According to Sanneh, “the funding facilitated Yerima’s sustained efforts to unite all official functions of government in his state and Islamic vision of organization of society with the help of his empowered religious strategists and facilitators.¹²⁵ In Kaduna state, the case was different, as the attempt to adopt the Sharia was firmly resisted by the Christians. “that was the last straw that irrevocably pinned Kaduna, the sprawling cosmopolitan city of the North, to the bloody walls of religious Armageddon on February 21, 2000.”¹²⁶ This Sharia motivated violence received reprisal in some southern states¹²⁷ like Abia, Anambra, Obonyi, Enugu and Imo states. However, the reverberation of the Kaduna crisis reinforced the ethnic and religious lines of the Sharia controversy.

1.3.6. The Sharia and the limits of Endurance to Southern Organizations

The southern coalition against Sharia law placed ethnicity at the fore-front of the controversy. While retired former President like Shagari and Buhari with many political heavy weights in the North challenged the National Council of States and rallied themselves in defense of Sharia, those from South East have equally been telling themselves that it is time to come together and reassess their place in the nation.

On June, 25, 2000, the Ohaneze-Ndigbo (a pan-Igbo Cultural Association) issued a statement, banning new Igbo graduates from accepting National Youths Service Corp

¹²⁵ Ibid: According to Sanneh’s description, with his newly formed Council of *ulama* (the traditionalists, who were paid to become Sharia strategists), Yerima quickly employed Islamic preachers salaried at N10,000 to teach islam among the under-classed of the Muslim oligarchy. He put in place groups of facilitators, including a board to manage *zakat*, or alms-tax, the state youth Council, and an *almajiris*-turned State Hisbāvigilance committee empowered to arrest sharia offenders. Financial allocations were made for what are thought to be other Islamic state ideals. Sanneh also reveals that some N240 million was given to the ministry of religious Affairs to feed the masses during the 1999 Ramadan fast and N3 million as personal gifts to the Islamic preachers during Ramadan. Other stunning gifts of one hundred motorbikes and some hundreds of bicycles were distributed to unemployed youth and state messengers respectively. In all, there was a sidelining of civil leaders and emergence of the religious ones.

¹²⁶ John Okwoeze Odey, *The Sharia and the Rest of Us* (Enugu, Nigeria: Snaap Press, 2000), 99.

¹²⁷ The Igbo fury for the killing of their own provoked the massacre of over 450 people, mostly Hausa. This anger must be viewed within their feeling of long and painful victimization as a people.

(NYSC) postings to the pro-Sharia states, judging them unsafe for non-Muslims.¹²⁸

Similar instruction was handed over to the Yoruba graduates by the two Yoruba cultural organizations, the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) and Yoruba Parapo.¹²⁹ The coalition further threatened to restrain the allocation of Value Added Tax (VAT) proceeds to the pro-Sharia states, arguing that its funds come from commodities, such as alcohol and cigarettes, outlawed in those states. In its own reaction, the Middle Belt zone, in the viewpoint of Paul Unongo,¹³⁰ asserted it was time it reclaimed its distinctive identity from the North.

The official Federal government line was that the action of the Sharia states was a breach of the constitution and their discriminatory punishment contravenes section 42 (1a) of the 1999 Constitution. But this official position was largely trivialized by the personal political interests of public officers. The vice-president Atiku Abubakar (a Muslim), supported the pro-Sharia movement. Before the Sokoto Sultanate council, he declared thus: "State governor's implementing the Sharia is only responding to the wishes of their people...They have the right to do the wish of their people and I do not think that should bother anybody."¹³¹ What makes Atiku's statement worrisome was that it generated no official contradictory response.

¹²⁸ C.f. The details in the *Tell*, July 31 2000, 24-25. The service program is a project established in 1973 by the then head of state, Gen. Yakubu Gowon, with the aim of promoting national integration and unity. Today, like other schemes, this aim has been defeated, as people bribe their way to be posted to places of their choice.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ *Tell*, July 31 2000, 24-25. Paul Unongo, a Middle Belt leader remarked in the wake of Sharia protests in the Middle Belt. "We are not, even if we had thought that we were, we agree now that we are not northerners. We also agree that the Hausa-Fulani are right in saying that they don't like us. They have said it so many years." No doubt, these events renewed Middle Belters' fury over the north.

¹³¹ Ibid. But one may likely allow for Atiku's position if the northern states are a homogeneous community of Muslims. They are not. Thus they are constituted of Muslim majority and Christian minority, making the move to implement Sharia desperately intolerant. The concern is that Atiku swore to uphold the Nigeria's unity, but failed to see the implications of his position.

Be that as it may, the disagreement over Sharia constitutes a key issue in Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria. It really presents a severe challenge to the concept of one Nigeria and leaves religion vulnerable to be manipulated by politicians. Whether the political community recognizes the seriousness remains doubtful. What do we do in this circumstance? Must we fold our arms and watch this ugly situation continue? Something must be done to forestall; the impending explosion which will do nobody any good. The answer lies in embracing dialogue initiatives as a means of fostering a society based on mutual respect for one another and for the different religions.

1.4. NATURE AND CONCEPT OF NIGERIAN SOCIETY VIS-À-VIS RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

1.4.1. Religious zealots involving Radical Groups of Christians and Muslims

In Nigeria the nature and extent of religious militancy is important for this study, especially as some of the most violent forms of radicalization have manifested along the Christian-Muslim divide. However, it needs to be pointed out from the outset that the manifestations of these conflicts are complex and confusing. In most of the conflicts, the origin has always been linked to the alleged insensitivity of the latter to Islamic doctrine, including the alleged desecration of the Quran and a lack of respect shown to Prophet Mohammed. What, however, seems common to all the conflicts is that they are rooted to local issues, including inability to handle economic stress and socio-political and ethnic differences, than to any external consideration. Most of these conflicts have taken place in northern Nigeria. Evidence has shown that nearly all communal conflicts, which have

mostly involved Christians and Muslims in the north, easily slide into violence, causing enormous destruction to life, property and relations between people.

However, it has to be noted that existing academic literature on Christian militancy in Nigeria seems to place the origin of the emergence of radical Christian activities among University students in the early 1970s, especially through the activities of the groups such as the Scripture Union (SU).¹³² Christians who have subscribed to radical tendencies have often come under the name “Pentecostal”, a name that was derived from the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and they spoke in different tongues. It is impossible to estimate the number of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, but they ran into hundreds of thousands, with a fellow ship of several millions, comprising a large number of churches of mostly youths. It is impossible to discuss the origin of all the churches because of the large number. This leaves us to identify few prominent ones by looking at three of these churches.

The Pentecostal church with the greatest influence in the country and one of the fastest growing churches in the world is the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). The church is currently under the leadership of Enoch Adejare, a former university lecturer at the University of Lagos. Since 1981, there has been a population explosion in the church. “There could be up to 50,000 parishes of the Redeemed Church of God in Nigeria. On the International scene, the church is present in many countries in the world. One of their well known programs in the church is the Holy Ghost service, an all night

¹³² Mathews Ojo has written extensively on this. See the following, among others, “The Contextual Significance of the Charismatic Movements in Independent Nigeria.” *Africa* No. 58 (Vol. 2) 1988:175-192; *American Pentecostalism and the Growth of Pentecostal Charismatic Movement in Nigeria*, 155-167.

miracle service that holds on the first Friday of every month at the Redemption camp Lagos-Ibadan expressway.”¹³³

Followed in number is The Deeper Life Ministry under the leadership of William Folorunso Kumuyi, also a former University lecturer who later on turned to full time preaching. A number of doctrinal issues are crucial to the Deeper Life Church. The first is the idea of whole restitution, which Kumuyi believed must follow the experience of conversion.¹³⁴ Second, is the belief that all Christians must have a personal conversion experience; third is sanctification; and fourth is evangelization.

On its part, the Living Faith Church, also known as Winners’ Chapel, was established by an architect, David Oyedepo, in 1981 in Kaduna, northern Nigeria. “It has branches in more than 50 countries across the world; in Nigeria alone, it has more than 400 local branches. Unlike the Redeemed Church that has a vision of establishing a church within every 100 meters, the Winners Chapel has the policy of having only one Church in a town.”¹³⁵ The church teaches that both Divine healing and material prosperity are benefits of submission to God’s will. The International of Winners’ Chapel is called Faith-Tabernacle, built at Ota, a suburb of Lagos. Other assets of the church include aircrafts and a fleet of over 350 buses that convey worshippers to and from the church. The church also owns Dominion publishing house, which turns out books and other materials weekly.

¹³³ Abiodun Alao, “Islamic Radicalisation and Violence in Nigeria” 2009, 32 www.securityanddevelopment.org/pdf/ESRC%20Nigeria%20Overview.pdf.

¹³⁴ Kumuyi himself practiced this. After he became converted, he made restitution by writing to the West African Examination Council (WAEC) admitting that he had impersonated other candidates in examinations. He claimed he was pardoned.

¹³⁵ Alao, “Islamic Radicalisation and Violence in Nigeria,” 32.

It is impossible to estimate the exact number of individuals who are deeply committed under the Pentecostal umbrella, but a number of things are known about these groups. Many of them are mostly between 15 and 40 in age and from various Christian backgrounds of various orthodox denominations, even Muslims are included. At the beginning of “Pentecostalism” in Nigeria, most of the activities were predominant in the southern parts of the country, but as time went on, inroads were made into the north where many Pentecostal radical churches were established in the areas populated by Muslims. They had no short supply of worshippers, for there were many Southerners resident in northern Nigeria. The focus of Christian radical churches in Nigeria has been towards four main issues: Faith; prosperity; miracles and holiness. Below is a list of some of these churches.

Table 1.3¹³⁶: Pentecostal churches and their areas of Focus

¹³⁶ A survey carried out at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife in the country’s South-West region reveals that there is no faculty in the University that do not have one of the teaching staffs also serving as Pastor or Assistant pastor of a Pentecostal Church.

Faith	Prosperity	Miracles	Holiness
Faith Tabernacle/ Aladura	Household of God (Chris Okotie)	The Synagogue of all Nations (T. B. Joshua)	Wesleyan/Apostolic
Redeemed Church of God (Pastor E. Adeboye)	The Church of God Mission (Bishop Benson Idahosa)	Aladura	Deeper Life Bible Church (William F. Kumuyi)
Latter Days Assembly (Pastor Tunde Bakare)	The Living Faith, a.k.a Living Faith (Pastor David Oyedepo)	Christ Embassy (Chris Okotie)	Mountain of Fire and Miracle
Grace Outreach Church	Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC)	Living Christ Mission for the Miracle	
Foursquare Gospel	Household of God	Sword of the Spirit	

Church	(Pastor Chris Okotie)		
Victory Christian Church	House on the Rock (Pastor Paul Adefarasin)	CAC (Agbala Itura)	
Liberty Gospel Church	Word of Life Bible Church	Christ Mustard Mission	
Christ Chapel (Tunde Joda)	Royal House of Grace	Evangelical Church of Yaweh	
The Redeemed Evangelical Mission Pastor Mike Okonkwo)	Revival Assembly	Bethel Ministry	
Redemption Ministries		Mountain of Fire and Miracle	
		World Bible Church (Pastor Samson) Ayorinde	
		Zoe Ministry (Pastor Partick Anwuzua)	
		Christ Embassy (Chris Oyakhilome	

But apart from the table presented above, there seems to be a lot of areas of “specialization” of some of these Pentecostal Christians. According to Olusegun Fakoya, “Liberty Gospel Church of Helen Ukpabio specializes in witch-hunting, especially among children; The Laughter Foundation provides barren women with the “fruit of the womb”. Synagogue of All Nations of Pastor TB Joshua is specialized in healing those suffering from HIV/AIDS; Mountain of Fire and Miracles specializes in casting out demons of all specifications.”¹³⁷ Many Muslims see all these Pentecostals as fraudulent and think that they should advance their own religion in a way to counter some of the practices of Christian radicals and their ways of worshipping. Discussions held in Focus groups also confirm that Islamic radicals also have objections to the new trends of radical Christian evangelization whose pattern of worship with dances associated with them as being unhealthy and tempting.¹³⁸

Some of the practices in Pentecostal churches have made many of the churches adopt the structure of a commercial enterprise which makes them look like more of a business venture, than the religious outfit they claim to be. The way radical Christians have gone in evangelization has spurred reactions from Muslims, especially youths. The figure for the cases of carpet-crossing from one religion to the other in Nigeria is not available, but it would seem that more Muslims have crossed to Christianity. Consequently, adherents of Islamic religion fear that something has to be done to counter this and prevent many Muslims, especially youths from getting converted to the Christian religion. The Sultan of Sokoto and the Spiritual head of all the Muslims in Nigeria, Alhaji

¹³⁷ Olusegun Fakoya, “The Gospel of Materialism: Nigerian Pentecostalism and Hypocrisy,” *Nigeria in American Magazine*, September 2008.

¹³⁸ As somebody puts it. “The pastor hears the wordings of the songs, but he also has eyes to see the wriggly anatomy of the body as well”

Abubakar Saad III, vowed to counter the upsurge of Christian evangelization in Nigeria with the message of Islam. “The Sultan who is also the president General of the Jama’atu Nasil Islam (JNI) said the spread of Christianity has made it all more urgent that the message of Islam shall be heard loud and clear and the JNI must play a leading role in this endeavors”.¹³⁹

1.4.2. Religious Intolerance between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria since 1980s

In 1980, some Muslim Students Society (MSS) members went on a rampage, and destroyed buildings, property, and molested people. The immediate cause of their violent behavior was not clear. But they left impressions which link to, probably, their frustration at the outcome of the 1978 Sharia debate, since they painted “Islam only” on the campus walls of prominent northern universities in Zaria and Kano respectively.¹⁴⁰ Few months later, their members, again stirred up chaos in the ABU(Ahmadu Bello University) Zaria campus, where they violently fought the members of the palm wine social club, which called itself the “Kegites”, and disrupted its annual party and abused them for allegedly imbibing alcohol. They destroyed a number of target buildings as well, including the Senior Staff Club, Students Union bars, the office and residence of the Vice-chancellor.¹⁴¹

Furthermore, in 1982 in Kano, the members of Muslim Mission Society (MSS) sparked off Christian-Muslim clashes after setting ablaze eight churches and other

¹³⁹ John Shiklam, “Nigeria: Sultan-We Must Counter Christians” Daily Champion, July 3 2007

¹⁴⁰ Nkom Steve, “Reflection on Religions and Communal Crisis in Kaduna State, Nigeria,” in *Africa: Towards Priorities of Missions: Acts of the Inter-Continental Congress of the Spiritan International School of Theology (sist), Attakwu, Enugu, Nigeria, November 11-17, 1996* (Attaku Enugu Nigeria ;Aachen Germany: SIST ;Missio-Institute of Missiology, 1978), 78.

¹⁴¹ Sanneh Lamin, “Sacred Truth and Secular Agency: Separate Immunity or Double Jeopardy? Sharia, Nigeria and Interfaith Prospects. “ Studies in World Christianity,” 40.

property. Their fury was raised by the closeness of the new Fegge Anglican Church to a mosque. The church whose foundation stone was laid by the visiting Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie had legitimately been in its present location, in Kano city since 1932; years before the mosque was built in the late 1970s. Upon their failure to destroy it, the angry students set fire upon other churches. The provoked Christian rioters believed it was a part of a larger plan to undermine their legitimate right to practice their faith. “The clash consumed forty five lives. It appears that the state government did nothing more than “to order for the removal of the church.”¹⁴²

In mid-1986, following the Christian rejection of Nigeria’s membership of Nigeria in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the MSS of University of Ibadan, carried out its threat of chaos, and destroyed the Christian Chapel of the Resurrection in their University, including the concrete statue of the Resurrection of Jesus. The student activists had earlier expressed displeasure concerning the position of the concrete cross (as old as the university) facing their new mosque. Thus, on the day of the opening of the new mosque, when they couldn’t pressurize the university authority to remove the cross as quickly as they wanted, they set the chapel ablaze.¹⁴³

On 6 March 1987, the city of Kafanchan, Kaduna state, witnessed two-week riots that spread across major towns in the former Kaduna and Kano. The uproar was sparked by the events that took place during the religious outreach held by the Christian Students of Kafanchan College of Education, with guest speakers participating. The

¹⁴² Joseph Kenny, “Sharīa and Christianity in Nigeria: Islam and a ‘secular’ State,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26, no. 4 (1996): 358.

¹⁴³ John Odey, *The Sharia and the Rest of Us* (Enugu Nigeria: Snaap Press, 2000), 29. The Ibadan branch of the MSS had issued a warning that if Nigeria withdraws membership of OIC, Christians would be engaged in Jihad by Muslims. The group imagined that, if dialogue did not succeed, physical aggression would be the option.

immediate cause was that a female Muslim student accused Rev. Abubakar Bako, a convert from Islam, of misinterpreting' the Quran and prophet of Islam, and snatched the microphone from his hands. The ensuing clashes put over one hundred people, 158 churches and some mosques, as well as businesses on the casualty list.¹⁴⁴ This clash deepened the mutual suspicions between the students of both sides. On 6 March 1988, during the anniversary of the kafanchan crisis, some MSS members of Kaduna Polytechnic flattened the Christian chapel under construction to ensure that none, but three mosques, stood in the institution.¹⁴⁵ The current mutual hostility continued between the Christian students and the MSS members of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, right into the early nineties.

In June, 1990, Bauchi state recorded a Christian-Muslim conflict that escalated to more than 10 schools. It began when the Muslim girls of Girls Secondary School Bauchi, probably, at the incitement of their visiting Muslim preacher, attacked their Christian counterparts for allegedly preventing them from practicing their faith. The accusation remains unclear, but the eruption left five students dead and some injured.¹⁴⁶ Several other riots occurred between Christians and Muslims in the 1990s in other parts of northern Nigeria, like Funtua , Jalingo, and Kaduna states. On 6 February 1992, a major riot erupted from a communal confrontation in Zango -Kataf in Southern Kaduna involving the local Kataf people (mostly Christians) and the Hausa-Fulani Muslims. The Codjoe Judiciary Commission of Inquiry found the immediate cause of the crisis to be the

¹⁴⁴ Nkom, "Reflection on Religions and Communal Crisis in Kaduna State, Nigeria," 79. It is crucial to note here that the female Muslim student could have also acted from the background of the Muslim viewpoint that a non-Muslim cannot quote the Quran or understand it. But without knowing what the speaker was saying it would be difficult to tell.

¹⁴⁵ Kenny, "Sharīa and Christianity in Nigeria," 358.

¹⁴⁶ Iheanyi Enwerem and Institut français de recherche en Afrique., *A Dangerous Awakening: The Politicization of Religion in Nigeria* (Ibadan: IFRA, 1995), 220.

decision of the Zango Kataf Local Government Chairman (a Kataf Christian) to relocate the Zango weekly market, at the center of Zango town, to a new site, without following the constitutional stipulations.¹⁴⁷ Yet, it is undeniable that the conflict was rooted in a long-standing ethno-political feud. While the Kataf, who feel marginalized in the Zango market, wanted to use their political chance to reshape the Hausa/Fulani dominance in the market, the Zango who resent their political loss, rejected the relocation for fear of losing out economically to the Kataf too. The cycle of violence that lasted for many days across the state consumed estimated 500 lives and property worth of millions of naira, with Zangon incurring more casualties, including the headquarters of Jama'atu Nasril Islami (JNI).¹⁴⁸

On 26 December 1994, tensions were heightened in Kano, when some zealous extremists (believed to be the Shi'ite Muslim group of El-Zakzaky) took the law into their hands, and broke into Goron Dutse prison, in Kano, and murdered one Gidon Akaluka. Their victim was an Igbo trader kept under protective custody, after the courts failed to convict him for supporting his wife's desecration of the Quran. His severed head was paraded on a pole in Kano city.¹⁴⁹ Barely six years after the Zango-Kataf mayhem in Southern Kaduna, another similar ethno-political quarrel sparked bloody riots in Kaduna in 1999. This time it was the imposition of a Muslim (Hausa) emir over the Christian

¹⁴⁷ C.f. "Justice R. Codjoe's Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the 1992 Zangon Kataf (Market) Riot" (Kaduna 22State Government Press, Kaduna, 1992), 10.

¹⁴⁸ Jama'atu Nasri Islam (the society for the victory of Islam) is the Nigeria's version of the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam.

¹⁴⁹ Adewale Maja-Pearce, "This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis," *The London review of books*. 24, no. 14 (2002): 169.

population of Kafanchan.¹⁵⁰ It also hastened the waves of communal violence that marked the return of democracy.

Shortly after the birth of democracy in 1999, as noted earlier, one of the states in northern Nigeria, Zamfara state, introduced the Sharia law. Within few months, other Northern state, adopted Sharia. As would be expected, the reaction of non-Muslim residents in the north was apprehensive and riots broke out in several parts of the country. Although it is the case that many of the states in northern Nigeria have adopted Sharia, there are various degrees of application. While states like Zamfara and Katsina are applying the codes, others are not. Included in the application of the code are penalties for specific violations like flogging for drinking alcohol, amputation for stealing, stoning for proven adultery.

There have been a number of punishments carried out in compliance with Sharia.

In January, 2000, the first amputation for stealing was carried out on Buba Jangebe, for stealing a cow¹⁵¹ and shortly afterwards, one Lawali Isa lost his right hand for stealing three bicycles.¹⁵² What is observed in both cases was that the victims claimed to be satisfied with the punishment and claimed to be happy that they had become a “better being”. Again in 2001, in Zamfara state, a woman found guilty of fornication was given 100 lashes, despite her protests that she had been raped.¹⁵³ Further, in October 2001 in Sokoto, an Islamic Court sentenced a 30 year old pregnant woman to death by stoning

¹⁵⁰ The problem of the succession of an Emir is critical to southern Kaduna people. It was the twelfth Hausa-Fulani emir being imposed on the traditionally Christian-dominated Kafanchan. Hence, the Christians felt it was time they challenged the practice.

¹⁵¹ Eyewitness: Nigeria’s sharia amputees, Thursday, 19 December, 2002: news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/Africa/2587039.stm

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ivan Watson, “Nigerian Girl Flogged for Premarital Sex,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (January 23, 2001).

after she was found guilty of having pre-marital sex while the man identified as her lover was released because of “insufficient evidence”.

In November, 2002, some angry Muslim youths rioted in Kaduna in protest of the Miss World Beauty pageant being hosted in Nigeria, forcing the organizers to abruptly move the contest to London. The fury was immediately caused by the suggestion of a Nigerian female journalist, Isioma Daniel, that the prophet of Islam would probably, have married one of the Miss World beauty queens, if he were alive today. The casualties included more than 100 lives and personal property, including the burned Kaduna offices of the independent Lagos-based newspaper -“*This Day*”-, which published Miss Daniel’s article.¹⁵⁴ Prior to the violent eruption, the Muslims had rejected the event on the grounds that Islam prohibits beauty contests, because it promotes indecency.

The fatwa pronounced on Isioma turned out to be very controversial even among Muslim clerics and scholars both within and outside Nigeria. Within the country, there were those who argued that the fatwa declaration was inappropriate since Isioma is not a Muslim and that she and her newspaper had apologized for the article that caused offence. Indeed, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs accepted the apology and was not willing to endorse the fatwa. There were also those who argued that while Isioma not being a Muslim did not invalidate the fatwa, the apology that was tendered nullified it. Outside Nigeria, reactions were mixed; an official of the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Sheikh Saad al-Salah, said that it would be inappropriate to kill a person who is not a Muslim and had apologized for her action. However, regardless of the opinion on

¹⁵⁴ The angry mob began by burning the Kaduna offices of the Independent Lagos-based newspaper “*This Day*”, which published Miss Daniel’s article, despite its later apology. It was after the third day of the rampage, unmitigated by a 24-hour curfew, that the promoters of the Miss World pageant moved the contest to London.

the matter, the Nigerian government said that it would not allow the fatwa to be carried out. The killing of Ibos in Northern Nigeria over this issue resulted in reprisal killing in Onitsha when the bodies of some of the dead arrived from the north. Within days, over 100 Muslims in Onitsha had been killed and several mosques burnt.

In 2003 and 2004, ethno-political hostility between the ethnic Tarok farmers and the Hausa/Fulani nomads, in central Plateau has been responsible for horrendous devastations and displacements. The immediate cause of the confrontation was a land dispute involving the Tarok farmers and the Hausa/Fulani cattle herders. On February 2004, the Hausa fighters burned churches and killed 73 people in a Tarok village, and on 3 May, 2004; a reprisal left about 67 ethnic Hausa/Fulani dead.

It was after four months into the series of crisis, precisely on 18 May 2004, that the President, Obasanjo, firmly responded by declaring a state of emergency in plateau state and suspended Governor Joshua Dariye from office, for not taking any political action to stem the tide of sectarian violence in his state. He appointed a retired general, Christian Alih, as the interim administrator for the Muslim and Christian stakeholders.¹⁵⁵

It must be stated that the Plateau crisis disrupted the relative good relations that have existed between Christians and Muslims since the Sharia crisis faded, or at least since tensions went aground. But the political action manifested with a state of emergency in the central Plateau state, provided caution and restraint on religious extremism for most of 2005. Nevertheless, it wasn't to be the end of violent acts in the name of religion. Following the 30 September 2006 publication of cartoons satirizing the prophet Muhammad by a Danish news paper, some Nigerian Muslim protesters of the

¹⁵⁵ The State administrative Secretary of Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), Sheikh A. Jusuf and the State Chairman of CAN, Rev. Yakubu Pam were among those invited to the session with the President.

caricatures in Maiduguri and Katsina, attacked Christians; killing over 30 people and burned shops and churches. In retaliation for the killing of Christian in the north, more than 100 ethnic Hausa-Fulani were killed in the southern city of Onitsha, in Anambra state, in a two day riot targeted against northern migrants. The Catholic bishops reacted to these incidents, condemning what they called the “unwarranted killing of Christians including ...Rev. Fr. Michael Gajere... and urged the government to set up a panel of inquiry into the riots, and punish the culprits.¹⁵⁶

Since 2007 up till date, Nigeria is learning her lessons from hard facts and bitter experiences from a sect of Islam known as Boko Haram. The emergence of this sect has heightened the level of religious intolerance in the country. Boko Haram (literally interpreted as a prohibition of all Western influence on the Nigerian society through its education and culture) struck into the limelight in Nigeria by a destruction of life and property in the name of religion and other associated ideologies. Much has taken place in the role played by the sect in the disruption of Nigerian society and it has maintained a sustained attack on public and private institutions. What is very disturbing and indeed an intriguing dilemma is that the new dimension of terrorism invariably wears a religious garb. Really the flame of religion is consuming Nigeria. Nigeria has not been at rest. The question of whether Nigeria will survive the onslaught of the Boko Haram sect is unpredictable. This sect was born in the 1960's shortly after independence, though it came into limelight in 2002, identifying Mohammed Yusulf as its official leader. Yusulf chose Maiduguri as its base and established a mosque and Islamic school Madrasa Islamiyya.

¹⁵⁶ Catholic Bishops Call for Probe, (2006): available from <http://www.champion-newspapers.com/news/teasers/article7> .

In July 2009, Boko Haram came in to the lime-light as a full-blown sectarian school turning to violence and disruption of society to achieve its aims.

From the foregoing, one can ask oneself, whether Boko Haram is really interested in the true principles of the Jihad, especially from the religious point of views when one realizes that Boko Haram had massacred people during months of Ramadan in 2010 and during the period of the haji, as well as during the celebration of the Eid el-kabir (Sallah) in 2011, it becomes obvious that it is rather killing the true meaning of pure Islam contrary to what Ulthman Dan Fodio and Prophet Mohammed wanted to enhance in the practice of Islam¹⁵⁷

June 16, 2011 was a sad day for Nigeria. On the above day a Boko Haram suicide bomber, Mohammed Manga bombed the federal police headquarters at Abuja capital territory, leaving an enormous death toll of people and destroying an unquantifiable volume of property. However, the death of so many people on the contrary cannot be justified as a way of purifying the state of evil because there can be no justification for the deliberate killing of people. The rate at which Nigeria is experiencing conflicts and crises from the members of Boko Haram sect is very enormous and it requires active attention. Boko Haram has become a political monster that is parading under religious apparel across the country. It will be elaborated upon further in the next sub- section.

1.4.3. Intra-Islamic Religious Violence

Apart from all the above conflicts that have been discussed between Christians and Muslims there are other dimension of radicalization, rooted in differences between Islamic sects within the country which resulted into violence. Most of these conflicts have always been between the Shiites and Sunnis as a result of doctrinal differences.

¹⁵⁷ Isidore U. Nwanaju, "Boko Haram and Violence Halal (a Reverse Edition)," in *Boko Haram And Terrorism Religious Conflicts and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria*, ed. Simon O Anyanwu and Isidore U. Nwanaju, vol. 2 (Enugu, Nigeria: Snaap Press Nigeria Ltd, 2012), 38.

There is the need to understand the politics of the rivalry and tension between these two sects. The Nigerian Sunnis have roots dating back to the 19th century with the Usman Dan Fodio jihad while the Shiites are a minority sect among Nigerian Muslims with the sects gaining ground in the country during the 1970s in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution. But it is worthy of note that Shia activism and martyrdom has provided an attraction to many Nigerian Muslims who see traditional Islamic religion in the country as being stagnant; while many other sects appear somehow to challenge the Shiites. The Sunnis feel uncomfortable with the growing numbers and presence of Shiites and persistent conflicts have ensued.

The Maitatsine group was the earliest Islamic sect that set upon other Muslims and non-Muslims. This occurred in December 1980 when the Maitatsine struck, leaving a death toll of 4,177 persons and an unquantifiable volume of property destruction¹⁵⁸. The mastermind of the riots and leader of the movement was Alhaji Muhammad Marwa, nicknamed Maitatsine, a Kano based extremist Muslim cleric, whose Nigerian origins have recently been doubted.¹⁵⁹ He had held strange ideas that find him outside Islamic orthodox practices; for instance that Muslims should not face the *Qibla*¹⁶⁰ during prayers and a categorical rejection of the authority of Hadith (Tradition) of the prophet of Islam.

His followers were drawn from the dispossessed class of the Muslim community, notably the *almajiris* whom he taught that all Muslims who shun his ideas were

¹⁵⁸ Kalu Ulu Eme, "Government as Fuel for Religious Crisis in Nigeria," in *Boko Haram And Terrorism Religious Conflicts and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria*, ed. Simon O Anyanwu and Isidore U. Nwanaju, vol. 2 (Enugu, Nigeria: Snaap Press Nigeria Ltd, 2012), 198.

¹⁵⁹ Udoma, *The cross and the crescent*, 153. Marwa was alleged to have originally come from Cameroon, having sneaked into Kano after having been deported in the sixties following his misdemeanor. However, Udoma, following Y.B. Usman, has contested Marwa's Cameroonian nationality, basing his arguments on the claim that both Marwa and his son had Nigerian passports and had sworn affidavits that they belong to Mubi axis of Gongola State.

¹⁶⁰ *Qibla* refers to the Muslim direction of prayer, which is the Ka'ba, a cubic structure located in Mecca.

unbelievers and deserve to die, which led to their murder of other Muslims. Marwa was one of the victim's of the 1980 riots which resulted in the scattering of his members. On August 5, 2007, verbal opposition turned into violence in Katsina when Shia groups clashed with other Muslims resulting in many houses being burnt and several people wounded. It was alleged that some Shia activists' confrontational methods provoked the violence. The groups broad cast their interpretation of Islam in Sunni neighborhoods, organized city-wide processions, distributed pamphlets on city streets and engaged in argument with Sunnis in mosques and religious centers. Shia religious zeal is mirrored all over northern Nigeria.

As the Maitatsine riots was subsiding a bit, another sect known as the Kala Kato or Qur'aniyyun, came out in August 2009 in Zaria, Kaduna state, under the leadership of Malam Isiyaka Salisu. Unlike other sects who based their injunctions on the Qur'an, *hadith* and the *Ijma* (consensus of Islamic scholars) this group only believed in the Qur'an and performs only two kinds of prayer (salat) against the compulsory five daily prayers stipulated for Muslims. On the *hadith*, the group's position is rooted to the conviction that "all prophets of Allah were given only one revelation and that scripture is the only thing that guides their worship and that of their followers."¹⁶¹ The group also has dietary regulations. For example, their member does not eat fish unless it is slaughtered according to Islamic ritual prescriptions. For them an un-slaughtered animal is not pure for consumption. Members don't observe funeral rites the way other Muslims do. For them these rituals were not mentioned in the Holy Qur'an.

¹⁶¹ Isa Sa'isu, "Kala Kato: Meet Group with yet Another Perception of Islam," *Weekly Trust*, August 15, 2009, www.weeklytrust.com.ng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=876:kala-kato-meet-group-with-yet-another-perception-of-islam-&catid=41:news&Itemid=30.

Boko Haram was a major Islamic sect that went on religious revolt in the northern Nigerian city of Bauchi in 2009. This sect has become a threat across the country especially in the nineteen states of northern Nigeria, including Abuja Federal capital and Lagos state. “Both foreigners residing in or visiting the country are living in constant fear for their lives and property following the now unrelenting campaign of killing and maiming, using improvised explosives and gun attacks”¹⁶² What made the riots a cause of considerable concern was that unlike most other cases of religious disturbances in Nigeria, they did not come as a result of disagreement but rather it came as a result of a doctrinal decision by a sect to impose its will on the nation, very similar to the Maitatsine that first drew national attention to the consequences of radicalization. One uniquely important thing about the Boko Haram group was its inclusion of women in its rank and activities. The main objective of this group is obvious from its name, as Boko Haram in Hausa language means “Western education is forbidden (under Islam)”. This created the first controversy about the activity of the group. After the riots, many media groups in Nigeria translated “Boko Haram” to mean “Western education is a sin. This was a force that prompted the new leader that took over after Yusuf’s death, Mallam Sanni Umaru, to come up with a clarification that:

Boko Haram does not in any way mean ‘Western Education is a sin’ as the infidel media continue to portray us. Boko Haram actually means ‘Western Civilisation’ is forbidden. The difference is that while the first gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the West, that is Europe, which is not true, the second affirms our believe in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not Education), for culture is broader, it includes education but not determined by western education. In this case we are talking of western ways of life which include: constitutional provision as it relates to, for instance the rights and privileges of women, the idea of homo-sexualism, lesbianism, sanctions in cases

¹⁶² Simon O Anyanwu, “Socio-Ethical Challenges of Boko Haram Terrorism to Security in Nigeria,” in *Boko Haram And Terrorism Religious Conflicts and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria*, ed. Simon O Anyanwu and Isidore U. Nwanaju, vol. 2 (Enugu, Nigeria: Snaap Press Nigeria Ltd, n.d.), 205.

of terrible crimes like drug trafficking, rape of infants, multi-party democracy in an overwhelmingly Islamic country like Nigeria, blue films, prostitution, drinking beer and alcohol and many others that are opposed to Islamic civilization.¹⁶³

But while there may be problems with semantics, the objective of the group was clear; to eradicate western education and establish Sharia law all across Nigeria. His philosophy against western education was because it teaches “heresy”¹⁶⁴ But there were those who pointed out a contradiction in his hatred for western education because he was allegedly in love with computers and western technology. The group struck up to a thousand people who allegedly refuse to convert to Islam. In response, the Nigerian military police fought back, killing and arresting many members of the organization. The leader of the group, Mohammed Yusuf, was arrested (and was in fact, interviewed) but was later killed. The Boko Haram situation raises several questions about Islamic radicalization in Nigeria and what the future might hold for the country. Some of the key issues raised by the occurrence are worth examining. They tell us “that they are not pleased with the secular status of Nigeria. They want Nigeria to become a religious state where the tenets of Islam, particularly the sharia law, would reign supreme.”¹⁶⁵ To achieve their aim, they wish to begin with the Northern states, where this rule of the sharia has virtually taken the place of the nation’s constitution.

¹⁶³ Alao, *Islamic Radicalisation and Violence in Nigeria*, 44.

¹⁶⁴ Specifically, Yusuf was against such western principles that the world is a sphere or that rain comes from evaporated water.

¹⁶⁵ John Odey, “Boko Haram: Nigeria’s Path to Disintegration,” in *Boko Haram And Terrorism Religious Conflicts and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria*, ed. Simon O Anyanwu and Isidore U. Nwanaju, vol. 2 (Enugu, Nigeria: Snaap Press Nigeria Ltd, 2012), 55.

But despite disagreements, Muslims also believe that there is a limit to how far divergence of views can go. In a veiled reference to the Christians, the President of the Muslim Association of Nigeria, Alhaji Olajide noted:

There is a limit to what you can disagree on in Islamic religion. You cannot disagree on the time of prayer (*salat*), you cannot disagree on where to face where you are praying, you cannot disagree on the month of Ramadan...it can not get to a stage when Yoruba service will be slated for 9 am, Igbo service for 10 am and English service for 7 am, as we have in other religions. So Allah him self has put in place a kind of unity in Islam.¹⁶⁶

The intense violent acts between Christians and Muslims as have been described above raised several questions: where do the weapons freely used come from? Who and who has been prosecuted for these crimes and arsons? Who stood to gain from these cycles of violence? What measures has the government taken to stem the tide? These catalogues of confrontational models inform how religious disagreements can be manipulated for criminal acts. Yet, it can be seen to reveal evidence of ethno-political and socio-economic struggles and discontents for which the quickest expression appears to be through religion.

Concluding Remarks

Since the 1980s, efforts to promote shared life between the two traditions have continued to be disrupted by riots and clashes. Islamic radicalization seems to have:

been induced by economic realities, aggravated by national politics, strengthened by the country's ruling elites; while religion has come out as the key issue, fundamental considerations like ethnicity, past perception of injustice, (sometimes dating back to the colonial era) allocation of opportunities and privileges in national politics, natural resource management and economic

¹⁶⁶ Nigerian Tribune, 23 January 2009

deprivation are all the key issues underlining radicalization and violence in the country.¹⁶⁷

The above research has also shown that Nigerian's case is unique but still it might not be excluded from centuries of the wider Christian-Muslim mutual hostilities. For these reasons, it is necessary to re-examine the past era of dissension between the two traditional religions in order to determine whether the past conflicts and views still weigh on the present experience, especially as it relates to Nigerian context. This motivation would likely be better appreciated if we recall how Christians and Muslims had treated each other in the past and perhaps, recover from their interpretations, useful resources for building up positive relations between them. This is the concern of the next chapter.

¹⁶⁷ Alao, *Islamic Radicalisation and Violence in Nigeria*.

CHAPTER TWO: DISSENTIOUS PAST BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS: SOME IMPORTANT VOICES

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Christianity and Islam is nearly as old and nearly as violent as that between Christianity and Judaism. Some would argue that it is even more violent. Islam arose in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh and eighth centuries, and it quickly spread through formerly Christian lands at the hands of conquering Arab tribes. Christianity lost hold of the areas of her first expansion and Islam rapidly took control of the Holy land, Asia minor, and the Iberian Peninsula (modern day Spain and Portugal).

Muslims entered Europe through Spain, and they advanced as far as the Pyrenees before being stopped by Charles Martel, ruler of the France. “The constant wars in the Iberian Peninsula paled in comparison to the massive undertakings in the East known as the Crusades, starting in 1096.”¹⁶⁸ Armies of Christians and Muslims fought each other many times, and countless people were slaughtered. Eventually the Muslims prevailed in the East, though they were driven from Spain and Portugal in the West at about the same as the Turks captured the city of Constantinople. Life for Christians under Muslim rule was generally tolerable; but there were times at which it clearly was not as I would explore later. The quest of this chapter is to explore the dissentious past and does not aim to repeat the historical account of Christian-Muslim relations, which is an area that has been considerably treated by many authors. An emblematic study of the conflictual

¹⁶⁸ James R Adair, *Introducing Christianity* (New York; London: Routledge, 2008), 442.

history will attempt to focus on significant events and voices of the chosen authors, although reference will be made to other sources when necessary.

The Muslim polemical tradition on Christian doctrines is represented by al-Tabari (d. 855) and Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328). Christian polemics against Islam during the Umayyad rule in the eighth and ninth centuries is represented by John of Damascus (ca 655-750) and Theodore Abu Qurrah (d. ca. 820) and during the medieval period as represented in the writing of al-Kindi (632-900) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Other works aimed toward the dissentious past are found in the views of Peter the venerable (ca. 1092-1156) and Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) against the back-drop of the crusade movement and the alternative approaches they propose to the problem of Islam. Finally the refutation of Islam by Carl Gottlieb Pfander (1803-1865), is examined as representing a typology of the colonial and missionary attitudes in Christian-Muslim interactions during the colonial period.

2.1. THE MUSLIM POLEMICAL TRADITIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

During the period of Abbasid establishment, Muslims intensified their refutation of central Christian dogmas. In the two cases considered here, one refutes Christianity from a largely Nestorian perspective, given that the author was a newly converted Nestorian Christian. The other wrote his refutation in response to the anti-Muslim Christian polemic of Paul of Antioch, utilizing the frame in addition to critique what he considered Muslim “innovations”. Their views generally showed less interest with the exception of al-Tabari, a former Christian in discovering Christian beliefs beyond the limit placed by the Islamic texts. The fundamental truths of the Trinity, divinity of Christ, two natures of Christ, the Crucifixion, and Biblical accuracy, were mostly debated and

denounced, especially by the first author under consideration below. More particularly, the Muslim arguments against Christ's divinity were mainly directed towards showing that he was only a man and in fact, especially for the first author considered here, Quranic data and Biblical evidence, provided by Arius and Nestorius were adduced.

2.1.1 Rabbana Al-Tabari's (d. 855) Central argument against Christianity

Al-Tabari¹⁶⁹ was originally a Nestorian Christian who was converted to Islam at the age of seventy, during the reign of the reportedly intolerant Caliph Mutawakkil (847-861).¹⁷⁰ Faithful to the Quranic idea, he claims that Christ is created and sent; he could not have been God and man. However, it is important to remember that, at the very start of Christianity, preachers and apologists did not have the luxury of a catechism to flip through for authoritative statements of just what this new Christian belief system held as its article of faith. The first problem, of course, is that words can never adequately explain mysteries, such as how God can be one and three persons at the same time.

2.1.1.1. Nestorius' Heresy

Faced with the above two aspects of Jesus, some people emphasized the human or divine aspect while some tried to strike a balance between the two. In the fifth century, the debate crystallized over the question of whether Mary was the "Mother of God" or the Mother of man." A monk named Nestorius (ca. 381-451) a Syrian theologian and the Bishop of Constantinople, openly argued that "Jesus had two distinct and separate

¹⁶⁹ In studying the Al-Tabari's view of the Christians, we rely on his edited texts: Ali al-Tabari (770-855), "Jesus is not God," in Jean-Marie Gaudeul, *Encounters and Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History*. (Rome: Pontificio istituto di studi arabici e islamici, 2000), 147.

¹⁷⁰ For this biographical information on Al-Tabari, see Gaudeul, ed; *Encounter and clashes*, 42. The caliph Mutawakki was often regarded as intolerant, because of his reputation for series of edicts outlining discriminating measures against the Christians and Jews.

aspects, human and divine. God was the source of his divine nature, and Mary, his mother, of his human nature. Therefore, Nestorius maintained, Mary was not the Mother of God, because she had given birth only to his human aspect. As a compromise, he suggested calling her the “Mother of Christ.”¹⁷¹ His teachings about the two natures of Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity, as both-divine (Logos) and human (Jesus) were condemned by the Roman ecclesiastical leadership and he was excommunicated as a heretic.

Subsequently Nestorianism was suppressed by the mainstream church and its followers like al-Tabari carried his “thoughts for-ward when they claimed Jesus must have been human and divine in some separate way-“other and other” was how they put it; making Jesus two separate persons at once.”¹⁷² All the arguments are built on the assumption that there is only one nature. “As a Nestorian, al-Tabari may have seen Christ as a man used by God, and found himself very near to the Islamic idea of Christ as a man sent by God, a prophet.”¹⁷³

To examine this idea further, it is necessary to focus on his “Refutation of Christianity”, which deals more on his opinion concerning Christianity in al-Tabari’s analytical study.

2.1.1.2. Al-Tabari’s Refutation of Jesus as created, and not God

Central to his argument, al-Tabari posited in his second chapter an “awkward” question for Christians. He challenged the veracity of the creed in the incarnation of the son of God or the relationship between the Father and Jesus. “Is it true from the

¹⁷¹ Donald Johnson and Jean Johnson, *Universal Religions in World History: The Spread of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam to 1500* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 93.

¹⁷² Christopher M Bellitto, *Church History 101: A Concise Overview* (Liguori, Mo.: Liguori Publications, 2008), 37.

¹⁷³ Gaudeul, *Encounters and clashes*, 42.

beginning to the end? Is it completely false? Or is it partially true and partially false?”¹⁷⁴

As a Nestorian, he was certainly aware that in the beginning of the creed it is said that “the father is the creator of all” and later, that “Jesus is uncreated.” After suggesting why the Christians should neither want to say that the creed is partially true or partially false nor entirely true, he goes on to declare the extremity of Christian inconsistency and falsity in the following way.

As for me, I do not know about a more obnoxious aberration and lie than the attitude of a community which stands in front of God, raises its voice and says: we believe that you only are God, that you are the Creator of all that is visible and invisible-and which adds that : Yes, Lord, we believe in another God...who is Creator of all things as you are!¹⁷⁵

In the above harsh statement, al-Tabari dismisses the essential Christian truth as the mother of all lies and the Christians as believing falsely, and thus, seeks to realize his declared intention to destroy the Christian faith.¹⁷⁶ Indicating that “Jesus is described as flesh and blood, a human being tempted by Satan; he cannot be God nor one with Him. The Theology of salvation makes no sense: how could weakness and defeat be salvific; it exalts Satan over God.”¹⁷⁷ To keep the theology moving forward, then, “this meant that humans had not been saved, because only God can save; and if Jesus is not God, then his death on the cross did not accomplish the purpose of salvation.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Al-Ṭabarī ‘Alī, *Riposte Aux Chrétiens* (Roma: Pontificio Ist. di Studi Arabi e d’Islamistica, 1995), 9.

¹⁷⁵ Al-Ṭabarī ‘Alī, 9.

¹⁷⁶ Gaudeul, *Encounters and clashes*, 42. There is no doubt that this medieval Muslim theologian was committed to destroy the Christian fundamental thesis, as the best way to dislodge what he considers, perhaps, as the enemy of Islam. Hardly, he was using the platform of Islam to level against the Church’s disavowal of Nestorian ideas. Considering the late date of his conversion, he was hardly trained in Muslim theology and one could argue that he utilized Islam for his own purposes, and went looking as shown in footnote 13 below for Quranic statements that fits according with his Nestorian views.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁷⁸ Bellitto, *Church history 101*, 34.

His position is informed by his thinking that Christians do not practice the true religion; that Islam his new faith is the true religion, which he argues, was divinely confirmed through military success.¹⁷⁹ Apparently, al-Tabari distanced himself from what Christians believe about Christ; which lays stress on the view that Christ is not God, but “a servant” of God (Q. 19:30; 4:172). Christ is presented as a human messenger of God. As J.M. Gaudeul rightly notes, this is closer to the Nestorian idea of Christ as God’s human-servant, than to the mainstream Christian confession in two natures in Christ.¹⁸⁰ However, in my correspondence with Zayn Kassam professor of Islamic Studies with University Pomona since 1995, added a slight expression of disapproval of al-Tabari for being considered truly an Islamic polemic.¹⁸¹

2.1.1.3. The Redemption Theology Glorifies Satan

Furthermore, al-Tabari turns his attention to the theory of redemption, refuting the idea of the suffering and dying God in Christ. While Christian faith teaches that Christ died to liberate mankind from the burden of sin, Islam is not a religion of redemption. It has no place for the cross (atonement) and the resurrection, and has no conception of the Original sin. In fact, Muslims argue, as Isma’il Al-Faruqi did, that humankind doesn’t need to be saved, for the human person “is the *khalifah* of Allah, perfect in form, and endowed with all that is necessary to fulfill the divine will indeed...man, as Islam defines

¹⁷⁹ In his argument for Islam as the true religion, al-Tabari appeals to military success; from Muhammad’s victory to those of the Muslim community after him.

¹⁸⁰ Alī, *Riposte Aux Chrétiens*. This observation is important, because it places al-Tabari’s refutation within the context of his Nestorian affiliation, which apparently settles well with Islamic perspective; the Muslim idea of Christ. In the Quran Christ is categorically denied of any divine nature. (He is not God-Q. 5:17, 72; He is not the third person of three Q. 5:73, 116; Christ is not the son of God Q: 4:171, 9:30; 19:35).

¹⁸¹ Thus, even though al-Tabari was converted to Islam, he was a Christian polemic from a lapsed Christian labeled “heretic” due to the Church’s lack of endorsement of Nestorius theology and so his refutation of Christian dogmas is actually a Christian polemic through the writings of a lapsed Christian, rather than truly an Islamic polemic. He was reading Islam through his own Nestorian understanding.

him, is not an object of salvation, but its subject.”¹⁸² The Quran denies the death of Christ on the cross, and teaches that God rescued him from his executioners to take him to himself (Q.3:55; 4:157-158).

Confronted with what he considered the appalling notion of Jesus who comes to the world to destroy Satan, but was overcome and killed by Satan. al-Tabari treated the question of the cross and salvation as ridiculous. This is his comment:

Here is a theory that would almost bring down the heavens to the ground, by its hideousness; it leaves our hearts astounded with disgust! Here is something very surprising; that the eternal creator is forced to bring down from heaven his eternal Son, then to send him to Satan at the instigation of his eternal and invincible Spirit so that Satan may tempt him and show his disrespect.¹⁸³

In the above statement, the decisive assessment is that redemption theology is repulsive. “The crucifixion never happened. Jesus was raptured to heaven, and a substitute (perhaps Judas) was nailed to the cross in his place. Thus what Christians see as the means for the world’s redemption, Islam regards as a charade.”¹⁸⁴ al-Tabari, further said “who could have compelled God to act in that way which was fitting neither to him nor his creation. Really, since the world exists, I do not believe that one has ever insulted God in a worse manner!”¹⁸⁵

This Christian-turned Muslim writer sees the Christian theology of redemption as nonsense. According to him, to say that Jesus defeat is salvific is to enthrone Satan over God, as he writes in the following way:

(I do not believe either) that any doctrine glorifies Satan as much as the Christian theory...that God, his son and the Spirit went to meet Satan...then

¹⁸² Isma’il R Al-Faruqi, *Islamic Da‘wah, Its Nature and Demands* (Indianapolis, IN, USA (10900 W. Washington St., Indianapolis 46231): American Trust Publications, 1986), 399–400.

¹⁸³ Ali B. Rabban Al-Tabari, *The Redemption Theory Glorifies Satan*, n.d., 183.

¹⁸⁴ Timothy. George, *Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad?: Understanding the Differences Between Christianity and Islam* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 136.

¹⁸⁵ Al-Tabari, *The Redemption Theory Glorifies Satan*, 183.

they began to fight Satan in order to subdue him, to erase him and to protect the people from death, and that...they did not succeed in their plan. On the contrary, they provoked Satan's revolt and unleashed his boldness against God.¹⁸⁶

Al-Tabari refuted the Christian dogma on Christ, and tried to relocate Christ to his Quranic accounts. After him, this trend was vigorously pursued by Ibn Taymiyya.

2.2. TAQI-AL-DIN AHMAD IBN-TAYMIYYA (1263-1328) AND HIS POLEMICAL VIEWS

Ibn Taymiyya's¹⁸⁷ opinion about Christianity, are most readily found in his important writing, *Al-Jawab al-Sahih Li-Man Baddal Din Al-Masih* The correct answer to those who changed the religion of Christ, edited and translated by Thomas Michel.¹⁸⁸ Concerning its setting, *Al-Jawab al-Sahih* does, in fact, present Ibn Taymiyya's refutation of the Christian religion, in response to Paul of Antioch's 25 page treatise in defense of Christianity (1150) received from Christians in Cyprus, probably, in 1317.¹⁸⁹ *Al-Jawab al-Sahih* counters the prelate's argumentation against Muslim faith by declaring in response the "errors" of the Christian religion. Christians are guilty of "replacing" the teachings of Christ and the prophets with "their own" formulations. The text also provides the key to his general theological ideas and critical outlook on what he identifies as erroneous beliefs and practices within Islam. They are considered to be "innovations" that depart from the Quran and Sunna, as rightly elucidated by the *salaf*, and seen to

¹⁸⁶ Jean-Marie Gaudeul, *Encounters & Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History* (Roma: Pontificio istituto di studi arabi e d'islamistica, 2000), 43.

¹⁸⁷ In reading Ibn Taymiyya's opinion about Christianity, attention is focused on his important writing, *Al-Jawab al-Sahih Li-Man Baddal Din Al-Masih* (The correct answer to those who changed the religion of Christ), edited and translated by Thomas Michel.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁸ Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim Ibn Taymiyah and Thomas F Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawab Al-Sahih* (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1999).

¹⁸⁹ The Christian, Paul of Antioch, "the Melkite bishop of the Crusader see of Saida", denied Muhammad's mission of any universal significance and the necessity of Islam within the Divine plan of salvation.

correspond to what is as Christian “error”. The only difference in both “errors” being that, whereas the departure involves the entire Christian community, the Islamic *umma* is free from perversion, for it is destined to preserve in the truth.

Ultimately, therefore, *Ibn Tamiyya* does not only refute Christian unbelief (*shirk*), but is, also, filled with concern for Islamic ideal risked by the co-existence of Muslims and Judaeo-Christian communities in Muslim lands. This is why he insists on controlled contact between adherents of these “corrupt” religions and the *umma*.

2.2.1. Polemical view of Christianity in Al-Jawab al-Sahih (The Context: Letter to a Muslim)

The 12th century Melkite Bishop of Saida, Paul of Antioch, wrote a work entitled “*Risala ila Ahad-al-Muslimin*, translated in English as letter to a Muslim. This letter which discredited Islam, does not suggest any clear proper Muslim addressee, but was apparently widely known to Ibn Taymiyya’s contemporaries;¹⁹⁰ which covers key points of theological conflict between Muslims and Christians.

Paul of Antioch challenged Islam for having no inspirational, didactic or salvific relevance for Christians.¹⁹¹ He did not put to question the Muslim traditional belief in Muhammad as a prophet, or the divinely revealed nature of Islam and the Quran. Rather, he argues that Islam neither has the resources to challenge the character of Christianity as the uniquely definitive divine way of grace, nor has any role in the divine plan of salvation. In defense of Christianity Paul made four cases for its truth drawing upon

¹⁹⁰ R. Y Ebied and David, Dimashqī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī Ṭālib Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic during the Crusades the letter from the People of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Ṭālib Al-Dimashqī’s Response* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), 149–458, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10175317>.

¹⁹¹ The text of the Paul’s letter is not included in our text of reference. Hence the information presented in this statement is based on Michel’s analysis of Paul of Antioch’s letter to a Muslim.

Quranic evidence; (1) Muhammad has no universal mission; he is sent only to the Arabs of the *Jahiliyya*,¹⁹² He emphasizes that Christians "... follow no one but the Lord Jesus Christ, the word of God, and his apostles whom he sent to us to bring us warning."¹⁹³ (2) The Christian scripture could not have been substituted with human "innovation" (*tabdil*) or corrupted (*tahrif*), for even the Quran affirmed it is not possible to do so.¹⁹⁴ (3) The Christian belief in the Trinity does not imply a multiplicity of God, but the use of "three names or attributes" to express the one "existing" (*shay*), "living" (*hayy*), and "speaking" (*natiq*) God.¹⁹⁵ (4) Christianity is the uniquely definitive expression of God's salvific grace. Thus, Islam and its followers have nothing new to offer the Christians.¹⁹⁶

While these new challenges carry the impetus of Quranic evidence, they leave the impression that Islam is not in God's plan, and this is the challenge which *Al-Jawab al-Sahih* could not ignore.

2.2.1.1. Ibn Taymiyya's *Al-Jawab al-Sahih* (The Crux of his Argument)

The core of Ibn Taymiyya's¹⁹⁷ argumentation is that Christians are unbelievers for two main reasons. Christians rejected God's absolute oneness (Tawhid) taught by

¹⁹² The word "*Jahiliyya*" means "ignorance". It is used to describe the pre-Islamic Arab Bedouin tribes, who worshipped many gods placed in sacred statues and stones, and who were ignorant of the Islamic concept of God. In Islamic discourse, this term has been used to express the so called 'godless' order engendered by secular values.

¹⁹³ Thomas Michel, *Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥīḥ a Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, 1978, 88. Here, Paul's assigning a prophetic role to the Apostles raises a problem of the criteria of Christian understanding of the prophetic tradition, which *Ibn Taymiyya* will challenge in his response. This reference would confirm the Muslim polemicists' charge of error on Christianity, as it reinforces the view that the early Church substituted their leaders' (Apostles) teaching for the message of their prophet, Christ.

¹⁹⁴ Thomas Michel, 89-90.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 90-92. Paul was consigned with the best way to bring the Muslims to appreciate the Christian belief in the Trinity, using their familiar categories, since he believed that with a better didactic formula, they would come to discover the Christian perspective of God. Yet, he could not convince Muslim theologians such as *Ibn Taymiyya* that he was not presenting a tritheistic notion of God. In the end, he was seen as having fallen into the widely perceived as inadequate Christian explanation of their belief in God.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁹⁷ Michel, "Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥīḥ," 103-112.

their prophet and replaced it with invented belief. They equally rejected Muhammad who was sent to warn them of their error. *Al-Jawab al-Sahih*, therefore, outlined explanation of why the Christian religion is faulty.

2.2.1.2. Muhammad is a Messenger for all, not only for the Arabs

Was Paul of Antioch correct to state that Muhammad has no universal mission and consequently, Islam is not needed by Christians? Did Muhammad claim that he was sent to all humankind? According to *Ibn Taymiyya*, Muhammad indicated that his message is intended, not only for his *Jahiliyya* Arabs, but for all. He finds Quranic supports to the above claims from Suras 7:158; 34:28 pointing to Muhammad as a prophet for all. *Ibn Taymiyya* recounts the Hadith of Abu Haritha, mentioning that Muhammad understands himself as a bearer of universal message, in the following words:

I was given preference over the prophets in six things; I was given comprehensiveness in utterance; I was delivered from fear; I was permitted booty; for me the earth was made a pure mosque; I was sent to mankind in its entirety; with me the prophets were concluded.”¹⁹⁸

From the Hadith too, Muhammad’s relations with the Christians of Najran and the letters summoning the Christian rulers of his time to Islam were cited as an indicative of his belief that his mission extended to those who have received revelation before him, not just for the pagan Arabs.¹⁹⁹ *Ibn Taymiyya* rejected the impression that the Quran in (2:151, 3:164, 9: 128)) must have contradicted itself in suggesting that Muhammad was sent “to his own people” on two counts: intentionally, that is, Muhammad’s self-

¹⁹⁸ Michel, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥīḥ, 104.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 147-209. The editor’s analysis is found in Michel, “The Theology of Ibn Taymiyya,” 103-112.

declaration of his priesthood and the Christian's use of the Quran as evidence.²⁰⁰ He writes:

The evident intention of that is something which can be known with certainty both specifically and generally...if they (Christians) have no knowledge of the meaning of those (Quranic) verses which they employ as the specifics of the messengership, it is necessary that they believe one or two matters. Either the verses have meaning with what he used to say (elsewhere), or else they are among those which have been abrogated."²⁰¹

Thus, *Ibn Taymiyya* claims that neither of these verses is meant to show that Muhammad is sent only to Arabs and not to others. Indeed, while some passages of the Quran speak of Muhammad in terms of a limited mission of only to his people, others largely latter verses lay claim to his mission to all mankind, without the former expressly denying the latter universal statements. He pictures Muhammad's prophetic mission as roughly paralleling that of Christ, who began with delimiting statements. I was not sent except to the sons of Israel, and concluded his preaching by his universal commission to the apostles to travel throughout the world baptizing all persons. This, whereby God sends the prophet firstly to those nearest to him in time, place, and relationship, and gradually leads the messenger to proclaim the message to a wider audience and eventually to all humankind, can be seen clearly in the life of Muhammad.

Within this line of argument, *Ibn Taymiyya* can assert that the credibility of Paul of Antioch's appeal to the evidence of the Quran, the idea of self-contradictions in the teachings of the Quran is even less acceptable. This Muslim polemicist thinks it is absurd for Paul of Antioch to seek self-contradictory support from the Quran or Hadith. In other words, to speak of internal contradictions within the Quran is to imply that it is not

²⁰⁰ Michel, "*Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawāb Al-Şaḥīḥ*," 104.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 167.

divinely revealed and Muhammad is not a prophet, and consequently, the Christian appeal to it is futile. “If they say that their intention is to point out that his teaching is internally contradictory with some of it contradicting the rest, they should be told that this would also require that he is not be a prophet, and thus it will be improper for them to use any statement of his as an argument to the extent they do”²⁰²

For Ibn Tamiyya, there exists ultimately one valid perception of Muhammad’s self-understanding of his “prophetic mission....That he was sent to all mankind; and that his entire teaching is true.”²⁰³ For this, *Ibn Taymiyya* thinks that it cannot be maintained without contradiction, that Muhammad was a prophet, but misidentified in his claim to universal mission, for the simply reason that the prophet cannot err in declaring God’s message.

2.2.1.3. The Corruption of Revelation and Christian Substitution

In dealing with the question of corruption and accuracy of the biblical scripture,²⁰⁴ *Ibn Taymiyya* held the popular belief in Islam that the scripture has suffered human distortion in the forms; in textual alteration (*tahrif al-lafz*) and in false interpretation of the original meaning of texts (*tahrif al-ma’na*). As hard as this question could be, the earlier and later Muslim polemicists were divided on the nature of the biblical corruption. As Michel has argued they believe that distortion exists, but not with the text, rather with its interpretation. However, for *Ibn Hazm*, this “accursed book”, as he described it, was

²⁰² Michel, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥīḥ,” 107. In his insistence that Muhammad’s particular mission and universal one are not contradictory, Ibn Taymiyya argues that the two moments: specific mission and universal mission are realized in Christ too; arguing that Christ mission to “the lost sheep” of Israel cannot be said to contradict his universal mission to which he sent his apostles.

²⁰³ Michel, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥīḥ a Muslim Theologian’s Response to Christianity*, 190-191.

²⁰⁴ Michel, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 210. The central motivation, here, on the part of Ibn Taymiyya, is to reply to Paul of Antioch’s claim that, if it was accepted that the Quran confirmed the earlier scriptures, it implies that it denies *tahrif al-lafz*, textual corruption of the Bible.

wholly corrupted.²⁰⁵ *Ibn Taymiyya* rather offers a modified version of *tahrif* of the Bible. For him, the Quran clearly leveled accusation of false interpretation of sacred texts (*tahrif al-ma'na*) on the “people of the Book”, mostly the Jews (4:46; 5:13). It neither explicitly charged the Christians and Jews of textual corruption (*tahrif al-lafz*) nor denies that it occurred.²⁰⁶

Ibn Taymiyya lends himself to the Muslim’s views that the tradition of the Torah was broken during the Babylonian exilic experience and that there was error in the way the gospel was transmitted by the apostolic church. On the basis of this, he contends that there is no certainty in treating the Bible as wholly accurate or rejecting it completely as corrupt. Only the individual passages of the Bible shown to be accurate in transmission and translation would be acceptable to Muslims. This is what he says:

It is not permitted for any Muslim to reject a single thing of what was handed down to those who preceded Muhammad, but any argumentation from that demands that three prerequisites (be fulfilled). 1) its being established as (having come) from the prophets. 2) The correctness of its translation into Arabic or into the language in which it appears e.g; Greek or Syriac. The language of Moses, David, Jesus, etc of the Israelite prophets was Hebrew, and whoever says the language of Jesus was Syriac or Greek, is in error. 3) Exegesis of the passage and knowledge of its meaning... This is different from rejecting the prophet himself; blatant disbelief (*sarih*) is not the same as that of the people of the Book.²⁰⁷

The decisive sentence in this argument is that any passage that is not established as being consistent with the teachings of the prophets is considered of being corrupt. However, one could still wonder about the consistency between this view and the Quranic statement that God cannot allow his word to be corrupted (Q. 6:34; 19:64). In taking this view, T.A Michel noted that *Ibn Taymiyya* wanted to distinguish his position

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 89-90.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 219-220. Cf. “The Theology of Ibn Taymiyya,” 116.

²⁰⁷ Michel, *Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 148-149.

from those of al-Ghazali and al-Baqillani, who positively affirmed the scriptures of containing the same Islamic message and their rejection as mere human inventions by Ibn Hazm.²⁰⁸ In this position Ibn Taymiyya parted ways with his predecessors. His style in arguing against biblical accuracy is to point out the incompatibility of the composition of the passages and their interpretations with the prophetic tradition sealed by Muhammad.

Ibn Taymiyya further argues that this distortion of revelation, apart from textual interpretation, involves also substitution (*tabdil*) of revealed words with words that were not in the so called original scripture. These innovations were allowed neither by Christ nor his messengers, but by the whims of error-prone Church leadership. According to Ibn Taymiyya:

Christ did not ordain for you the Trinity, nor your thinking on the divine persons, nor your doctrine that he is Lord of the universe. He did not prescribe for you that you make pork and other forbidden things permissible. He never commanded you to omit circumcision, or that you should pray to the east; nor that you should take your great men and monks as masters beside God. He did not tell you to commit shirk by using statues and the cross, or by praying to the absent or dead prophets and holy men and telling them your needs. He did not prescribe monasticism or the other reprehensible practices which you innovated. Christ never ordained such things for you, nor is that which you follow the Law which you received from the messenger of Christ.²⁰⁹

Ibn Taymiyya sees the origin of these “innovations” in the early church as a parting of ways with the Jews and the quest for a distinctive identity. In pursuance of its own autonomous faith, Christianity sidelined the original prophetic religion, and constructed a religious synthesis that included idolatrous beliefs from pagan philosophers.²¹⁰

2.2.1.4. The Mystery of the Trinity

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 115.

²⁰⁹ Ibn Taymiyyah and Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, 118.

²¹⁰ Ibid. This author does not ignore the link that could be made between Ibn Taymiyya's charge of the Christian preference to hold on to man-made religions rather than to Christ's and what Ibn Taymiyya would have considered aberrations found within Islam-in Sufism, Shi'Imamism, saints veneration etc.

Ibn Taymiyya, in this section, focuses on the Christian rational explanation of the Trinity and its related points: the divine hypostases, incarnation, the Quranic Jesus and union of God with a creature. To confess that Jesus is Lord is distinctive of Christian faith. This is not contrary to belief in the One God. “Nor does believing in the Holy Spirit as “Lord and giver of life” introduce any division into the One God.”²¹¹ The basic questions guiding his reply are: Are the views of Paul of Antioch on these matters convincing? Is the doctrine of trinity in line with the prophetic tradition? The word *Trinitas*, possibly used in Latin for the first time by the apologist Tertulain in the second or third century, offers another example of how Christianity invented words that approximate a mysterious truth.

A general council convened in Constantinople in 381 to explain in greater depth these essential theological truths was summarized in the “Nicene-Constantinopolitan” creed that states: Father, Son and Spirit are all co-eternal and co-equal; three separate persons as well as a unified God all the time and all at the same time.”²¹² Ibn Taymiyya’s position on these issues is that the doctrine of trinity is unreasonable belief, and has no basis in the prophetic tradition; neither in the prophets’ “explicit” teaching nor in any valid exegesis of their statements. It is, rather, founded on less-evident expressions in the Bible, and given doubtful and inconsistent substantiation.²¹³ However, there are several places in the Quran where the trinity seems to be explicitly denied. “People of the Book, do not transgress the bounds of your religion. Speak nothing but the truth about God.

²¹¹ Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (New Hope, Ky.: Urbi et Orbi Communications, 1994), 55.

²¹² Ibn Taymīyah, *A Muslim theologian’s response to Christianity*, 103-112.

²¹³ Michel, “The Theology of Ibn Taymiyya,” 120.

Believe in God and his apostles and do not say: “Three”...God will not forgive idolatry. He that serves other gods besides God has strayed far indeed (4:171, 114).”²¹⁴

Ibn Taymiyya’s criticism outlines a detailed explanation of why the doctrine of the trinity is mistaken. He questions Paul’s attempt to explain the trinity with three substantial attributes of existence, speech and life.²¹⁵ Thus, this Muslim theologian responds that, “no intelligent person says that the attribute is equal to that which is described in the substance.... The essence is one, while something equal to another is not that to which it is equal.”²¹⁶ He argues that the basis for the Christian articulation of the trinity ought to be revelation, and, hence, the prophetic teaching; not reason. He indicates that to resort to reason in order to explain the Trinitarian dogma as Paul of Antioch does, dislocates the subject from its proper theological competence and pitches in the field of theodicy.²¹⁷ Authentic teachings of the prophets neither need this kind of rational support, nor seek to escape being reasonable. Moreover, to say that the trinity transcends reason is to deprive revelation of its reasonability and prophetic character.

Consequently, Ibn Taymiyya equates Christians with Sufis who teach the mystical path as the only way to truth, leaving no room for reason. He quotes al-Tilimsani, who points out that, Muslims mystics have intuitions that falsify genuine reason.²¹⁸ However, for him, such Muslims are like Christians, displaced from the authentic spiritual quest. Ibn Taymiyya devoted a number of passages to arguing that the fundamental flaw in the

²¹⁴ George, *Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad?: Understanding the Differences Between Christianity and Islam*, 57.

²¹⁵ Ibn Taymiyyah, *A Muslim theologian’s response to Christianity*, 91.

²¹⁶ Michel, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥīḥ a Muslim Theologian’s Response to Christianity*, 271.

²¹⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah, *A Muslim theologian’s response to Christianity*, 121. Ibn Taymiyya sees problem with the theological grounds of the doctrine of the Trinity. The pitfall lies in building religious doctrines on early theologian thesis.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 122. In this latter citation, Ibn Taymiyya expresses the error of the Muslim mystics, he citing al-Tilimsani, who insisted that one must leave out rational or sense perception in order to attend the truth.

Christians formulation of the trinity is that Christ's words or those of other prophets were taken out of contexts; he thereby attempts to correct such Christian misinterpretation.²¹⁹ He seeks to re-establish the true meaning of the concepts "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit," in the words of Christ and the prophets. Thus, he expounds that the prophets described God as "Father" (in the figurative sense), in order to express the relationship of a servant and Lord. His critical position is that it was the (Christian) priest that removed this sense out of this term and superimposed a unique generational relationship between God and Jesus.²²⁰

Ibn Taymiyya further notes that by the same misinterpretation, the "Holy Spirit" was dualised in its significance to Jesus and to others. He sees this view of the Holy Spirit as promoting duality between its proper biblical role in bringing revelation and guidance and having a special relationship with Jesus. He summarizes his accusation against the Christians as follows:

When in their books the Christians are faced with their calling Christ a son and calling other prophets a son as God's saying to Jacob 'You are my first born son' and calling the apostles son they say that Christ is a son by nature and the others are sons by adoption. Thus they make the term 'father' an equi-vocal term. They posit a nature for God and make Christ his son by expression of that nature. This is attested by the view of those among them who understand Christ to be God's son by the son ship known to creatures, and Mary as the spouse of God. In the same way they make "Holy Spirit" a term which carries both the meaning of the life of God and the Holy Spirit which descends upon the prophets and holy persons.²²¹

Furthermore, the question of Christ divinity, a key point in which Muslims claim that Christianity is in error and the gospel being falsified, Ibn Taymiyya bases his

²¹⁹ Michel, *Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥīḥ a Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, 273-324.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 262-263.

²²¹ Michel, *Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥ.*

argument on the criteria of the Quran and Sunna. Muslim theologians refused to agree that God could reveal himself in a human person (incarnation). Ibn Taymiyya explains that the prophets taught that an essential union of God and creature is not in accord with God's transcendence. No one can conceivably suggest otherwise (whether Christians speaking of the divinity of Jesus or as some Muslims honoring Sufi shaykhs), without landing into logical absurdity and damaging the nature of God.²²² Ibn Taymiyya expresses his conviction that such knowledge neither issues from reason nor revelation. Christians fell into such absurdity as the doctrine of trinity, because they wrongly insist that revelation and reason complement each other.²²³

The doctrine of the trinity is the blue print on which the Christian faith-and theology- is built, Christianity and Islam have always been at odds over the doctrine of the trinity- and they remain so today. Some of the differences however, have resulted from misperceptions and false interpretations. According to Timothy George, "we should not be surprised, then, when Muslims misunderstand the trinity, for all Christians acknowledge its mystery and many Trinitarian heresies have flourished under the Christian banner."²²⁴

2.2.1.5. Islam as a Superior and necessary Religion

²²² Ibid. Ibn Taymiyya highlights the teaching of the Quran on this subject. He seeks to prove that when the Quran called Jesus the "word of God" (4:171), it means that he was made by the creative word of God. We must note that the experience of God's transcendence in Islam and Christianity are substantially mutually different. In Christianity, God's transcendence includes immanence, but in Islam, the concept is so majestic that it excludes immanence. This statement may hold true for some Muslim theologians but not for Islam as a whole. And certainly the writings of Sufis, Shi'a etc, are ample evidence of belief in God's immanence.

²²³ Ibid., 349-350.

²²⁴ Timothy George, *Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad?: Understanding the Differences between Christianity and Islam* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 87.

Paul of Antioch challenged the Muslims by saying that only two kinds of religion exist; religion of law depicted by Judaism and religion of grace depicted by Christianity. This entails then that “Islam will have to be an unnecessary extra”.²²⁵ In his response, Ibn Taymiyya argues for the superiority and necessity of Islam. He proposes right relations among religions by saying that Judaism truly represents a religion of law and Christianity, the religion of grace, but Islam is a religion that completely combines both law and grace.

His emphasis then is that Judaism and Christianity are fundamentally incomplete, and only the perfect religion, that is Islam, can fulfill their limitations.²²⁶ This deficiency of Christianity and Judaism is in the area of revelation which provides another element through which to reckon the superiority of Islam. Ibn Taymiyya argues that the Quran augments the Torah and the Gospel, and clarifies their ambiguous accounts.²²⁷

Of course, as the gospel cannot be accepted as a kerygma of faith in the “Risen Christ”, but rather as a text of some moral and legal principles, Ibn Taymiyya insists the legal framework of the Quran is surpassing, and needed to perfectly balance the goals of the legal principles of the Torah (which is justice) and the Gospel (that is goodness). Islam does this; by unifying both justice and moral goodness, as well as law and grace. How this is achieved is not however, clearly demonstrated. He further contends that Islam would have been necessary, even if the Jews and Christians had not corrupted the religion of the prophets, for humankind to be brought to total obedience to their creator,

²²⁵ This topic means so much to Ibn Taymiyya and of course, to all Muslims, as Islam was therein, being asked to give account of itself. It is not surprising that this polemicist deals with it decisively.

²²⁶ Michel, “The Theology of Ibn Taymiyya.” 132. Al-Qarafi opined that law and grace are common points of all the Prophetic religions, but was definitively restored in the true path, that is, Islam. For Muhammad Ibn Abi Talib, Islam is the perfect fulfillment of the law and grace in that one religion, which have hitherto, existed partially in earlier religions.

²²⁷ Michel, *Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥīḥ a Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, 354-355.

without associating anyone or anything with God. In this context, he justified Muslims' military victories as a sign of divine support; pointing out that both the Jews and Christians lacked the divine support to spread the 'straight path' to all parts of the world.²²⁸ He believes that "Muslims made the religion of the Lord conquer from the eastern parts of the world to the west by word and deed.

Can any intelligent person having knowledge and fairness state there is no benefit in God's sending Muhammad and he is dispensed from his messenger ship because of what is held among the people of the book?²²⁹ Ibn Taymiyya thinks that it is for the sake of propagation and the teachings of all the prophets that God gave Islam conquest. To say that Islam is not necessary in the economy of salvation therefore is to obscure this Islamic history.

2.2.1.6. Assessment

The foregoing discussion on al-Tabari and Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of Christianity calls for a re-examination of our religious attitudes towards differing views and criticisms of our religions. Both Muslim theologians set out to prove the superiority of Islam and the deficiency of Christianity and (Judaism) in response to Christian assertions with which they disagreed. As a former Nestorian Christian, al-Tabari is convinced that the Christian claims of Christ as God betrays the fundamental unity of God. While Ibn Taymiyya on his own position developed extensive theological arguments to show that Islam has the right answers. Thus, Ibn Taymiyya assessed Christian dogmas in Islamic terms, not in terms of Christian self-understanding. Both, Ibn

²²⁸ Michel, "The Theology of Ibn Taymiyya," 134-135

²²⁹ Ibn Taymiyyah and Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, 135.

Taymiyya and al-Tabari with Nestorian understanding tend to read Christianity of their milieu as a monolith, without paying attention to its respective formulations in the east and west. This is a crucial limitation in the way Christians and Muslims view each other.

Indeed, this typical hostility which al-Tabari and Ibn Taymiyya symbolizes is still present among some Muslim tendencies. Whatever the right and wrongs of their anti-Christian advocacy, they are not voices of accommodation in the Christian-Muslim dissentious past and divisions. Obviously, the atmosphere of hostility towards the other is still what the two traditions are facing in today's Nigeria. The unity of purpose in Nigeria is a challenge that calls Christians and Muslims to "start re-thinking both scientifically, spiritually and philosophically to know God better for peace, joy and harmony in life."²³⁰ Understanding this link may help us moderate the most savage effects of religious violence and give greater force to the non-violent aspects of religious teachings.

2.3. CHRISTIAN POLEMIC AGAINST ISLAM DURING THE EARLY INTERACTION

Within a century of Muhammad's death, Islam firmly came to stay on the map of the Mediterranean world. Islamic states had been successfully established in the Persian Empire and many parts of the Byzantium,²³¹ hence, the territories originally belonging to the various forms of Christian churches²³² sunk in the internal problems in the East, were subjected to Muslim rule through military conquest.

The Muslim rulers and apologues of this period treated Christians according to the impression they received from the Quran. The central question is: How did the

²³⁰ Dharam Vir Mangla and Raju. Gupta, *Buddhism Vs Hinduism: A Comparative Study* (Delhi, India: Published by Academic Excellence, in association with Geeta International, 2010), 211.

²³¹ Francesco Gabrieli, *Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 180–223.

²³² The Nestorian Christians had held sway in the Persian empire and, in Byzantium; there were the churches, which accept the Chalcedon dogmatic definition and the non-accepting Monophysite Churches.

Byzantine Christians view this rampaging phenomenon? Of course, their perception of Islam was defined by much older divisions in Byzantine Christianity, along the line of acceptance and non-acceptance of the Council of Chalcedon.²³³ From the ranks of Chalcedonian Christians (later, known as the Melkites), we present the opinions of John of Damascus (ca. 655-750) and Abu Quran (d. ca. 820).

2.3.1. John of Damascus (CA. 655-750)

John of Damascus²³⁴ treated Islam in Chapter 101 of his book on the Heresies- *De Haeresibus*. Another work that has been attributed to him as containing his view of Islam is entitled *Controversy between a Saracen and a Christian*. However, for this work, our focus will be mainly on *De Haeresibus*, and will only make a brief reference to the second work.

John had a special connection with the Muslims and their religion, mainly due to his family background and public life. He was born around 655 during the time of Muslim occupation of Damascus, coming from a popular family integrated into public service under the new Muslim government of the Umayyad Caliphs.

John served as a financial official, having succeeded his father, probably from 705-726. The available accounts are not clear regarding the specific post he held in the finance department. However, his public life seems to have set him in the middle of the caliphate and the Christian community of Syria. After having withdrawn his service

²³³ Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Chicago, Ill.: New Amsterdam Books, 2000), 37 The council of Chalcedon defined that Christ is one in his divine and human nature. While many people in the East, including Syria, accepted this teaching, there were many who refused to accept it. They held to monophysitism, stating that Christ was only God and not a true man.

²³⁴ For this study, our main source is Daniel J Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam. The "Heresy of the Ishmaelites."* (Leiden: Brill, 1972).

under the reign of the caliph Hisham, he retired to the monastery of St. Sabas, where he devoted himself to contemplative life.

Chapter 101 of *De Haeresibus* is part of John's major theological work, known as the Fount of knowledge, composed most likely during his retirement in the monastery. This corpus consists of three parts: the first concerns philosophical principles; the second is a review of heresies and the third is a presentation of the orthodox truth, namely the *Expositio accurate fidei Orthodoxae*.

The fount of knowledge presents a logical order that treats the first two parts, not as independent essays, but as prelude to the dogmatic exposition in the third part. As its prologue suggests, it is intended as a theological reader for the Christian community on the truth of Christian faith concerning their Muslim counterparts.

In this work, the second part of his work is our concern, since it contains *De Haeresibus*, which contains a list of Christian heresies, including Islam. In this "book of heresies" the chapter on Islam is seen as the one hundredth heresy or the one implied when enlisted as the 101st heresy²³⁵ More than he did in relation to other heresies, John of Damascus leads his readers to the root of the "the heresy of the Ishmaelite"

2.3.2. Islam is a Christian heresy

Chapter 101 exposes the Muslim heresy in five parts: (1) Introduction of the heresy, (11) Fundamental doctrines, (111) Apologetics, (1V) Introduction to Quranic texts, (V) Islamic Legislation and Practices.²³⁶ In the first part, the chapter explains the

²³⁵ For the purpose of our study, we will refer to the number on the heresy of the Islamaelites" as Chapter 101 of *De Haeresibus*, except where it is otherwise necessary.

²³⁶ We are indebted to Daniel J. Sahas for this division of John's work. What is of interest to us is that John presents a thematic exposition of Islam in a simple way. The structure revealed that with his Christian audience in mind, he has not set out an argumentation against Islam.

identity of the heresy: There is also the still-prevailing deceptive superstition of the Ishmaelite, the forerunner of the Antichrist.²³⁷ The opening sentence describes Islam as a “deceptive superstition”. The word “superstition” in its Latin derivative, *superstitio*, means ‘erro’. Hence, for John, Islam is a heresy that leads people astray from the truth.

He further calls it the “forerunner of the Antichrist”²³⁸ With some clarity, Saba observes that John’s association of Muhammad with heralding the ‘Antichrist’ is consistent with his other discourse “on the Antichrist” in *De Fide Orthodoxa*, in which he identifies “the forerunner of the Antichrist”, not only with Satan, but also with any person who distorted the basic doctrines, particularly the divinity of Christ.

The chapter identifies the origin of Islam in Ishmael, and uses three names for its adherents: Ishmaelites, Hagarenes, and Saracenes.²³⁹ These names place the Muslims in their Judaeo-Christian biblical terms, although they assume different significance for the Muslims. For instance, Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, have special place in the religious heritage of Muslims, and this is customarily expressed in the rites of the Haji (pilgrimage), as act of faith. It is therefore plausible that, while the accents in Muslim appeal to these three names may lay in their being associated with earlier monotheism; their significance is different in Christianity. In Christian polemical tradition, to which John of Damascus subscribes the intention in signaling the names to draw attention to Muslims’ link with their illegitimate origin and false monotheism.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ The Chapter 100/101 Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam. The “Heresy of the Ishmaelites.”* 764A

²³⁸ The greek Antichristos, in its biblical sense, which appears most clearly in the Johannine Epistles, They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us (1Jn 2:19)

²³⁹ At John’s time the name “Ishmaelites” was well known, especially since the biblical book of Genesis speaks of Ishmaelites in Gen.16: 10-12. Ishmael the son of Hagar and Ahraham is blessed by God, and was destined to grow like a donkey and live in hostility with his brothers.

²⁴⁰ Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam. The “Heresy of the Ishmaelites.,”* 71.

He further mentions that this religion has its historical origin in the pre-Islamic religion of the Arabs, pointing out that Muhammad is the figure that led the Arabs from idolatry to the worship of one God (monotheism).²⁴¹ Furthermore, this first part introduces the founder of the heresy as follows: “Mameth, who, having been casually exposed to the Old and New Testament and supposedly encountered an Arian monk formed a heresy of his own. While identifying Muhammad as a false prophet, John’s accent is on the Judaeo-Christian sources of his teachings and his claim to a contact with “an Arian monk.”²⁴² Thus, John indicates that, not only the origin of Islam, but also the prophet of Islam’s claim to having a scripture sent down to him, is part of his heretical character.

In the second part, Chapter 101 states what Muhammad teaches about God, Christ and revelation:

He says that there exists one God maker of all, who was neither begotten nor has he begotten. He says that Christ is the word of God and his Spirit, created and a servant...born without seed from Mary.... For, he says, the word of God and the Spirit entered Mary and she gave birth to Jesus who was a prophet and a servant of God. And that the Jews, having themselves violated the law, wanted to crucify him and they arrested him, they crucified his shadow, but Christ himself, was not crucified nor did he die; for God took him up to himself into heaven because he loved him. And this is what he says, that when Christ went up to the heavens God questioned him saying: ‘O Jesus, did you say that ‘I am Son of God, and God? And Jesus they say, answered ‘Be merciful to me, O Lord; you know that I did not say so, nor will I boast that I am your servant; but men who have gone astray wrote that I made this statement, and they said lies against me, and they have been in error’. And God, they say, answered to him: I knew that you would not say this thing’...And we ask: And which is the one who gives witness that God has given to him a scripture? And which of the prophets foretold that such a prophet would arise?

²⁴¹ Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam. The “Heresy of the Ishmaelites.”* “The Chapter 100/101 of the De Haeresibus,” 764B,133

²⁴² John’s reference to an “Arian monk” signals the intention to stress that Muhammad imbibed heretical ideas, since Arius denied the Trinitarian mystery and held that Christ was a great prophet but not more than a man. Yey, for the Muslims who appealed to the hadith about the Syrian monk, Bahira, in their reply to the Christian charge that the prophethood of Muhammad was not predicted, this figure was not just “an Arian monk”, he was a Christian monk.

In the above statements, John of Damascus highlights some of the key Christian doctrines as sieved through the Quran, believed by Muslims to be contrary to Islamic beliefs. They concern the unity of God (*tawhid*), the fundamental difference between God (as creator of all) and man, Muslim rejection of Christian Christology and embracing of Quranic Christology emptied of salvation history (one, which denies the divine nature in Christ and crucifixion). These are perceived as errors of Christianity, which, in the Muslim point of view, are not of Christ, but are invented, and the stress is that Christ disowns them before God.

But John does not leave the authenticity of the Muslim doctrine of revelation and the prophet hood of Muhammad unchallenged. This appears in a few lines in the form of a dialogue between a Christian and a Saracene. The important of the dialogue between both believers lay in the fact that in John's polemics, the recurring Christian criticism of Islam for lack of divine witness has a place. Hence the Christian interlocutor challenges why Muslims accepted faith and scripture without witnesses, while the Quran prescribes witnesses for different aspects of Muslim's life: marriage, inheritance, debt, etc. The result of this line of argumentation for John is that Muhammad is a false prophet, in so far as he received no previous witnesses from the prophets.

In the third part of Chapter 101, the dialogue focuses on the attributes of God, religious piety and symbolism. "Moreover, they Muslims call us *Associators*, because, they say, we introduce beside God an associate to Him by saying that Christ is the son of God...",²⁴³ Here, John of Damascus alludes to Quranic criticisms against the

²⁴³ Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam. The "Heresy of the Ishmaelites."* Chapter 100/101 of the *Haeresibus*," 765A-C, 133-135

Christians²⁴⁴ It was difficult for him to comprehend the reason for which the Muslim rejects Christ's divinity, and still claims loyalty to the prophetic tradition. He counter-accuses them of being 'Mutilators', in so far as they alienate God from His essence. He goes on to defend the Christian theological thesis:

For the word and the Spirit are inseparable from that in which they have been by nature, If, therefore, the word is in God, it is obvious that he is God as well. If, on the other hand, this is outside of God, then God, according to you, is without word reason and without Spirit. Thus trying to avoid making associates to God you have mutilated Him.²⁴⁵

John of Damascus then turned his counter-attack to the charge that Christians are idolaters for venerating the cross, about which he charges that the Muslims venerate the Ka'ba.²⁴⁶ He wants to bring to the knowledge of the Christians that, if the Christian symbolism of the cross is idolatrous in the Muslim viewpoint, then, such accusation could be made of the Muslims for the rituals of kissing and embracing of the stone around the Ka'ba. "This, then which they call 'stone', is the head of Aphrodite, whom they used to venerate and whom they called *Haber*."²⁴⁷ John is very popular for his defence of iconoclasm, and so, his displeasure with the intolerant Muslim attitude towards the Christian cross and other symbols, probably, falls into that stance.

²⁴⁴ As found in Sura 34:58-59. These Quranic criticisms belong to the Medinan period (622-632), and not the Meccan period (612-622), for while in Mecca and also for sometime in Medina, Muhammad rather sought to confirm earlier revelations and therefore, he did not attack the Christian revelation.

²⁴⁵ John of Damascus, "The chapter 100/101 of the *De Haeresibus*," 768C-D, 137. (my emphasis) As Sahas rightly points out, the response of John on the nature of God and His attributes must be located within its wider debate latter pitched the different theological schools in Islam against one another, focusing mainly on whether the attributes of God constitute his essence or not.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 768D-769B, 137. This discussion about Muslim ridiculing of the symbolism of the cross must be placed within the context of the Muslims' objection to Jesus crucifixion and veneration of icons. The Syria of the Umayyad period was a clear example of the tension. Except for the tolerance of some Caliphs, such as 'Abd al-Malik, who allowed few Arab Christians to wear cross around their neck, the Muslims were so intolerant of Christian cross and icons.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

In an important fourth part, John of Damascus introduces his reader to the Islamic scriptures, focusing his discussion on four Suras of the Quran he considers absurd and “ridiculous”. The first is Sura 4 concerning “*The Women*”. He challenges what he sees as Muhammad’s permissiveness to marriage and divorce: “He, (Muhammad) clearly legislates that one may have four wives and one thousand concubines as many as he can maintain, besides the four wives; and that one can divorce whomsoever he pleases, if he so wishes, and have another one.”²⁴⁸ John does not concern himself with the original purpose of legislation on polygamy. He simply sees the practice of polygamy and divorce among Muslims as uninspiring, and links the origin of the legislation on divorce to Muhammad’s marriage to Zaynab, the wife of his adopted son, Zayd.²⁴⁹

The second Sura concerns “*The she-camel of God*.”²⁵⁰ John’s emphasis in this particular reference is that this story is unconvincingly incoherent. This seems to reinforce his objection to the authenticity of the prophetic claims of Muhammad and belief in them.

The third and fourth reference concern Sura 7:14 about “the table Spread” and Sura 2: The *Heifer* respectively.²⁵¹ In each of these references, John places his emphasis on the fact that the Muslim scripture is inconsistent and ridiculous. In the fifth and final part of

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 769C, 139. This statement recalls Q. 4:3, which permits polygamy as a response to the need to protect orphans of the Battle of Uhud.

²⁴⁹ It must be recalled that after the prophet of Islam had taken Zaynab as his wife, two revelations came from God to justify his action for future practice of believers. One of them is part of Sura 33:37; “Then when Zayd had dissolved (his marriage) with her, with the necessary (formality), we joined her in marriage to thee: in order that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the believers in (in matter of) (their marriage) with them. And Allah’s command must be fulfilled.” (Abdullah Yusuf Ali). The indication is that Muhammad’s marriage to Zaynab is consistent with God’s will. For John, this cannot be from God.

²⁵⁰ John of Damascus. “The Chapter 100/101 of the De Haeresibus,” 769D, 773A-D, 139-141.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 772D, 141.

chapter 101, having finished his discussion of the Islamic scripture, John of Damascus mentions some Muslim legislation and practices:

He (Mohammad) made a law that they (men) and the women be circumcised, and he commanded (them) neither to observe the Sabbath, nor to be baptized and...to eat what is forbidden in the law and,...to abstain from the other ones...; he also forbade drinking of wine altogether.²⁵²

John's view of Mohammad's permission of female circumcision can help us reflect on today's debate on this practice in Islam,²⁵³ even though some Muslims say it is not part of Islamic practice.

2.3.3. Islam's Teaching on Predestination

One crucial topic treated in the book, the *Controversy between a Saracen and a Christian*²⁵⁴ is the question of predestination (*qadar*) in Islam. This consideration touches the heart of the rising debates of Islamic theology of the age on the status of human act and problem of freedom as derived from the Quran (59:22). The question: does God's foreknowledge imply our actions are predestined?

Indeed are human beings predetermined? If yes, then; are they still free in their actions? The "disputation" between the Christian and Muslim on this subject becomes, among others, a Christian apologetical position on human freedom. Thus, in modern time, the belief in predestination has remained a problem among variant Muslim theologians. With this theoretical indication, John of Damascus was convinced that his

²⁵² Ibid., 773A, 141.

²⁵³ It is interesting to see John of Damascus talk of Islam and the permission of female circumcision, especially as we read that along with modern debate on whether female circumcision is objectively Islamic or a matter of ethnic practice. The importance of John of Damascus in this discussion is that he talks about this Muslim practice only 100 years after Muhammad. It seems to suggest that this practice was part of the known oral tradition before the redaction of the Quran 20 years after the death of Muhammad.

²⁵⁴ C.f. a short commentary on John's view of predestination in Islam in J.M. Gaudeul, ed; Encounters and clashes: Islam and Christianity in history 1, a survey, 2 vols.

argumentation has proved that Islam and all who subscribe to it are heretical and Christians must be protected from such designs.

2.3.3.1. Theodore Abu Qurrah (740- 820) on matters of Freedom and Predestination

Theodore Abu Qurrah²⁵⁵ was a Melkite bishop of Haran (Mesopotamia) who considered himself a disciple of John of Damascus, and a defender of Chalcedonian doctrine. He lived under the religious climate of tolerance in the Umayyad period, when Christians and Muslims could engage each other in theological dialogue and polemics at the court of caliph al-Ma'mun (813-833).²⁵⁶ Abu Qurrah wrote on a number of themes concerning Islam in Greek and Arabic. One of the most challenging examples of his Arabic works is a short polemical treatise on "Free will" the import of which lies in the critique of a central element of Islamic belief, that is, predestination (*qadar*). In his book, *Controversy between a Saracen and a Christian*²⁵⁷ is the question of predestination in Islam.

This consideration touches the heart of the rising debates of Islamic theology of the age on the status of human act and problem of freedom as derived from the Quran (59:22) The question is does God's foreknowledge imply our actions predestined? Are human beings predestined? If yes, are they still free in their actions? The disputation

²⁵⁵ Gaudeul, *Encounters and clashes*, 31-32. See a short commentary on John's view of predestination in Islam.

²⁵⁶ At this period it is important to note that various religious groups interacted in a measure of religious freedom; a policy that was later not comfortable for some caliphs, who rather became intolerant. As it were, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Manichaeans and pagans could be found within its walls. It is most likely for this reason that the quest for the true religion and true church occupied a central position in Abu Qurrah's writing.

²⁵⁷ Gaudeul, *Encounters and clashes*, 31-32. This is a handbook for Christians, teaching them how to answer the questions that Muslims ask; a book written by a Christian for Christians in Greek. And yet, behind it one can discern actual examples of discussions between Christians and Muslims.

between the Muslim and the Christians on this subject becomes among others, a Christian apologetical position on human freedom. Abu Qurrah refuted the Islamic doctrine of predestination as heretical and from his time, the Muslim polemicists felt they were being called to account for their faith in matters related to freedom and predestination. Thus, it may be one of the earliest instances of Christian theology offering its help to other believers without any ulterior motive.”²⁵⁸ Although some may unlikely accept this opinion.

2.3.3.2. Theodore Abu Qurrah’s teaching on Free will

In dealing with “Free Will”, Abu Qurrah seeks to persuade, against Islamic advocacy of predestination and its Manichean version of human beings as having been created free but ultimately compelled in their actions, that human actions and inactions are products of freedom. He indicates this purpose clearly as he opens his treatise. According to him, “...our aim is to establish that there is freedom in man nature and that compulsion was not introduced into it from some cause or another- until that is, it voluntarily yielded to that cause. Come then, let us converse with the proponents of each of these positions that we might guide them to agree with us.”²⁵⁹

Islam teaches that God is the Creator of heaven and earth. He has decreed all things; all that happens; good and evil are from him. Thus, creation (human beings and other creatures) act according to that which has been predetermined.²⁶⁰ As the Quran stated “everything happens by the will of God (Sura 3:145; 7:187, 188) and “Now Allah

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 32.

²⁵⁹ Thāwdhūrus Abū Qurrah and Middle Eastern Texts Initiative (Brigham Young University), *Theodore Abū Qurrah* (Provo Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 196.

²⁶⁰ Joseph Kenny, *Basic Practices of Religion in Nigeria* (Lagos: Dominican Publications, 1998). This book is our source for the discussion of Divine will and predestination.

leaves straying those whom He pleases and guides whom he pleases; and He is exalted in power, full of wisdom.” (Sura 14:4; 74:31). For centuries after the death of Muhammad, Muslim theologians were locked in debate about divine will and predestination. The Jabrites school of thought insists that God has decreed all things; human beings are not free in the face of what God has determined. Another school, the Qadarites, disagrees. It taught that humans freely choose their actions. Yet, the third group, the Ash’arites, taught that God has predestined all things; which means that “yes”; God has decreed all that human beings do and everything that happens, but he has also given human beings the freedom to choose to do them.

Most Muslims believe and live by predestination, mostly in terms of the Ash’arites conclusion that God has predetermined all things, and this is why they submit to all events that happen in the belief that they are decided by fate (fatalism). Abu Qurrah’s basic conviction is that there is freedom in human nature.²⁶¹ In the first part of his argumentation directed against the Muslims, he proposes that human freedom is integral with the creation of human beings. According to him, it is not possible to affirm that God is just and that people’s actions are predetermined without contradiction. In other words, the doctrine of the Justice of God could not be reconciled with the doctrine of predestination. Either one of them can be true, but not both. For the fact that we accept that God will reward the obedient of his commands and punish the disobedient, we affirm God’s justice and human freedom, and deny predestination. This is, for Abu Qurrah, the consistent position to take. Within this context, to deny freedom is to subscribe to the

²⁶¹ Abū Qurrah and Middle Eastern Texts Initiative (Brigham Young University), *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, 196.

idea of God as so unjust as to be asking people to do what is beyond their ability. “God is just, and it is precisely his justice that keeps him from doing this.”²⁶²

He insists that God’s power over his creation does not go against his justice, or involve a constraint on people, but is, rather, in harmony with his justice and wisdom.²⁶³ The line of reasoning here is that if God had dictated for people their actions in advance, it becomes absurd to subject them to commands and prohibitions that are outside their power. Abu Qurrah insists that “those who speak of constraint will either have to deny all divine commandments and prohibitions in order to do so, or if they continue to affirm that God gives people commandments and prohibitions, clearly they will have to reject constraint and advocate freedom.”²⁶⁴

A similar position is being held by Manicheans that people are created free but teaches that contrary to people’s will, constraint was introduced into that freedom.²⁶⁵ Abu Qurrah disagrees with this thesis, argues that this freedom was not lost by human beings;²⁶⁶ indicating that to believe so would be to ascribe to God “much that is loathsome, in a variety of ways.”²⁶⁷ He argues that to say that God introduced compulsion into freedom is to suggest three impossibilities in the nature of God; that he was ignorant of the end result of freedom; or that he changed his mind upon his meanness; or that had regretted that freedom did not produce his evil intention.²⁶⁸ Yet, he sees more contradiction in its position that compulsion was introduced from outside of God, by Satan, such that the soul is constrained by the body.

²⁶² Abū Qurrah and Middle Eastern Texts Initiative.

²⁶³ Ibid. 197. Confer, Romans (9: 21).

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 198-203.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 198.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Abū Qurrah and Middle Eastern Texts Initiative.

Abu Qurrah noted that as people who are free creatures, the Manichean's interpretation of the gospel that "a good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor a bad tree, good fruit," (Matt. 7:18) in support of his thesis is inconsistent with God's commandments. He offers exegesis of this gospel periscope saying that "...the above mentioned words of the gospel is nothing other than good and bad intention...He did not say that bad intention cannot change and become good or that good intention cannot change and become bad...he suggested that intention can change from one state to the other."²⁶⁹ This implies that by an act of the will, individuals can change from good to bad or vice versa.

Abu Qurrah further discusses the relationship between God's foreknowledge and human freedom, upon which the theory of introduction of compulsion into freedom was based. If God knows everything about us, past, present and future; and things happen as is known to him; the natural thing is that our actions must have been predetermined long before we act. For him, if this is true, then, the first victim of compulsion will be God himself, who knows all he will do in advance, and is compelled to do it. We cannot say that God is compelled by his own foreknowledge, unless we deny his will. As Abu Qurrah writes; "if God's foreknowledge in and of itself does not compel him what he foreknows, his foreknowledge does not compel human freedom to do what he knows- indeed, otherwise, his foreknowledge would be found to annul his will."²⁷⁰

It means that, since we are not willing to deny God's will, we have to deny that his foreknowledge compels human freedom, since God endowed it with human nature. For instance, God knows that Mr. A will be killed by his own free will. He does not kill because God's knowledge of it has preceded his action. Mr. A's action has to be product

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 200.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 203.

of his free will, not by compulsion, lest the knowledge of God fails and contradicts his will. Hence, it is God's foreknowledge that goes together with human freedom, not the former and determinism. It is precisely for this that Abu Qurrah writes that "God's foreknowledge is not something that forces either God or freedom to end up at what God has foreknown."²⁷¹ The above assertion ironically corresponded with the view of al-Ash'ari that God has foreknowledge of a person's actions, but the person is free in the choice they will make.

Finally, Abu Qurrah, directs his attention to the relationship between intention and freedom. The fact that people are commanded to honor their father and mother and prohibited from stealing, does not constrain their freedom to intend whether to obey or disobey God, or to do good or evil. Human freedom governs intentions, and "its acts are required according to the intention behind those acts, not according to the external ... manifestation of those acts."²⁷² If so, Abu Qurrah concludes, "it follows that it lies within its ability to perish or to enjoy a life of blessing, to enter hell or to inherit the kingdom."²⁷³ Abu Qurrah defended the doctrine of human freedom as integral to human nature. By citing a couple of biblical justifications of his positions, he shows that the doctrine of predestination and the suggestion that human beings are compelled is contrary to the scriptures and to hold such position is to demonstrate ignorance of the scriptures.

2.3.3.3. His refutation of the Saracenes

²⁷¹ Abū Qurrah and Middle Eastern Texts Initiative, 204.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

Abu Qurrah considers the Muslims heretics as well as enemies of Christ and the church in his refutation of the Saracenes.²⁷⁴ Below is his assessment of Islam in a dialogue with a Muslim, which occurred probably in a Palestine territory as reported by John the deacon.

2.3.3.4. Muhammad has no divine authority

When faced with the Muslim comparison of the obedience of the authority of Moses and Christ with demand of similar obligation to the authority of Muhammad, Abu Qurrah questions the divine authority of Muhammad; indicating that God supported the teachings of Moses and Christ with several signs, a criterion which is absent in Muhammad. For him to confess that Muhammad is a messenger of God as required in the second part of the “Shahada” is to testify falsely. “...to accept someone as a messenger is only if he was prophesied by an earlier prophet or through signs established ... Muhammad, however, could appeal to neither of these conditions. No earlier prophet declared him to be a prophet and he did not engender faith in him-self through signs.”

²⁷⁵The above statement highlights the predictions of previous prophets as well as miraculous proofs as signs of prophet hood which Abu Quran finds lacking in Muhammad. This means that Muhammad misidentified himself to be a prophet. In terms of Abu Quran, he should be seen as “insane”. Such a conclusion comes through clearly in the following description provided by Abu Qurrah,

I respond to Muhammad, the insane false prophet of the *Agarenes*.²⁷⁶ This can be

²⁷⁴ Abū Qurrah and Middle Eastern Texts Initiative, 211-227.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 215. Abu Qurrah seems to repeat the main points of criticisms against Mohammad by his master, John of Damascus, especially as it regards the absence of the criteria of previous predictions and prophetic signs in Muhammad’s career.

²⁷⁶ The term “*Agarenes*” refers to the Muslims. Its etymology remains uncertain. As has been suggested earlier, the Christian polemicists used this term to denote the link between the Muslims and “Hagar”- the slave woman of Abraham, and her Arab descendants.

shown from his own boastful and lying remarks. Under the power of a demon, he said, ‘God sent me to spill the blood of those who venerate the divine nature as three hypostases²⁷⁷ and of those who do not say, God is one, barren-built, who did not beget and was not begotten, who has no partner.’²⁷⁸

This insanity or diabolic possession, according to Abu Qurrah, was observed by Muhammad most clearly in the episode of “The Forgiveness of Aisha” one of the prophets wives. The author’s view is that Aisha was absolved of suspicion of adultery after Muhammad’s experience of demonic trance, other than his claim of having received a revelation.²⁷⁹

2.3.3.5. On the Christian Doctrine

Abu Qurrah shows how Christian teaching is confirmed through those essential Christian teachings that appear preposterous to the Muslim. He outlines the core of the Christian narrative tradition, which culminates in the salvific events of Christ and prolonged through the apostolic tradition. In the Christian story he persuades that “Jesus Christ the Nazarene is God and the son of God and that he willingly suffered these things for a reason that escapes the understanding of all who saw it.”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ The Greek word “hypostasis” is suggested in online Wikipedia to mean “that which stands beneath” It shows that the meaning has evolved so much historically. The Greek philosophers like Aristotle used it to describe “inner reality” Among early Christian writers; it is used to speak of “substantive reality” and is oftentimes interchanged with “ousia” (essence), as exemplified in Tertullian, Origen, and the anathema appended to the Nicene Creed of 325. When used to describe “Hypostatic union”, the term mainly expresses two realities or natures in one person. Now, in the case of the Doctrine of the Trinity, the formula “three hypostases in one ousia” came to be generally used, under the influence of the Cappadocian Fathers.

²⁷⁸ C.f. “Refutation of the Saracens by Theodore Abu Quran, the Bishop of Haran, as reported by John the Deacon,” in Theodore Abu Quran, 224.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 225. Commenting on this, John C. Lamoreaux reminds us of the important hadiths that described the situation of the Prophet of Islam during his experience of revelation. The Muslim historian, Ibn Hisham (Sirah, 3:314-315) pays attention to the story of Aisha in the history of Islam. The impression often given is that the revelation is usually accompanied by something that appeared like convulsion and headache. It is possible that Abu Qurrah built his view from this tradition.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 219. Abu Qurrah faces the real problems Muslims encounter with Christian faith. It is not about Christ’s Virgin birth, his pious life, his miracles and his ascension. It is about claims of Christ’s divinity, his crucifixion, resurrection and its saving significance, which are unacceptable to Islamic vision of God and the prophets. They cannot understand Christ’s weakness in the face of torture bring salvation? Christ as

Apparently he captured the core of the Chalcedonian Christology, which he represents, notably that “Christ was the true God, even though he became human.”²⁸¹ Perhaps, the Melkite bishop places special significance in this Christology because of the general belief that linked the Muslim denial of Jesus crucifixion and the early Christian Gnostic denial of a physical body to Jesus, and consequently, his crucifixion. The reality of this Christology is further explained when confronted with the following question: Was Christ’s hypostasis destroyed in the passion? Abu Qurrah responds by reinforcing what clearly is Chalcedonian teaching of inseparable union in Christ’s hypostasis.

Christ even before the composition of his two parts, he existed with the Father and the Spirit; or rather he has existed from all eternity. When he became a composite being and was begotten of the virgin, he put an end to none of the properties of his two parts (that is, his divinity and his humanity), for he remained perfect God even as the Father is perfect and he became a human being even as his mother was a human being. At the time of passion, when his soul was separated from his body, he was not separated from either part but was bound together through inseparable union; a single hypostasis formed from divinity and humanity.²⁸²

In essence Abu Qurrah has explained Christ as God and son of God, which means that “God has a son who shares his essence” and like Him is timeless.²⁸³ With this explanation, he has asserted the divinity of Christ against Muslim denial.

2.3.3.6. Assessment

The atmosphere of religious freedom during Theodore Abu Qurra’s era may explain his boldness to carry out “the dialogue initiated by John of Damascus into the field of polemics”.

God is at issue for Muslims. There is also the question of the idea of “original sin”, with which Muslims may not have agreed.

²⁸¹ Refutation of the Saracens by Theodore Abu Quran.

²⁸² Ibid., 223.

²⁸³ Ibid., 225.

In essence the concern of Abu Qurrah to defend the central point of the Christian-faith cannot be separated from what were perceived as heretical movements and sects which includes Islam. Obviously, Islam's direct attack on the central beliefs of Christianity enforced its perception by these Byzantine writers as the "enemy" of Christ's church; which in turn led to the refutation of Islam and its important features of belief and practice.

Abu Qurrah really proved to be a great scholar and a formidable voice in the Arab-Byzantine encounter. That Christian apologists and polemicists vivify Islam and Muhammad in a free manner without being harmed during the religious climate of the Umayyad Damascus of Abu Qurrah's time presents a challenge to the current experience of religious intolerance. It calls for a re-examination of our religious attitudes towards differing views and criticisms of both traditions.

2.4. CHRISTIAN POLEMIC AGAINST ISLAM DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The Christian-Muslim struggle reached its highest point during this period, from the Abbasid expansion to the Seljuk Turks' conquest. At the battle of Manzikurt in 1071, the Turkish armies eventually defeated the Byzantine troops and established themselves in Byzantine territories. This mutual attitude of confrontation left a legacy of centuries of mutual hostility and wars. These troubled relations also have their intellectual imprints in the Muslim-Christian polemical literature of medieval period.

In this period, a lengthy dialogue in the form of argument was presented between Abd al-Masih al-Kindi a Christian who was invited by a Nestorian Christian al-Hashimi, who later on became a Muslim inviting him to convert to Islam. Both al-Hashimi and al-Kindi worked together under caliph al-Ma'mun's, court (813-833) at Baghdad, during the

Abbasid rule (750-930). The Caliph was renowned for promoting art and learning²⁸⁴ and it was during his reign that he inspired a well-organized forum for interreligious debates between Christians and Muslims. It is also within this context that these correspondences on Christianity and Islam between these two friends are presented.

The apology of al-Kindi's²⁸⁵ arguments were presented in two hundred and thirty pages and is much longer than those of al-Hashimi which appears in thirty seven pages. The exact date of the writing of the Christian text is unknown, but it is suggested by J.M Gaudeul to have been written in the 19th century. Al-Kindi gave a discrediting description of Islam and Muhammad by arguing largely from Islamic sources.

2.4.1. The Muslim Letter to Al-Kindi

Al-Hashimi's letter to al-Kindi²⁸⁶ focuses on presenting the important of Islam, showing its beliefs and rites; all intended to account for why his friend should convert to Islam. This motivation is reinforced with a presentation of argumentation against Christian beliefs, to familiarize his addressees with the error of Christianity. At first, he showed how he had become acquainted with the religion of the Christians. He mentions three: the Melkites, Jacobites, and the Nestorians, and their belief and texts.

Having introduced his letter, he presents the Islamic faith and practice. He identified Islam with "orthodox faith" of Abraham and the profession of the two

²⁸⁴ Islamic history suggests that it was during his reign that the library and school of Baghdad (known as Bayt al-Hikma) was established. Al-Mamun's intellectual delight led him to empower the Mutazilites, notable spiritual and intellectual elites but still failed to command the support of the simple and ordinary Muslims, thus paving the way for the decline of the Abbasid dynasty. Perhaps it is not due to ideological reasons alone.

²⁸⁵ Hereafter referred to as al-kindi. The views of this author is mostly based on Abd al-Mash ibn Ishq al-Kindi. "The Apology of al-Kindi," in *Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A collection of Documents from the first three Islamic centuries (632-900 A.D)* Translation with commentary, ed. N.A. Newman (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Bible Research Institute, 1993), 382-515.

²⁸⁶ C.f. The text on the Muslim letter to al-Kindi, "The Apology," 382-402. See also the short outline of this letter in Gaudeul, ed, *Encounter and clashes*, 54.

statement comprising the “Shahada” that “God is one” and “Muhammad is the messenger of God”, which includes belief in the last day (the Day of Judgment). He also furnishes explanations on the important elements of the “five pillars,” the Muslim code of conduct, and lessons on marriage. Then, after explaining the tenets of Islam, al-Hashimi rehashes the familiar Muslim attack on the Christian faith: on the doctrines of the Trinity and Redemption, the Divinity of Christ, asserting from these that the Christians are in error. On the basis of these two reasons (the superiority of Islam and the deficiency of Christianity), he urges al-Kindi, as a friend, to leave aside his belief, and convert to Islam to have peace, in the following way:

Thus now I have spoken to you the word of God...Away then with your present unbelief, which means error and misery and calamity. Will you any longer cleave to what you must admit is a merely medley? I mean your doctrine of father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the worship of the cross? I have grave doubts on your behalf. Come, enter the true fold, strike out into the easy way, and embrace the faith that brings assurance²⁸⁷.

Al-Hashimi ends his mild-toned letter by expressing his keenness to receive the reply of al-Kindi to his invitation, while allowing comparison of their respective views.

2.4.2. The Apology of Al-Kindi

Al-Kindi, not only declined the invitation to convert to Islam, but also advanced the view that his friend’s religion lacked divine authority. His main points of attack on Islam are the use of violence; Muhammad’s claim to be a prophet; and the Islamic holy text and practices. He insists that Islam’s military conquests cannot be a sign of God’s approval of the faith; that Muhammad’s life style, in particularly, his violent attitude and

²⁸⁷ The text of the Muslim letter in Al-Kindi, “The Apology,” 382-402. See also the short outline of this letter in Gaudeul, ed, 54.

treatment of women, cannot be reconciled with the character of true prophets; and that the Quran is a forgery, a fabricated text.

The first part of the Apology is concerned with the doctrine of God. Al-Kindi does not waste time in countering al-Hashimi's claim that Islam was the "orthodox faith" of Abraham. He contends that this "orthodoxy" of Abraham, in the sense of the Quran, was actually the paganism practiced in Haran. But, by turning away from "orthodoxy" to profess monotheism (the unity of God), Abraham and his descendants through Isaac²⁸⁸ became true believers, as described in the Bible. Obviously, this account permits al-Kindi to establish that Abraham was not a Muslim. Then, there is a detailed philosophical discussion on the different dimensions of unity and plurality to suggest that no notion of unity of God is complete if it excludes the "threefold in His personality."²⁸⁹

The meaning of the Trinity as the "proper" and "essential" attributes of God, i.e. life and knowledge (clearly separated from the relative attributes of creatures) is offered. References are made to the scriptures to situate the revelation of the Trinity in the Bible. In the second consideration, this Christian writer focuses his attack on the person of Muhammad and his claim to be a prophet. Al-Kindi recalled the life of Muhammad as a raider (he mentions the series of raids linked to him), and his violent misdemeanor. Regarding Muhammad's violent attitude, al-kind writes: "How different is all this (violent behaviors) from that of our savior of the world. When one drew sword in his presence against another and smote his ear and cut it off, Christ replaced the ear and made it whole as the other. He also denounces what he described as Muhammad's

²⁸⁸ It is worthy of note that al-Kindi omitted Ishmael in this account. Thus, while he remains faithful to his Christian medieval worldview, we also note that Islam has no place for Isaac. It never speaks of him; it is always Abraham through Ishmael.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.,417.

indecent treatment of women.²⁹⁰ Al-Kindi's method was to present Muhammad's personality as described in the Islamic sources and examine them through the criteria of the prophets of the Old Testament. This procedure leads him to throw his addressee the following challenges:

Now judge of these instances and say honestly, is it on such grounds you hold your master to have been a prophet? What has a prophet to do with plunder and raids, infesting of roads, intercepting and taking the property of men? What has your master left for thieves and highwaymen to do? What is the difference between him and Atabek?²⁹¹

He describes the qualifications of the true prophet. Like earlier Christian writers, much emphasis is placed on the ability to provide "prophecies", predictions that come to fulfillment, and to perform miracles. These "two-fold guarantees" are affirmed of the Biblical prophets, such as Moses, Isaiah, and Jesus. He shows, proving from the Quran (17:61a), that in the case of Muhammad, there are neither the support of "prophecies" nor miracles for his prophetic claim. On the contrary, "he was sent with sword, enforcing his pretensions and those who did not confess that he was a prophet were slain or paid a heavy fine."²⁹² Finally, two paragraphs are dedicated to arguing that the Islamic laws are built on satanic prescription of violence.

The third section is an attack on the status of the Quran as revelation of God, as claimed by al-Hashimi. Al-Kindi focuses on its origin and history, seeking to prove that the Quran is forged. Indeed, al-Kindi's version of the questionable origin of the Quran is somewhat unique. He dismisses any claims of divine inspiration and implicates the

²⁹⁰ Al-kind, "The Apology," 432-434.

²⁹¹ Who was Atabek? Gaudeul offers an interesting notification on this statement. He recalls that William Muir notes in his translation of "The Apology" that Atabek was a notorious rebel about the time of the composition of Apology, who constituted himself an extreme terror for twenty years, until he was eliminated in 837.

²⁹² Ibid., 443.

Meccan Jews in the composition of the Quran. Muhammad was said to have been taught by a heretical Christian monk, and his text suffered alteration by the Jews: “They had introduced passages from their own law and material from the literature of their own country. In this way they corrupted the whole, taking from it, and adding to it as they chose, insinuating their own blasphemies into it. Al-Kindi described a history of the Quran, referring to its collection, compilation, redaction, and insisted on its corruption through human interferences. So he challenges al-Hashimi: you are yourself a witness to this.

You have read the Quran and know how the material had been put together and the text corrupted, a sure sign that many hands had been busy on it, and that it has suffered additions and losses. Indeed each one wrote and read as he chose, omitting what he did not like. Now by the grace of God, are these what you consider the mark of an inspired book?

In the fourth and final section, al-Kindi makes a detailed criticism of the Islamic practices, to which al-Hashimi had invited him. He denounces the Islamic “pillar” as “fictitious and counterfeit” externalities, incapable of offering internal purification, for he asks: “what is the use of washing hands and feet or standing to pray, while the heart is fixed on slaughter and plunder?” He discusses the practice of circumcision, recalling its history and insisting that it was never binding necessarily. The Muslim prohibition of pork is explained to be contrary to the scripture, for God did not forbid “swine” to be eaten, but their being sacrificed or worshipped. Al-Kindi insists that the Ka’aba and pilgrimage to Mecca have pagan origin²⁹³, and describes the Muslim rites of hajj as useless. He denounces the practice of divorce and re-marriage as dehumanizing, and the

²⁹³ Professor Zayn Kassam challenges the above statement, insists that since according to Muslims, the Ka’aba was initially built by Abraham and many of the rites of the hajj are retellings of the Muslim version of the Abraham/Ishmael/Hagar story –so to call it merely pagan deliberately downplays the biblical connections.

visit to the shrine (of the prophet of Islam) as a fruitless exercise, since it cannot be source of healing and other blessings, as in the case of Christ and Christian saints.

Al-Kindi notes that the invitation to Islam can no longer be justified, in so far as the Quranic injunction that “there is no compulsion in religion” (Q. 2:256) is contradicted by that of a sword (Q. 9:5). In the paragraphs following his attack on Muslim practices, al-Kindi offers his defense of Christianity. There is not much that is new in this section of the Apology. They present the Christian understanding of Christ and his teaching based on the gospels and denial of accusation of *tahrif* of scriptures, and a counter-charge of the Quran. Regarding the worship of the cross, he justified this from the evidence of scripture, and interestingly, mentions three incidents in which al-Hasmini had himself made the sign of the cross. About three centuries later, these ideas of Islam are echoed and put in a more rational language in a paper.

2.4.2.1. Peter the Venerable and the “Toledan Collection”

The Muslim infiltration into the west with military forces was seen as requiring a counter offensive by Christian Europe. The early 12th century marked the beginning of the serious study of Islam in the Western Europe, at the initiative of the Abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable (ca. 1092-1156). Moved by the desire to study Islam from its sources, rather than to promote the crusades at that time, he travelled to Spain in 1142-1143. He commissioned the translation of Arabic works to Latin. Among the fruits of this project are the translations of the Quran by the English scholar, Robert of Ketton, the Islamic Hadiths from Adam to Caliph Yazid, other works on Muhammad and the

Apology of Al-Kindi. His first monumental step, the corpus, that came to be known as the “Toledan Collection” (*Corpus Toletanum*).²⁹⁴ According to James Kritzeck:

required a measure of both originality and heroism on the path of Peter the venerable to initiate the study of Islam in Europe. Although the Islamic empire was hewn out of Christian lands to a very large extent, ‘the Christian world was slow to recognize Islam for what it was...and independent religion of considerable appeal’.²⁹⁵,

Peter the venerable contributed two works to the Toledan corpus, namely the *Summa totius heresis Saracenorum* (A summary of the entire doctrines of Islam) and *Liber contra sectam sive heresim saracenorum* (A refutation of Islam). For the sake of relevance to this work, attention is channeled to his second book, A refutation of Islam, since it deliberated on his opinion about Islam

2.4.2.2. Peter the Venerable’s views on Islam

Peter the Venerable, argued that Islam is a heresy. In his earlier work, *Summa totius heresies sacracenorum*, he presents Islam’s teachings on God, Christ, Muhammad, and other fundamental beliefs. He bases the heretical character of Islam on examining it from the perspective of the source of Muhammad’s information. In presenting the sources of the Quran, he proposes that the evil one sent a Nestorian monk, Sergius, to Muhammad, and then there were Jewish influences too. His description concludes with the proposal that Islam should be considered a Christian heresy and yet, something close to paganism, in so far as Islam rejects the Church’s sacraments.

Choose, therefore, whichever you prefer: either call (the Muslims) heretics on account of the heretical opinion by which they agree with the Church in part and disagree

²⁹⁴ Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, 93.

²⁹⁵ James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), 15.

in part, or call them pagan on account of the surpassing wickedness by which they subdue every heresy of error in evil profession. Furthermore, he sees Islam as a work of Satan against Christianity and faith in Christ, the incarnate God. Hence, Muhammad is considered to be in-between Arius and the Anti-Christ.

In his second work, *Liber contra sectan sive heresim Saracenorum* (A Refutation of Islam) Peter the Venerable channeled his attack on the Quran and Muhammad. This work is divided into two parts: (1) The Christian Scriptures and the Quran, and (2) The Criteria of a true prophet and Muhammad. In the first section, the Refutation explains its intention in approaching Islam with dialogue and reason:

it seem strange, and perhaps it really is, that I, a man so very distant from you in place... write to the men who inhabit the lands of the East and South, and that I attack, by my utterance, those whom I have seen...But I do not attack you, as some of us often do, by arms, but by words; not by force; but by reason; not in hatred, but in love.²⁹⁶

Peter the Venerable offers detailed argumentation to suggest that religion and reason go together, and invokes two authorities for his approach: Christ's love and human reason. He backs this approach both from the scripture and the Quran.²⁹⁷ Peter condemns this latter attitude, and sees it as Muhammad's way of evading the rational framework of the Christian scriptures, so that a preference to supplant "reason" with force of arms could be seen in him.

Peter the Venerable, then takes up the Muslim accusation of *tahrif*, corruption of the Bible. He argues that the Muslims are to accept the Bible as comprehensively accurate, not in part. He reasons that the scripture is divinely revealed and the Quran

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 144.

²⁹⁷ The former, in the impetus given in 1 Peter, 3:16 (on being ready to give account of one's faith); and the latter, in the Quranic verses 3: 18-19: 3:61:29:45 (all of which frown at theological disputation with non-Muslims).

urges that they be appreciated as such.²⁹⁸ He rejects this Muslim accusation, demanding convincing Quranic proofs for the charge. He concludes that it is impossible to speak of falsification of the Bible without rejecting the Quran, in so far as the latter alludes to the Old and New Testament. In the end he rejects the Quran, not in part but in its entirety.²⁹⁹

In the second and final section, Peter the Venerable showed that Muhammad was not a prophet, in as much as he does not fulfill the criteria of true prophet hood. He establishes the meaning of a prophet in the terms of the Bible as one who is manifest to mortals, taught not by human knowledge but by inspired Spirit of God, unknown things about the past or present or future.³⁰⁰ The emphasis in this definition is on the criteria of prophetic predictions and signs. Thus, Peter the Venerable makes a comparison between Muhammad's career and those of Moses, Isaiah and some of the other Old Testament prophets. Further, he contrasts Muhammad's frequent self-projection of his prophetic claims with the humility of Amos and John the Baptist about their vocation.³⁰¹

Furthermore, he argues that there are two types of prophets: the good and the bad prophets. The first, the good relates to those who represent prophecies of universal nature, such as Moses, Christ and other biblical prophets and bearers of particular prophecy, like Jonah and Samuel—all of whom lead laudable lives and whose prophecies came true. The second, the bad prophets, are those whose lives and prophecies are counterfeit, such as the “prophets of Baal.”

²⁹⁸ C.f. Peter the Venerable, *Liber contra sectam sive haeresim Saracenorum*, D185. Here Peter the Venerable here builds his argument against the accusation of *tahrif*, on the strength of the Quranic view point that the Bible is revealed by God, but subsequently distorted by the Jews and Christians.

²⁹⁹ Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, 193.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 266.

³⁰¹ Kritzeck, 189–190.

Peter the Venerable concludes these distinctions by suggesting that universal prophecy ends with John the Baptist, and thus, declares that Muhammad is not the “Seal of the Prophets.”³⁰² He further suggests that particular prophecy continues, such as was granted to saint Paul and other apostles, and it could be given to many people of all times. Even at that, Peter the Venerable denies to Muhammad the status of both the universal and particular prophet.³⁰³

2.4.2.2.1. *Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) Life and main Event*

Francis of Assisi³⁰⁴ is another medieval figure who feels that armed confrontation was not a worthwhile approach in dealing with the church’s crusade of his time with Islam. He was converted to a life of evangelical poverty and in 1209, founded a brotherhood oriented to his radical life of the gospel. Instead of promoting the crusade project of his medieval time, he alternatively proposed a mission to the Muslim territory.

Francis made two aborted attempt in 1212 and 1214 to travel to Muslim territories but finally in 1219 his zeal to meet the Sultan al-Malik al Kamil (1218-1238) came to fruition. The outcome of his visit was unknown but it seemed that it was fundamental to his new approach to Muslims and the Islamic religion. As a sequel to the crusade movement of the church defined by the medieval pope, the key to understanding Francis’ approach to Islam is the Pope’s crusade encyclical. Referring to his crusade encyclical

³⁰² Ibid., 192–193. It has to be noted that Peter uses the Bible as the basis for his discussion, upon his conviction that he has proved it to be the true text. However, even at that, what is left unclear is whether Muhammad belongs to either universal or particular prophets. It could be concluded that he belongs to none since for Peter he is not a prophet at all.

³⁰³ Ibid., 194.

³⁰⁴ In examining Francis of Assisi, we use as our source: J Hoeberichts, *Francis and Islam* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1997). The core of J. Hoeberichts argument is that chapter 16 of the *Regula non Bullata* of 1221, establishes, on the one hand, that the idea of living among the “saracenes” and being subject to them suggests a more respectful esteem for other religions; and on the other, that Francis’ attitude is relevant for the crucial issues of interreligious dialogue today.

(*Quia Maior* 1213), Pope Innocent 3rd call for the 5th crusade (1217-1221) to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims. *Quia Maior* justified the new crusade, in its urgency³⁰⁵ as a religious task for the cause of the crucified Christ to be an occasion of salvation. The encyclical referred to Muslims as “perfidious Saracenes³⁰⁶” while Mohammad is named “a son of perdition...a pseudo-prophet, who has seduced many people from the truth by worthily enticements and carnal pleasures...”³⁰⁷

As such, then, a counter offensive against Islamic infiltration was viewed as a “holy war” against the enemies of Christ. To die in the course of fighting to liberate the holy land becomes a saving martyrdom. In view of the above mandate armed crusade against Muslims is not something left to the choice of a Christian, but a duty for every member of the church. Eventually, all these means of crusading are backed up with promises of indulgence from punishment due to sin.”³⁰⁸

Regarding this crusade encyclical, Hoebericht observed that (1) Innocent 3rd's effort to justify the crusade by leaning on its traditional link with discipleship of the crucified Christ is unconvincing. (2) His negative way of looking at Mohammad and Islam, and accordingly, the image of Islam presented by preachers of crusade, often were worlds apart from the memoirs of people who had had personal contact with Muslims. (3) His

³⁰⁵The document announced alarmingly that the “Saracenes” (the Muslims), having secured parts of the Christian Holy Lands, would seize the entire Christian inheritance, if they were to capture the city of Acre held by the crusaders, and appealed for more Christian forces to ward off their total invasion, Innocent 3rd then recalled that the Christians had held nearly all areas of the Holy Land which are now in the hands of the Muslims, until the time of Gregory the Great (c.540-604).

³⁰⁶ The Encyclical, *Quia Maior*, in many instances used the adjective word “perfidious” to describe the Muslims, indicating their treacherous or deceitful influence. With this image of the Muslims and the prophet of Islam, Innocent 3rd places himself in the line of the prevailing medieval opinion that Islam is the work of the evil one.

³⁰⁷As above.

³⁰⁸ Hoeberichts, *Francis and Islam*, 11–12.

crusade strategy, in line with the tradition of Urban 2nd (1095), clearly left out “mission among the Saracenes” as an option.

Hoerbericht’s evaluation seems plausible. It is surprising, however, to realize the sudden outbreak of the missionary spirit that characterized Francis’ life at this time. For the entire medieval church, crusade thinking differs from the vision of the Muslims entertained by Francis and his brothers. Such human desires were carried along with the zealous missionary spirit of the church. “Not even the risk of losing one’s precious life inhibited some from the mission to convert souls in far distant lands.”³⁰⁹

Francis method of approach to Islam is elaborated in Chapter 16 of the *Regula non Bullata* of 1221, as admonitions on the missionary approach required of those going among the Saracenes.

2.4.2.2.2. Reviewing Islam in the Regular non Bullata, Chapter 16

In chapter 16 of *Regular non Bullata*, Francis gave methods to be followed by his followers who might like to work in the mission land of Saracence or non-Christian territories with some guide lines that might please God in dwelling among them. In this section, Francis’ rule is called the “Mission Chapter.” The importance of this Mission Chapter is to consolidate his brothers’ commitment to a mission of peace and respect for the faith of other people, as part of, not as something outside, their evangelical vision of life. In the spirit of St. Francis, all who comes to us are to be treated with dignity and respect, no matter what their limitation, race, color or creed. Each one is a masterpiece formed by God. For Francis there is no dichotomy.

³⁰⁹ Joseph A. Griffin, *The Sacred Congregation of de Propaganda Fidei: Its Foundation and Historical Antecedents*, n.d., 297.

According to Hoeberichts, chapter 16 expresses “the position of Francis and his brothers, on the basis of their theology of the Church and the world, adopted towards the Saracenes and Islam after they had come into personal contact with them during their visit to the sultan. As such, Francis’ attitude to Islam expressed in chapter 16 reflects his personal missionary experience among the Muslims in Egypt; an inspiration for his future brothers who might want to go into such mission. The question is: How do the “Mission Chapter” and its proposed approach to the Saracenes go together with the theological vision articulated in the *Regula non Bullata*? In other words, what is the literary context of chapter 16 of Francis’ rule? Hoeberichts resolves this clearly by suggesting that chapter 16 is inserted in a manner that links it to the preceding chapters 14 and 15, and the three have common points of “going about in the world”. Following chapter 16 is chapter 17 (verses 5-7), which highlights Francis’ exhortation on humility. The fact that Francis followed up chapter 16 with firm advice on the necessity of humble submission, signals the fundamental relevance of this virtue for the spiritual lives of his brothers going among the Saracenes, towards realizing the true peace they represent.³¹⁰

The Franciscan mission of peace, therefore, contrasts the definition of peace in the world around them at that point in time, in Assisi and in the Christian-Muslim struggle of the day. A typical lack of true peace is found in the late 12th or 13th century materially-sunk Assisi which favored the rich and subjected the poor, and to which Francis and his brothers turned their back, to become “channels of peace”. Hence, their decision to be “the lesser ones and subject to all who are in the same house is integral with this

³¹⁰ Hoeberichts lays emphasis on the comprehensiveness of the choice of Francis and his brothers to humble themselves before all in their fundamental commitment to the evangelical life of the gospel.

fundamental choice”³¹¹ This ideal of peace and the way to being “subject” were conceived to be of dire need, not only in the divisive Assisi of their time, but also to the warring Christians and Muslims. One thing can be assumed is that to extend this vision of peace beyond the frontiers of Christendom to the Muslim world was unprecedented, but it fits into Francis’ evangelical life.

2.4.2.2.3. Contextual Interpretation of Chapter 16

Chapter 16 opens by situating the mission of the Franciscan brothers going among the Saracenes in the vision of peace mission enjoined by the gospel. The Lord says: behold I am sending you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be therefore prudent as serpents and simple as doves. (Mt 10:16) With the above citations, Francis and his brothers found a confirmation of their preference in the gospel text; and the accent is on prudent and peaceful presence of his brothers as servants among the Saracenes. This missionary command portends a respectful submission to God present in the Saracenes by promoting peaceful relations with them through non-violent attitudes. In an important verse 5, it states that: “the brothers, who go, can live spiritually among them in two ways.”³¹²

This verse confirms that the presence of brothers among the Saracenes is not something outside their spiritual vision, but a spiritual presence. Mission to the Muslims is part of their choice to stand up against worldly vanities and enthrone the “spirit of the Lord.”³¹³ The verses that follow further elaborate on two ways of spiritual presence

³¹¹ Hoeberichts lays emphasis on the comprehensiveness of the choice of Francis and his brothers to humble themselves before all in their fundamental commitment to the evangelical life of the gospel.

³¹² Regula non Bullata (RegNB 7:2, as cited in Ibid;70.

³¹³ As observed, Hoeberichts interpretation of this verse is convincing. The fact that there is continuity between Francis basic spiritual intuition and this mission approach suggests that his evangelical vision was unchanged by the image of the Muslims among his contemporaries.

among them. What are the two ways of living spiritually among the Saracenes? One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes, but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake (1Pet 2:13) and to confess that they (the Franciscans) are Christians.

In the first part, the emphasis is that polemical approach and disputes are not proper ways of building peaceful relationship with the Saracenes. Let's remember that this prohibition comes at a time when Christian-Muslim polemics were rife. Yet, experience played a part here too. Some of the brothers had earlier engaged in argumentation to convince the Saracenes of the superiority of Christianity and to refute the false claim of Islam. Francis avoided this approach for arguments and disputes strive to show the superiority of one's point of view and the deficiency of another which contradicts his idea of humility. Further, the second part advises the brothers to "be subject to every creature," which affirms what fits into their spirituality, as an important character of Franciscan spirituality. "Being subject " to the Saracenes and others indicates that the missionary context must be lived in the spirit of "obedience" and submission, as counter to the power struggle of the time. This vision opposed the crusade policy of subjecting the Saracenes. Faithful to their evangelical choice, it is not "minors and "Lord" that go together but minors and submissiveness.³¹⁴

The chapter further states the second manner of presence among the Saracenes is "to proclaim the word of God when they see that it pleases the Lord, so that they believe in the all powerful God, the father and the son and the Holy Spirit...and be baptized and become Christians, for whoever is not born again of water and the Holy spirit cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (cf. Jn 3:5) How do we understand the words; "when

³¹⁴ There is no doubt that is a much-valued ideal to submission to the presence of God, who abides in every creature.

they see that it pleases the Lord?” Do they mean that preaching is not necessary? Proclaiming and baptizing are necessary for it is through them that the unbelievers find the fullness of their spiritual aspiration in Christ. Furthermore, if Hoeberichts’ interpretation is accepted, it appears that Francis’ emphasis on “when they see that it pleases the Lord” touches also the way the truth is communicated. Apologetic seeking to expose the deficiency of Islam do not meet the criteria. As such, one way of avoiding this will be that the brothers live among the Saracenes, learn from them and then as God determines, preach to them. Francis experience of the Saracenes convinces him that God is present in them.³¹⁵

2.4.2.2.4. Assessment

Francis’ approach to his mission land is spectacular, for he brings strength to the Christian-Muslim encounter by mutual support and affirmation. There is striking closeness of his emphasis on the common spiritual bonds in preaching to the Muslims and his stress on common Christian-Muslim elements adopted centuries latter by the Vatican 11 Declaration, *Nostra Aetate* (1965). In this section, Peter the Venerable and Francis of Assisi have exemplified, alternative visions to armed confrontation in dealing with Islam and Muslim’s. Francis appreciated their common grounds and differences, but refuses to discriminate against Muslims for their religious otherness. His approach confirms the importance of building good relations and dialogue rather than engaging in polemics between the two religions.

2.5. CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM CRUSADE DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIODS

³¹⁵ Having stayed with the Saracenes, Francis may have left Egypt with touching memories of the faith-commitment of the Sultan and the Muslims, as they preoccupy themselves with how to please the Lord through life of prayer and submission to his will. It is on the basis of this that the need to learn about the faith of the Saracenes becomes important as Francis and his brothers pondered on preaching to them.

During the last two millennium citizens of the world have suffered a lot due to many religious wars and the forcible conversion of poor, weak and illiterate people to change their religion, such distress is still continuing in these days, albeit through different means, financial temptations, terror and coercion. In various parts of the world, “the mutual antagonism of Christians and Muslims flared up in wars which though political or commercial in fact appealed to religious motivations”³¹⁶ and used a vocabulary of religious warfare: crusade or jihad.

2.5.1. Meaning of Crusade

The crusades are another of those emblematic topics that spring to mind when someone says “the medieval church” or even “the middle Ages.” The crusade according to Jonathan Riley-Smith meant “to engage in a war that was both holy, because it was believed to be waged on God’s behalf and penitential, because those taken part considered themselves to be performing an act of penance. The war was authorized by the pope as Vicar of Christ. Most crusaders were laymen and women who made vows, committing themselves to join an expedition.”³¹⁷ In other words, crusaders were soldiers called upon to take to the field on Christ’s behalf. In many ways crusades deserves their poor reputation. Like all religious wars, they were marked by indiscipline and atrocities. Thus,

The first crusade was fought between 1096 and 1102. The crusading movement was at its most popular from the late fourteenth, but was still active in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The last crusade league was the Holy war league, which began the recovery of the Balkans from the Turks between 1684 and 1699. The last operative order state of a military order was Hospitaller

³¹⁶ Gaudeul, *Encounters & Clashes*, 204.

³¹⁷ Jonathan Simon Christopher Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 9.

Malta, which succumbed to Napoleon in 1798³¹⁸.

Fundamentally, the crusades began as the attempt to protect Christians under Muslim rule, although this “effectively meant recovering control of the Holy land from Muslims, who had taken the area as part of their initial expansion in the seventh century.”³¹⁹

Crusaders were on the whole volunteers and this meant that the laity which include the less well-off as well as kings and nobles; women as well as men had to respond positively to an appeal from the leaders of the church before an army of any size could be mustered.

Historians don't all agree on the numbering of the crusades, but the first few are clear. The first crusade occurred as a result of the speech of Pope Urban 11 in France in 1095, which is seen rightly as the inauguration of the crusading movement. The initial call for crusade was also a part of the papal revolution to stress the pope's authority over all of Christianity, both in the East and the West. “Inspired by Urban 11, this first crusade was the only successful one in terms of taking Jerusalem, which the crusaders did in 1099 in a bloody massacre of Muslims.”³²⁰

A fourth crusade (1198-1204) was an abominable mess in which European Christians, frustrated by their inability to make it to the Holy Land, turned their fury instead against their fellow Christians, the Greek-speaking Eastern Christians, and brutally sacked Constantinople. A fifth crusade (1213-1221) replicated the third; although the leaders did not take Jerusalem, safe passage was arranged for pilgrims.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, the sale of indulgences (remission of sin) was a key point in the preaching of crusades against the Turks. Although “most associate

Gaudeul, *Encounters & Clashes*, 204.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 1.

³¹⁹ Bellitto, *Church History 101*, 70.

³²⁰ Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam*, 71.

Martin Luther's (1483-1546) ninety-five theses ("disputation on the power and efficacy of indulgence" used to finance the building of St. Peter's basilica in Rome) with objections to the marketing of salvation,"³²¹ there were earlier attempts at reform of the church's selling indulgences to finance warfare.

Subsequently, the mainstream continued to accept violence as a legitimate Christian response to worldly problems. The acceptance eventuated in all-out warfare between Catholics and Protestants in the early 17th century. "The thirty years war (1618-1648), one of the bloodiest periods in European history resulted in widespread devastation, with a death toll of millions, killing as much as thirty to fifty percent of the population in some of the regions."³²² But this did not end the use of violence by Christians in the service of their God. Theological justification of violence continued with the slave trade traders and the colonialist expansion of Europeans into Africa and the Americas. Crusades continues till today with extremist interpretations of the scriptures, preaching in churches aimed at the support of a war that has been incorrectly framed in terms of Christian versus Muslims, and isolated acts of violence by individuals against people like abortion clinic employees and homosexual individuals. Medieval Muslims and Christians never did understand each other religiously and culturally, of course, though at times the sources indicate a certain admiration for each other's bravery.

2.5.2. Meaning of Jihad

³²¹ Charlene Embrey Burns, *More Moral than God: Taking Responsibility for Religious Violence* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 25.

³²² Ibid.

Jihad is the term most commonly associated in the Western mind with the subject of Islam. Literally translated the term means struggle and not “holy war” as is sometimes claimed.

Jihads were not initiated to spread the faith. The expression of “holy war” is an inappropriate rendering of the Arabic term jihad, whose root meaning is “striving” or “struggle.” Muslims teach that there are two kinds of struggle.

One is the individual’s effort to try to live as Allah wants people to live. This means struggling against selfishness, egoism, jealousy, and all kinds of emotions that keep a person from experiencing inner peace. The second jihad is the struggle against enemies, especially those who threaten the community.³²³

What then do Muslims mean when they carry out an uncompromising struggle in the path of Allah or Jihad. What Muslims mean when they use the term to describe external military and political activities is something like “religiously justifiable struggle against injustice and oppression. In other words, in its classical meaning the term jihad is roughly analogous to Christian “just war theory.”³²⁴ What it entails is that modern just war theory presumes that violence is indeed an evil, but also that disorder can be a greater one. The use of force may therefore become a necessity as the lesser of evils when a state or community is faced with a situation in which order can only be restored by means of it. In these special circumstances, it will be condoned by God and participation in it will not incur guilt³²⁵.

³²³ Donald Johnson and Jean Johnson, *Universal Religions in World History: The Spread of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam to 1500* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 140.

³²⁴ John Renard, *Responses to 101 questions on Islam* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 145.

³²⁵ The origin of Just war theory are to be found in the Middle Ages, when Christian theologians and canon lawyers struggled with demands for advice coming from those engaged in conflicts that were not covered by any traditional model, but the theory could not make headway until a consensus was prepared to abandon the Augustinian premises.

According to Ibn Khaldun, in the Muslim community, jihad is a religious duty because of the universalism of the Islamic mission and the obligation (to convert) everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force.”³²⁶ In the same vein, Professor Muqtedar Khan states that Islam does not fully advocate pacifism but authorizes the use of force under certain conditions. The theory of jihad permits the use of force: 1) when Muslims are not allowed to practice their faith; 2) when people are oppressed and subjugated; and 3) when people’s land is forcibly taken away from them.³²⁷ Permission “to fight is given only to those who have been oppressed...who have been driven from their homes for saying, God is our Lord.” (Quran 22:39) In these cases, a Muslim can either respond with force or forgive the oppressor. Like many other religions of the world, Islam has three key elements to which a section of Muslims consistently appeal when they want to cause violence in defense of their faith. These include: jihad, the immutability of Quran, and religious governance (Islamic state) based on God’s law.

At the outset, it is thus important that when speaking of Islam, one is clear as to what group one is referring.³²⁸ While all Muslims hold on to the same core beliefs and practices, particularly as found in the Quran and the hadith, there are differences among

³²⁶ Abdel Rahman ibn Muhammad Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-Ibar Wa-Diwan al-Mubtada Wa-I-Khabar* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, 1961), Vol 1, 408. For modern day discussion of the doctrine of jihad see: Majid Khadduri, *War and peace in the law of Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University press, 1955).

³²⁷ For a discussion of jihad, particularly as related to Al-Qaeda, see Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner, “Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11” in http://www.mepe.org/public_asp/journal_vol10/0306_wiktorowicz Kaltner.asp.

³²⁸ Particularly influential on how Muslims interpret their faith are the different Islamic thinkers that arose in the last few centuries and that preached a return to what they considered the original purity of Islam, as established by the Prophet and as practiced in its first days. Among these are: al-Wahhab in Saudi Arabia, al-Afghani in Afghanistan, al-Abdu in Egypt, Iqbal and Mawdudi in India and Pakistan, and the Muslim Brotherhood with al-Bannah, Qutb, and Kichk (Lucia). According to Fadl, “a dogmatic, puritanical and ethically oblivious form of Islam has predominated since the 1970s. This brand of Islamic theology is largely dismissive of the classical juristic tradition and of any notion of universal and innate moral values. From, Khaled Abouel Fadl, “What Became of Tolerance in Islam?,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 14, 2001, <http://articles.latimes.com/2001/sep/14/local/me-45660>.

them in terms of the way they understand and live their faith. The Muslim community in Nigeria is not a monolithic entity and Islam in fact has many faces. At one end of the spectrum one would find the nominalists and at the other end the extremists and fanatics. The former are those who are Muslims only in name while the latter are the ones who politicize the faith and sanction violence in order to achieve their political ends. In between these two extremes are the moderates and the fundamentalists.³²⁹ The moderates, as the name implies have a moderate understanding of Islamic religious life and practices while the fundamentalists or traditionalists desire to preserve and promote the rich religious and cultural identity of Islam.³³⁰ Among the latter are those who would like to strictly implement the Sharia law in Muslim countries³³¹ and who would like to Islamize society.

2.5.3. Distortion of Jihad by Militant Islamic groups

Apart from ‘the ideological and spiritual meanings of *jihad*’,³³² struggle in the physical sense had to be a struggle carried out only for defensive purposes and could not be termed as aggression. However, the use of “the concept *jihad* for acts of aggression against innocent people would be unjust and a great distortion of the true meaning of the

³²⁹ Ilyas Ba-Yunus of the State University of New York rejects the expression *Muslim fundamentalism* “because its vocabulary and its imagery is borrowed primarily from Christian fundamentalist movement of the American South” which he sees as unrelated to what we find in Islamic movements (Ilyas Ba-Yunus, “The Myth of Islamic Fundamentalism” in <http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/6453/myth.html>). He considers the term misleading and counterproductive.

³³⁰ As Armstrong rightly reminds us, “It must be emphasized, however, that the vast majority of fundamentalists in all three religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) do not take part in acts of terror, but are simply struggling to live a religious life in a world that they feel is inimical to faith” (Karen Armstrong, “Fractured Fundamentalism,” in http://www.beliefnet.com/story/88/story_8849_1.html?rnd=19).

³³¹ Chaplain (LTC) Kenneth L. Sampson, “Militant Islam,” in <http://www.rca.org/mission/witness/september11/militantislam.html>.

³³² The greater (spiritual) jihad refers to the personal struggle of the heart to overcome temptations and the secular self. In this endeavour, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and study seek to internalize the message of Islam.

term”.³³³ Recent events have generated an intense interest in the religion known as Islam. How could religion motivate young Muslim men to hijack planes and attack the innocent? What cause would drive these suicide bombers to sacrifice both their own lives and those of innocent civilians? It is thus ironic that “Islam” which means surrender to Allah and which is a word that is closely related to “peace,” is often associated, without any qualifications, by many people with violence.

Jihad has been distorted by militant Islamic groups to obscure the fundamental message of Islam. It is this issue of *jihad* through which the Islamic militants make it a right to shed blood, to spread disorder and disloyalty, and to disrupt civil peace in the name of Islam. These militants carry out violence by appealing to the need to defend Islam against Western ideas that include modernity, secularism, capitalism, individualism and consumerism. These Western ideas or influences, when transplanted to the Muslim world are often unstable. They “threaten the status quo, and are often too radically different to fit comfortably within a deeply rooted, traditional, and generally static Muslim culture.”³³⁴

It may be true that those who carry out terror in the West or elsewhere in the name of *jihad* are manipulating an originally sacred term, and their efforts have not been accepted by established and mainstream religious authorities as *jihad* in the juridical and theological sense of the term.³³⁵ A common sentiment among many Muslims and their sympathizers seems to be that “the non Muslims especially Christians perceive Islam as a

³³³ Hassan Yahya, *Islam Denounces Terrorism*, 52 (see <http://www.harunyahya.com/terrorism1.php>).

³³⁴ Seyyed Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity*, 1st ed. ([San Francisco]: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 263.

³³⁵ Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, 263.

potentially dangerous rival and feel tempted to satanize it.”³³⁶ This view of sanitizing Islam seemed offensive to Islamic militants and some radical Muslims who consider the Quran to be immutable and to regulate private and public life. These groups reject the West and all its influence, seeking instead to implement a strict interpretation of the Quran and Sharia. This interpretation looks at the world as divided into two parts ‘the world of ‘Islam’ and ‘the world of heresy’. Within this conception, the mission of Islam is to bring faith to those who have not yet believed (world of heresy).³³⁷In pursuing this goal, Islamic militants and radicals resort to a variety of tactics, as their primary concern to reshape political reality in the Muslim world.

The expression of contemporary terrorism under the guise of Islamic jihad is a clear manifestation of its commonality with religious violence in Nigeria. Statistics show that the politicization of religious violence by some Nigerian governments had caused and inflamed the wild fire of conflicts in Nigeria. The lofty idea of global jihad to Islamize the whole world is like the effort in Nigeria to dip the Quran into the Atlantic Ocean. Such efforts have never succeeded and will never succeed since it has always bred dissensions, violence and conflicts among peoples. The discussion of the above issues has shed light on the key religious values within Islam that Islamic militants and radicals have used to cause political violence in the Muslim world and elsewhere. I acknowledge that it is a small section of Muslims that may have been causing this violence. There may

³³⁶ Luis Sols Lucia. “Islam: Towards a Necessary Dialogue,” in <http://www.fespinal.com/espinal/english/visua/en82.htm>.

³³⁷ Frederick Denny observes that the concepts of *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb* which are also at the background of contemporary Islamic militancy have no enduring doctrinal authenticity because they are neither Quranic nor intended for anything other than legally identifying the parties in medieval Islam’s. According to Mohammad Talaat Al Ghunaimi, “The terms Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb are an innovation of the Abbasid legists.”

be millions of peace-loving Muslims, who deserve respect and tolerance and who, like non-Muslims are also victims of this violence.

2.5.4. Why Just War Doctrine? St. Augustine's position in Context

Religion is powerful in times of crisis. This is so because for more practitioners religious beliefs provide ways for finding value in trauma or experiences of injustice. Violence and its “justifications are found in many of the scriptures...so are very clear admonitions to make peace and practice compassion”³³⁸ In the Middle Ages for instance, the Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas worked to interpret the scriptural violence mystically and not literally. Islam on the other hand, despite its rich mystical tradition stressing both human and divine love, is rarely associated with nonviolence in the Western mind.

Historical evidence clearly indicates that by the fourth century the Christian commitment to pacifism waned and was replaced by what is now called the Just war Doctrine.

When Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, Christians moved from being a persecuted minority to becoming the rulers of society. Facing the question of what it means to safeguard the common good; and how to act responsibly in the face of aggression and attack, the possibility of war being “just” began to be explored. “The once persecuted Christians turned the table and begun persecuting groups that deviated from the new orthodoxy.”³³⁹ The primary architect for the just war doctrine was Augustine, the most influential theologian of the early church. “When the

³³⁸ Burns, *More Moral than God*, 9.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

Roman Empire was threatened by the invading Germanic tribes, Augustine argued that war, even for Christians, could not only be just but also a moral duty.”³⁴⁰ Augustine, and the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas after him, taught that violence could be a requirement of Christian love if it was the only way to protect one’s neighbor, especially the innocent and the weak, from unjust harm.

War might be barbaric and tragic, but it can be necessary if there is no other way to insure the stability and peace of society. Supporting the above position, Oliver McTernan noted that “violence is not used to terrorize but to protect oneself and the world from evil and injustice. This moral justification of violence is rooted in the belief that God reincarnates on earth to restore order whenever the weak are threatened by the ascendance of evil.”³⁴¹ The use of force may therefore become a necessity “as the lesser of evils when a state or community is faced with a situation in which order can only be restored by means of it. In these special circumstances, it will be condoned by God and participation in it will not incur guilt.”³⁴² Augustine did not deny Jesus’ call to nonviolence, but reasoned that, in a fallen and imperfect world, war may sometimes be the only way to restore order and achieve peace

Still, even with the emergence of the just war tradition, the moral priority of nonviolence and peace remained. The guiding assumption was that wars were fought not just because of the fundamental moral obligation not to harm one’s neighbor. Over the past several decades the Catholic Church has used the doctrine of the just war

³⁴⁰ Paul J. Wadell, *What Does the Church Teach About Just War* (USA: Liguori Publications, 2005), 9.

³⁴¹ Oliver J McTernan, *Violence in God’s Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2003), 46.

³⁴² Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam*, 13.

increasingly to question whether any war today can truly be declared just. Beginning with Pope John XXIII's encyclical on peace, *Pacem in Terris*, continuing through the second Vatican council's call for "an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude" (*Gaudium et Spes*), Pope Paul VI's strong critique of war as a means to achieve peace (*Populorum Progressio*), and the more recent statements of Pope John Paul II, there is in Catholicism a growing disenchantment with war as a means of securing justice and restoring peace. The massive devastation that results from modern war leads many to ask whether any war today can rightly be called moral or just.

Consequently, given the presumption in favor of nonviolence and against war, the burden of proof was on the person arguing in favor of war. He or she would have to show that in these particular circumstances the ordinary prohibition against war ought to be overridden. The just war doctrine is built on the principle that war should always be the exception, never the normal way of settling conflicts. The teaching is designed to limit and restrict the waging of war, to make us question it, not legitimize it. This is why when Thomas Aquinas begins his discussion of the just war he asks, "When is war not a sin?" He assumes that war is ordinarily sinful; a grievous offense against the law of God and, therefore, something Christians ought not to embrace. A Christian can justifiably engage in the violence of war solely when it is the only way to protect the common good. But even when justified, war ought to be repented and mourned.

2.5.5. Principles for Determining a Just War Doctrine

As the just war doctrine developed certain criteria for guiding its application emerged. Built on the assumption that war is inherently evil and seldom justified, these guidelines were designed to challenge those who argued in favor of war. A kind of moral

checklist, each criterion was meant to present an obstacle or hindrance to war, not a reason for waging it. Before proceeding to war, each of these criteria had to be carefully scrutinized in order to determine if the war could possibly be just. For war to be legitimate:

Whether holy or merely licit, have three criteria to be considered. (1) It must not be entered into lightly or for aggrandizement but only for a legally sound reason which has to be a reactive one. (2) It must be formally declared by an authority recognized as having the power to make such a declaration. (3) It must be waged justly.³⁴³

These principles rooted in the law of the Roman Republic were developed in a Christian context by St Augustine of Hippo. Before proceeding to war, each of the above guidelines had to be satisfied in order for the war not to be sinful. In addition to the above guidelines that had to be reviewed prior to going to war (*jus ad bellum*), the just war tradition added another criterion meant to insure justice in the waging of war (*jus in bello*).

2.5.6. Proportionate Means and Discrimination

Intending to restrain the viciousness of war to spiral out of control, the principle in the just war tradition says that any war must use proportionate means and discrimination. Proportionate means guides how wars are fought. Its purposes are to limit the destructiveness of wars by prescribing restraint in the fighting of wars. No more force than necessary for achieving peace may be used. “The principle of discrimination is meant to protect non-combatants in war. It not only forbids the direct and intentional attack of civilians in war, but also says that before attacking any target of war serious

³⁴³ Riley-Smith, 11.

efforts must be made to avoid injuring or killing innocent persons.”³⁴⁴ Wars today are commonly indiscriminate in their destructiveness, for it is difficult to envision how any war, even when justly undertaken, could satisfy the principles of proportionality and discrimination, which is the very thing the just war tradition had tried to eliminate.

Christians and Muslims have often felt uneasy about participating in wars. In view of that people should work to overcome differences and to minimize conflict. The just war doctrine is an important and valuable part of the Christian moral tradition. It can continue to be useful if we recall that its fundamental aim is to question and to limit the justification of war, not endorse it. The reality that the world is now a global village cannot be swept under the carpet. This means that as long as the world exists, human beings of various shapes and sizes, ideologies and cultures, religion and regions will co-exist. The living together of Christians and Muslims is inevitable in different parts of the world. In human history war has never solved the problem. Therefore, as both Christians and Muslims aspire to live out their faith, both religions should continue to call for genuine dialogue, peace, religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

2.5.6.1. Why is Terrorism morally wrong? James Turner Johnson’s position in context

In contemporary discussions, Johnson’s interpretation of the just war tradition places him in the category of limited war theorists. His emphasis has always been on the restraint of war with strong emphasis on the requirement of non-combatant immunity. Though the transition in the late Middle Ages from religious cause to natural law as the only just cause for war was an attempt towards ridding the just war tradition of its

³⁴⁴ Wadell, *What Does the Church Teach About Just War*, 21.

ambivalences, Johnson opts for the amalgamation of the two approaches to war.

The firm conviction on the truth of their cause, war for the true faith, resulted to the indiscriminate use of force during the crusades and holy wars of the medieval period despite the principle of proportionate means. It was this reality that led to the condemnation of the holy war tradition of the medieval period. Johnson observes a recovery of the accumulated wisdom of non-combatant immunity in what he calls the “modern just war tradition of international law.” This was an attempt again to restrict the destructiveness of war while at the same time emphasizing the non-combatant immunity. A brief introduction becomes very necessary here so as to enable us to understand the position of Johnson on the phenomenon of terrorism.

It is very clear from the various definitions and descriptions of terrorism analyzed above that terrorism has basic characteristics. One among these characteristics is that it directly targets non-combatants. Johnson’s position on terrorism is thus informed by this characteristic. His basic condemnation of terrorism is that it does not respect the right of the innocents by directly targeting the non-combatants who ought to be saved from the ravages of war. Its means are indiscriminate and its over-all intention is characterized by what Augustine of Hippo calls ‘implacable animosity.’ Johnson not only condemns insurgency terrorism, he also condemns counterinsurgency use of terrorist strategy. Pointing out the moral problem of terrorism, Johnson refers to the statement of a French peasant on terrorists in the sixteenth century, “Who will believe that your cause is just when your behaviors are so unjust?”³⁴⁵ The basic moral problem of terrorism then lies in the fact that often it uses wrong means to achieve its ideological end. In just war terms

³⁴⁵ James Turner Johnson, *Can Modern War Be Just?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 61.

both the cause and the means must be just while in terrorism the guiding principle is that the 'end justifies the means'.

Consequently, the claims of the cause must be tested by the other traditional ideas that together determine when resort to war is justified. Johnson's argument against terrorism is as follows: (1) A claim to justice that is fundamentally ideological is not a sufficient justification for the use of force because such claims are not subject to verification. (2) The claim to have just cause rests on the presence of an authority able to determine when an injustice is present affecting the community of persons for whom the authority acts, and the authority must be in fact be derived from the support of those persons as well as the asserted intent to act on their behalf. (3) It is difficult or impossible to judge that terrorism represents the kinds of attitudes that in just war tradition define right intent in the use of force.³⁴⁶ Johnson stresses strongly that in terrorism, it is incoherent to claim just cause when it cannot be verified, when there is no evidence of popular support, and when there is evidence of wrong intention.

2.5.6.2. Terrorism directly attacks the Non-combatants

James Turner Johnson in his book, "*Can Modern War be Just?*" stresses that terrorism is counter-population instead of counterforce. He therefore condemns terrorism outright as a legitimate form of armed conflict. In agreement with the condemnation of the holy war tradition of the medieval period he base his argument on the just war requirement of non-combatant immunity. According to Johnson, "Terrorism strikes at the defenseless, not at the combatant forces of the social unit and is thus by nature a crime

³⁴⁶ James Turner Johnson, 62.

against humanity.”³⁴⁷ The mainstream war traditions in history emphasize respect for non-combatant immunity. However, instead of targeting the combatants or political structures directly, terrorists intentionally attack innocent citizens. This terrorist strategy is meant to instill psychological fear in a body politic so as to undermine a political structure.

All the proponents of the just war tradition condemn any premeditated harm on non-combatants. Paul Ramsey rejects all forms of direct targeting of non-combatants while Michael Walzer allows harm on them only in what he describes as a situation of “supreme emergency.”³⁴⁸ Limited war theorists in union with mainstream war traditions stress strongly that the right of non-combatants must be respected. In Johnson’s analysis, “It is the intentional violence against the innocent that marks this form of force as fundamentally evil.”³⁴⁹ It was in the effort to preserve the accumulated wisdom of the just war tradition on the right of non-combatants that medieval canonists condemned terrorism.

2.5.6.3. Terrorism is indiscriminate in its means

The requirement of discrimination is an outstanding characteristic of any legitimate use of force. The mainstream just war tradition maintains that a legitimate use of force implies justice of both the cause and means of the war. Any use of force that is wanting in both the *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello* (cause and means of the war), lacks

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 60.

³⁴⁸ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 98–101.

³⁴⁹ Michael Walzer, 61.

profoundly the requirement of justice. If a war is just in its cause but is unjust in its means, or vice versa, then it is unjust.

It is the view of Johnson that the indiscriminateness of terrorism stems from its roots in the holy war tradition. In agreement with this view, Gerhard von Rad writes, “Sacrifice of the host, including sexual abstinence and other steps to ensure ritual purity among the warriors; sacrifice prior to taking the field; a divine oracle or sign; a resulting unshakable certainty of victory, which was characteristic of defining all holy war; the movement of Yahweh, God of Israel in front of the host; divine terror seizing the enemy so that his forces lose their courage and are thrown into confusion and rout; the *herem*, consecration of all booty to Yahweh; and ritual dismissal of the host.”³⁵⁰ Roland Bainton’s typology for the crusading idea throws light on the theme of indiscriminateness of terrorism, which is a progeny of the holy war tradition. According to him, “The crusading idea requires that the cause shall be holy (and no cause is more holy than religion), that the war shall be fought under God and with his help, that the crusaders shall be godly and their enemies ungodly, that the war shall be prosecuted unsparingly.”³⁵¹ The above typologies give the picture of two camps: the good and the bad, righteous and unrighteous, holy warriors (‘Holy Christian/national crusaders’ and *Mujahedeen*) and the infidels, believers and unbelievers.

Johnson distinguishes three meanings from such a complicated typology.

According to him they are as follows:

³⁵⁰ Gerhard von Rad and Marva J Dawn, *Holy War in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1991), 41–50.

³⁵¹ Roland Herbert Bainton, *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-Evaluation* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), 148.

Cultic holiness conferred by particular acts performed by the warriors individually or collectively and/or by specific acts of blessing by duly authorized religious leaders; moral uprightness, such as expressed in vows of renunciation of certain types of activity (for example, sexual relations), ...or righteousness as conferred simply by being one of the designated people of God.³⁵²

The notion of divine mandate and sanction of holy war coupled with its righteousness in defense of true faith, gave rise to its unsparing protection as we see in Bainton. It is on this background that the English Puritan divine William Gouge draws a line between wars among the godly and the ungodly. According to him, in a war among the ungodly the outcome is always uncertain, but wars in which the soldiers on one side are righteous are guaranteed by God's blessing of victory.³⁵³

Johnson observes that in the Islamic mainstream war tradition, ideological thinking is prominent. Buttressing this point, he writes, "Within Islamic jihad in a fundamental sense is always understood as a war of the righteous, those who have submitted to God (Muslims of the *dar al-Islam*), against the unrighteous (non-Muslims in the *dar al-harb*)."³⁵⁴ Noteworthy at this juncture are the ideological elements and ambivalences inherent in the holy war thinking. Just as the Christian crusades of the medieval period were masked under socio-political, economic and religious pretenses, so also is the Islamic jihad in history. According to Robin Wright, "Many Shia have broadly interpreted jihad.... To Ayatollah Khomeini, the war with neighboring Iraq has been a

³⁵² James Turner Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 39.

³⁵³ William Gouge, *God's Three Arrows, Plague, Famine, Sword in Three Treatises* (London: George Miller, 1636), 290, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_val_fmt=&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:28254.

³⁵⁴ Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, 39.

jihad, including hostage-taking and terrorism.”³⁵⁵ Johnson observes that the above ambivalences led to the medieval condemnation of holy war and terrorism as brigandage.

Today this brigandage has assumed divergent forms more complex than its medieval surrogates. Its diversity embraces chemical terrorism, biological terrorism, narco-terrorism, cyber terrorism, nuclear terrorism, and ecological terrorism, domestic and international terrorism. Among the most eloquent expressions of contemporary terrorism is religious terrorism under the umbrella of Boko Haram in Nigeria. The question to ponder: will Nigeria survive the onslaught of the Boko Haram sect? Time will tell, but on the meantime the flames of violence in the name of religion are consuming Nigerians.

The above survey reveals that violence has been justified by some members of religions “even if the scriptures provide little or no warrant for it, and nonviolence has arisen in religious traditions that seem to have their foundations in violent acts.”³⁵⁶ The future of democracy in Nigeria will be determined to a large extent by the ability of the government to stay clear of religious politics. This work is optimistic that when the government renounces its politicization of religious fanaticism, then the different religions in Nigeria will understand their social role as binding the people together. When this is done, then the religious fanatics will beat their swords into ploughshares, their spears into pruning hooks and eventually all will certainly turn to the table of dialogue.

2.6. CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM INTERACTION DURING THE COLONIAL-MISSIONARY PERIOD

³⁵⁵ Robin B Wright, *Sacred Rage: The Crusade of Modern Islam* (New York: Linden Press/Simon and Schuster, 1985), 55.

³⁵⁶ Burns, *More Moral than God*, 29.

Islam as a religion has been challenged by the social transformation empowered by the West since the 19th century. The once glorious “people of the right way”³⁵⁷ could not withstand the rising confrontation and secularizing systems³⁵⁸ facing the globalized world that was established by the Westerners. The Islamic religion can no longer resist change, for in this computer age ideas are shared and distributed freely and massively.

The global influence has changed a closed conceptualization of ideas. Besides religion, as the world advances in technology and ideology, the internal struggles of Muslims with their unorthodox mystical movements and moral integrity were also challenged by the Christian missionary enterprise, comprising mostly European Protestants who engaged with Muslim theologians in public disputations indicating that Islam was not a true religion and that the Quran could not have been divinely revealed. This new development was identified by J.M. Gaudeul in Christian-Muslim polemics “as a collision on which is the true revelation.”³⁵⁹ To cite an example of a formidable disputant about Islam in this period is a German missionary named Carl Gottlieb Pfander.

2.6.1. Carl Gottlieb Pfander’ (1803-1865) Missionary to India

Carl Pfander³⁶⁰ worked under the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Agra, India in 1854. He held a public disputation with the Indian Muslim Rahmat Allah and

³⁵⁷ We have earlier noted this traditional Muslim belief that Islam is the only true way to be acceptable to God; all other ways are false. This mindset has huge effect on their typical reaction to the new order. The Quran allows for peoples of the book, so the mindset is not as exclusionary as made out here.

³⁵⁸ By way of colonization, European and American value systems and ideologies were stamped on important Muslim cities of Egypt, Algeria, Turkey, Delhi, etc. The French secularist ideology (*Laicite*) was being spread in the French colonies, while Great Britain and America propagated liberal ideology and the open market economy. Basically, Muslim intellectuals were able to identify the differences between these new ideas and systems and their Islamic way of life, and these provoked a range of Muslim reactions.

³⁵⁹ Gaudeul, *Encounters & Clashes*, 253–260.

³⁶⁰ The source of this study is the work of C. G Pfander, *The Mizanu’l Haqq* (*‘Balance of Truth’*) (London: Religious Tract Society, 1910), <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/833656.html>.

also in (1818-1890) with the Indian Muslim Khalil al-Kayranawi. The forum offered both religions an opportunity to defend the integrity of their scriptures, which was said to have been better done by al-Kayranawi.³⁶¹ Carl Pfander was later transferred in 1858 to Constantinople, where until death he kept on his practice of preaching to convince Muslims of the superiority of the Christian faith with his writings and distribution of books. This was the position he defended in his book *the balance of Truth*,³⁶² which has remained a reference book for Christian missionaries among Muslims.

2.6.2. The Balance of Truth

In his apologetic writing, Carl Pfander, makes a refutation of Islam, and urges the view of the superiority of Christian values. He does this by defending the authenticity of the Old and New Testaments and counteracting the Muslim accusation that the Bible has been corrupted (*tahrif*). He sets out six criteria for a true revelation as follows: (1) orientation to eternal happiness (2) its harmony with conscience (3) presentation of noble ideals of religion (4) agreement with truths of nature (5) salvific aims, and (6) evidences of predictions and signs for its prophet. It is to these points of security that Pfander subjects Christianity and Islam.³⁶³

The *Balance of truth* is divided into three parts: (1) The Authenticity of the Bible (2) The fundamental teaching of the Bible (3) Examination of Islam's claim to be the final revelation. Pfander's method was to examine the foundation of Christianity and Islam, through the criterion of reason. In the first section, he persuades recognition of the

³⁶¹ The debate centered mainly on the old theme of the *tahrif*, or corruption of the Christian scripture

³⁶² Written originally in German, and published in 1831 in Armenian, and soon translated in many Muslim languages, including Arabic in 1865. The book stirred up a crisis in Turkey where it was circulated. The Ottoman regime tried to expel missionaries because Pfander and his group baptized converts in 1864.

³⁶³ Pfander, *The Mizanu'l Haqq ('Balance of Truth')*, 23–24.

respect the Quran accords the Bible, by appealing to the evidence of the Quran. This argumentation comes against the Muslim theologian's traditional interpretation of the Christian scriptures as corrupted, just as the Quran says, and that they had been abrogated by the Quran. Among other reasons, he appeals to the words of the prophets, apostles and Christ, suggesting that scriptures are eternally valid. This is why, he concludes, "the essential teachings of Old testament and the New are in their very nature incapable of being changed because God's will and character are free from all change and alteration."³⁶⁴ He used the Muslim commentator's works as proofs against the charge of *tahrif* and devaluation of Christianity and its beliefs.

The second section makes a presentation of the essential teaching of the scriptures, with emphasis on the Christian belief in God, the salvific role of Christ, the trinity, and the significance of "witness to the person of Christ" for true revelation. Pfander sees a connection between the integrity of the Bible and the spread of Christianity during the first centuries and its resilience against the menaces of the infidel.

Thus, within a few hundred years after Christ's resurrection the Christian faith had almost entirely overthrown the heathen religions of Syria, Egypt, Asia minor, Greece, Italy, and some other lands etc. This victory was not obtained by the sword or by compulsion, but by faith, courage, kindness, faithfulness even unto a martyr's death, and the simple preaching of the gospel of Christ.³⁶⁵

This statement, while proving the divine support for the Christian revelation, devalues Islam by linking it with violent spread, in spite of the anonymity it takes. But in the following statement, this comes out clearly:

Other religions besides Christianity have also spread widely, but never by such means as these (i.e, faith, courage, kindness and faithfulness). In some cases their propagation has been largely due to two things; the trenchant argument of the

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 75.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 212.

sword, and permission to men to follow and indulge in their fleshly lust in this world, with the hope of doing so to all eternity still in fuller measure after the resurrection.³⁶⁶

In this context, Pfander considers the Muslim defense of Islam as the true religion on the grounds of successful spread, as mistaken. He declares emphatically that “the spread of religion by such means as these is surely no proof that it has come from the holy and merciful God, who loathes cruelty, oppression, hypocrisy and impurity. In the third and final section, Pfander launches a rational quest for truth into Islam’s claim to be the final revelation. He explains the purpose of this inquiry: But the very existence of so many different religions in the world is permitted for a time by God in order to make the thoughtful man and the earnest truth-seeker inquire, what proof have I that my religion is the truth? If no one asked such a question, the heathen would never be truly converted to Islam or to Christianity. Hence, it is clear that sincere examination of the foundations of one’s faith and one’s religion is a good thing, provided it be undertaken with humility and earnest desire to know God’s will and to do it.

According to this explanation, the search is aimed at re-examination of the basis of Muslim faith. His attempt in the earlier sections is an establishment of the supreme character of Christianity. In the present inquiry, Pfander intends to convince the Muslims that Islam was false. It is therefore, not surprising that this search for proofs focuses on Muhammad and the Quran as the fundamental frameworks upon which Islam rests. In the Muslim “*shahada*” (*There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah*) Pfander begins the inquiry by affirming the first part of this creed on the unity of God.

³⁶⁶ (The imput is mine) This argumentation is directed against the Muslim traditional interpretation of Islam’s military success and its spread as a proof of true revelation. This view was sustained by Muslim apologists during the 19th century.

“There is no god but God” as universally true, but questions the proofs for the second part, which claims prophetic office for Muhammad.

He examines the five traditional proofs advanced by Muslims: biblical predictions, eloquence of the Quran, Muhammad’s miracles, Muhammad’s life, and the successful spread of Islam. The outcome of his examination of these proofs as presented by the Quran and Hadith is, obviously, a denial that Muhammad is a prophet. A few examples of his arguments that may be cited here are, first, the view of the self-expressiveness of the Quran as a miracle; he argues that the early accounts point out that different versions of Quranic utterances and collections existed. Indeed, he believes that the Quran does not have eloquence or good style as often claimed, and even if it does, its verses could not prove the truth of Islam or that Muhammad was inspired.³⁶⁷

Secondly, concerning Muhammad’s miracle, he mentions that the Quran and its commentators insisted that Muhammad did not perform any miracle, or questioned the accounts of miracles attributed to him by the Hadith. He draws a comparison between the Islamic accounts of miracles and those of the gospel, and concludes “the miracles mentioned in the traditions being in themselves too absurd, too contrary” in some instances, in the Quran, and too lacking in corroboration to be accepted as having really occurred. At the end, Pfander concludes with these remarks:

when we consider the criteria laid down in the Introduction, and inquire how far Islam satisfies them, the answer is not difficult to give. To us it seems that the only one of these criteria which Islam satisfies is the fourth. Christianity, on the other hand, satisfies them all. The conclusion is defensible.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ The constant refrain in this particular argumentation is that the history of the collection and redaction of the Quran does not support the claim of eloquence; even if it does, neither eloquence nor style can justify inspiration.

³⁶⁸ This addition is mine.

Obviously, the fourth criterion identifies true revelation to agree with the truths of nature accessible through human reason. Hence, to credit only this to Islam is to propose, like Aquinas, to see Islam as a religion of nature. In Pfander's terms, only Christianity has fulfilled all six criteria, and is therefore, God's true religion and final revelation.

2.6.3. Assessment

Pfander's evaluation offered us some relevant insights into the development of Christian polemics against Islam in the 19th century. There is remarkable continuity with past views that Christianity is a true religion, for whose ultimate values the Quran itself has high respect. Pfander argues that Islam's claim to be a true revelation lacks proofs and Muslims are called to make a choice between Christ and Muhammad for which his *Balance of truth* provokes condemnation and response. The issue in this research is not whether Pfander has the right sources for his opinion or not but the circumstances of his attitude towards the Muslim faith. It is the fact that the Muslim world had to contend with, in addition to the overriding infiltration of Western value systems and ideologies, in the questioning of Muslim religious identity by Christian missionary efforts. Ultimately, the significance of this is that the missionary and colonial factors are as much issues as ever in Christian-Muslim mutual mistrust, often held under ignorance and prejudice.

2.6.4. Theological Reflections

This chapter summarizes centuries of Christian-Muslims dissensions through some important voices. Really the arguments were dominated by emphasis on divisions, polemics, negative imaging, rivalry and collision. The above issues intensify mutual mistrust.

On the one hand, according to Muslim critics, Christians hold on to unreasonable beliefs, for they associate God with some human person (al-Tabari) and falsified their scripture (Ibn-Taymiyya), although there is no agreement on which portion of the Bible, if any, has suffered this distortion. Ibn-Taymiyya was deeply concerned with the risks posed to the Islamic ideal as a consequence of the co-existence of Jews and Christians with Muslims in Muslim territories.

On the other hand, from Christian polemicists paint, Islam as a false religion, satanic, and at best, a heresy. Some of these views contain a flawed logic. For instance, if the Church understands heresy as “the obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and catholic faith” (Canon. 751), then reasoning with Fitzgerald, Muhammad could not be considered a heretic, since to be a heretic, one must first belong to the church.³⁶⁹

How does this history of Christian-Muslim conflict relate to the situation in Nigeria? Of course, here in Nigeria, “due to the theatre of the absurd created by the incompatibility of professed religious tenets and the gruesome activities of religious fanatics, religion has been given an ugly name by some people.”³⁷⁰ Others by trying not to sound harsh have shifted the blame from religion itself to those who want to exploit it for their selfish interests. There are also those who adduce political, economic, and sociological reasons to account for all that happen in Nigeria by translating the ugly phenomenon as a byproduct of mass discontentment and frustration among the jobless and hopeless hordes of people that roam about on Nigerian streets. But irrespective of

³⁶⁹ Michael L Fitzgerald, *From Heresy to Religion: Islam since Vatican II*, "Grace and Truth", vol. 23, 2, 2006, 6.

³⁷⁰ John Okwoeze Odey, *The Sharia and the Rest of Us* (Enugu, Nigeria: Snaap Press, 2000), 13.

whatever conclusions, the colonial legacy and the current global economic regime play a role in exacerbating, if not creating; such tensions that theological issues are drawn into the struggle.

Thus, the Nigerian case is sometimes socio-political, despite its expression in the garb of religion. Hence, the negative encounters of conquests, rivalry, polemics, colonialism, and missionary endeavors are invoked to strengthen what divides religious communities. So, to a considerable measure, the hostility and exclusive attitudes that caused intensification of difference and violence between Christians and Muslims are still with us. And these attitudes are passed into the daily understanding of Christians and Muslims either in the church or mosque.

The situation is not helped by the fact that both communities value the intimate connection between the national space and survival of their religions. As such, the emboldening of religious fundamentalism, extremism, bigotry and conflict have become common in recent years, with devastating hurts caused to victims of clashes and riots. Nevertheless, as the historical interaction of Christians and Muslims has been mostly conflictual, so does it indicate the direction our present and future relations must learn to avoid completely. Believers of both religions are challenged to show that it is not polemics and violent confrontation that matters, but mutual understanding and peaceful collaboration that lead to the future of harmonious society of justice and peace. Therefore out of a complex dissentious history, there has emerged a commitment to Christian-Muslim mutual understanding and discovery- a common engagement that must disengage past tensions and conflicts.

2.6.5. Concluding Remarks

The Christian-Muslim conflictual history has survived to the present age. To overcome centuries of mutual mistrust is never be easy, but a renewed creative bent of mind is needed in the 21st century Nigeria. The solution may require, as Vatican 11 has urged, that all strive to overcome the troubled relations, by means of honest dialogue and cooperation. To do so, is to constructively embrace the contemporary Christian invitation to dialogue on the spirit of the Quranic command: “Oh people of the book come now to a word common between us and you, that we worship none but God...” (3:64).³⁷¹ Thus, this call is needed for both Christians and Muslims “to free themselves of the ingrained prejudices and traditional inhibitions that have impeded their movement toward each other.”³⁷² It is time to proceed in a comprehensive dialogue that is based on the sound premise of mutual recognition.

³⁷¹ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur’ān: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Brentwood, Md., U.S.A.: Amana Corp., 1989).

³⁷² W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam and Christianity Today: A Contribution to Dialogue* (London; Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1983), x.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MODEL OF CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The Roman Catholic Church's new relations to the Muslims and their religion were officially declared by Vatican II in an initiative which formulated a positive attitude towards non-Christian religions.³⁷³ This impetus acknowledges the positive values found in Islam, and undermines the century's view of Islam as a heresy or a diabolic invention, proposes it as a religion deserving of respect, and urges Catholics to enter into dialogue with Muslims. This new attitude has become the mainstay of the Catholic vision of Christian-Muslim relations being developed and nourished by the Post-Conciliar Church.

Given this background and understanding, "it is also true that Vatican II did introduce paradigm shifts that turned the Church's perspective around, though not necessarily on a dime. What happened was that Church leaders were embracing what had been bubbling in the Church body for more than a century. There were several such shifts, some of which were genuinely unique and others of which were recoveries of earlier aspects of Catholicism."³⁷⁴ The declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions (*Nostra Aetate*) went beyond Christianity to discuss Catholicism's relationships with other faiths, the monotheistic Judaism and Islam as well as Eastern faith traditions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. The document acknowledged great respect especially for Jews and Muslims, who share with Christianity a common father in Abraham.

³⁷³ Second Vatican Council and Pope (1963-1978 : Paul VI), "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non Christian Religions. *Nostra Aetate*" in *Decree of the Ecumenical council*, ed; Norman P. Tanner (Washington, D.C: Washington University press, 1990) 3: 969. Hereafter referred to as *Nostra Aetate*.

³⁷⁴ Bellitto, *Church History 101*, 133.

What Vatican II taught about Islam and Muslims is seen in two texts. The first formulation is a sentence in the Dogmatic constitution; *Lumen Gentium*³⁷⁵, no. 16. The importance of LG, in general, is that it builds the theological foundation that supports the Church's approach toward realizing her vision of renewal, including the new attitude toward the religions. *Lumen Gentium* spoke of Muslims as being part of the plan of God's salvation and in a positive way about other religions. The second text, contained in a special paragraph was dedicated to Muslims in the "Declaration on the relations of the Church to Non-Christian religions, *Nostra Aetate*, precisely in the third paragraph³⁷⁶. This chapter also examined the Catholic Church's model for Christian-Muslim relations as declared in the Vatican II teaching, the Post Conciliar documents and in contemporary reflections. Finally, the Catholic Church in the reflection argued that she has prospects for dealing with the questions of religion and society that pose difficulty in the interreligious relations of Christians and Muslims.

PART 1: 3.1. VATICAN II COUNCIL (1962-1965) AND CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

The second Vatican Council produced the document *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), which speaks of recognizing the "signs of the times"³⁷⁷ the special circumstances, opportunities, and responsibilities of

³⁷⁵ Second Vatican Council, "*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. Lumen Gentium*," in Decree of the Vatican Council, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington, D.C; Washington University press, 1990), no. 16. Hereafter referred to in the footnote as *Lumen gentium*.

³⁷⁶ There is another document which has not specifically focused on Islam or Muslims, but its principles apply to Muslims as well; and the NA is, as a matter of fact, to be taken and read with it; that is the declaration, *Dignitatis Humanae*, on religious liberty. We are not dealing with it because it does not share a similar attentiveness to the reality of Islam, but it will be referred to when necessary.

³⁷⁷ Smith and Burr, *Understanding World Religions*, 232.

each historical period. There has been much controversy over what these signs are and what they mean.

The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about the present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics. (Para.4)

The Church is therefore called to make the gospel have an effect in the struggling and suffering of people and on the joys, anxieties and hopes facing the modern world.³⁷⁸ This ecclesiastical interest in common existential questions people face, is further shown when *Nostra Aetate* forges an initiative of engaged pluralism, by which the Church and other religions of the human family will be engaged in dialogue and in joint service of the cause of peace, social justice, truth and moral values.³⁷⁹

The promulgation of the second Vatican council's declaration on the relations of the Church to non-Christian religions (*Nostra Aetate* 1965) expanded the formulation that presents the religions in a positive light. Crucially it is organically linked to the Dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, and is very specifically related to the Declaration on religious freedom. The linking of these conciliar texts signifies that *Nostra Aetate* is not to be considered in isolation; it has to be read together with other documents of Vatican II. What emerges is that with Vatican II, the salvation of non-Christians and interreligious dialogue that were hardly spoken of previously became the focal point of the Catholic theology of religions. Turning to a related teaching, the

³⁷⁸ Catholic Church and Pope (1963-1978 : Paul VI), "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. *Gaudium et spes*" in *Decrees of Ecumenical Council*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington, D.C: Washington University Press, 1990), no. 1. Hereafter referred in the footnotes as *Gaudium et spes*

³⁷⁹ C.f. *Nostra Aetate*, no. 3.

Council Fathers, while affirming the reality of pluralism in today's world, reckoned that promoting religious freedom and improving relations between religious communities are complementary goals. This vision is articulated in the Declaration of Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965). Its main thrust is that the right to choose one's religion, which is known through natural and revealed truth, is founded on the inherent dignity of the human person.³⁸⁰

Nostra Aetate is a very short document but its implications and repercussions have been enormous. It has to be seen in the context of the overall renewal of Vatican II since it focuses and symbolizes the spirit and the direction of that renewal. It was and remains a controversial text. Yet *Nostra Aetate* is integral to the whole direction of conciliar teaching. "*Lumen Gentium* provided a new articulation of the Church's self-understanding, one that is in some way inclusive of other Christians, of religions and of all people of good will. The most significant development was the way the Church expressed its relationship with the Jewish people."³⁸¹ But what is said of other religions was remarkable too. *Lumen Gentium* spoke of Muslims as being part of the plan of salvation and spoke in a positive way about other religions.

Relation to non-Christian religions might best be understood as a conversion to the "providential mystery of otherness" for the life of the Church, and as a call to extend and deepen that conversion. "For the first time in history, an ecumenical council spoke positively of other religions to which people look for an answer to "the unsolved riddles of human existence.... Thus the council encouraged "discussion and collaboration with

³⁸⁰ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*. Here after to be referred to as *Dignitatis Humanae*

³⁸¹ McDonald, "Nostra Aetate: Forty Years On."

followers of other religions.”³⁸² *Nostra Aetate* built on these dogmatic principles of *Lumen Gentium*, and in order to implement this body of teaching, Pope Paul VI set up the body that is now called the *Pontifical Council for inter-religious Dialogue*. The important development towards this body is that in relation to other religions the idea of dialogue is necessary for inter-religious relations.

The encyclical *Ecclesiam suam* of Pope Paul VI explained how dialogue is integral to the very nature of Christianity. It is a frame work that respects other religions inasmuch as it acknowledges the action of the Holy Spirit among the adherents of those religions. A culture of dialogue is something Christians can contribute to inter-faith work. The globalized multi-faith and multi-cultural world in which we live many years after *Nostra Aetate* should be a stimulus both to pursuing dialogue and to ensuring that future generations will be equipped to engage in it effectively.

3.1.1. Development of the Declaration, *Nostra Aetate*

Generally, traditional Christianity viewed non-Christian religions as debased. Edward Cassidy observes that “they were often considered as pagan or even the fruit of Satan’s presence in the world.” In light of which Christian mission must seek to convert their followers to Christ. He opines, it is this traditional notion regarding non-Christian religions that caused some pre-conciliar positive thinking on them by some Christian scholars to be viewed “officially with skepticism and even some concern.” Pius XI and Pius XII are credited with certain earlier efforts at positive presentation of the Jews respectively. But the decisive Catholic initiative to address the Jewish question owed

³⁸² Ibid.

itself to John XXIII, who, in September 1960, assigned Cardinal Augustine Bea, the Secretariat for promoting Christian unity to prepare a document on the subject.

John Osterriecher relates that John XXIII's action actually served to make official his personal efforts toward bringing the Church and Jewish people into reconciliation. Indeed, it is argued that it was this same desire that made this Pontiff favorably disposed to pre-conciliar pleas for the Jewish cause advanced by a number of concerned groups. The groups named in this regard are the *Pontifical Biblical institute* (24th April 1960), the *Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies* of Seton Hall University, USA (24th June 1960), and the *Apeldoorn Working Group Memorandum* (1960). Worthy of special mention among these influential pre-conciliar interventions, are the activities of the French-Jewish historian, Jules Isaac, who visited John XXIII in 1960, and has been linked with what has remained a diplomatic undercurrent to the making of the Vatican II statement on the Jews.

Thus, rather than see the "Declaration on the Jews" suppressed, John XXIII and Cardinal Augustine Bea nurtured and developed the draft through the three general meetings of the preparatory committee. An attentive study of the definitive text cannot but agree that the declaration on the Church's relation to non-Christian religions, *Nostra Aetate* is, indeed, a result of the conciliar process. The declaration indeed had a difficult development in the council. What is known is that the original text was changed several times, and was largely stretched outside the plan of its advocates from the versions that eventually matured to a definitive text.

3.1.1.1. The Drafts of the Nostra Aetate

Regarding the five chapters of the definitive text, the first chapter accounts that the motivating context for the declaration is the essential unity of humankind in origin and destiny, for “all nations are one community and have one origin...they have also one final end....” (NA, no. 1) The second chapter affirms that there exists in all peoples the longing to reach out to the transcendent mystery that surrounds their lives. The text begins to express esteem for specific religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism; declaring that “the Catholic Church rejects nothing of those things which are true and holy in these religions.” (NA, no 2) Hence, the council urges dialogue and co-operation with them. In the third chapter devoted to the Muslims, the church declares “respect” for them, noting especially what Christianity and Islam’s have in common, and calls for Christian-Muslim dialogue and collaboration. The fourth chapter is on the Jews, and it retains the primary intention of what became the text of NA. I This chapter ends the text’s statements on distinctive religions. The fifth and final chapter reaffirms the common human affinity, linking true religiosity to promotion of fraternity among humankind.³⁸³

3.1.1.2. Approval /Declaration of *Nostra Aetate* by the Council Fathers

The Declaration, *Nostra Aetate*,³⁸⁴ represents the Church’s starting point for its new attitude to those outside the Christian community and their religions. The uniqueness of this Declaration does not lie in being an isolated effort in Catholicism to engage other religions. Rather, it consists in being the Church’s first official commitment to seeing

³⁸³ The definitive text (English Translation) in Anderson, ed., *Council Daybook Vatican II*, session 2, 191-192.

³⁸⁴ “In our age, when the human race is being daily brought closer together...the Church is giving closer attention to non-Christian religions” *Nostra Aetate*, no, 1.

other religions in a positive light and engaging them.³⁸⁵ Thus the Church reveres the spiritual values (truth and holiness) found in them as the work of the one living God, and witnesses to the presence of the activity of grace in human religions.

The declaration *Nostra Aetate* was solemnly voted and approved by the Council Fathers on 28 October 1965, with 2,312 votes in favor, 88 against, and 3 invalid.³⁸⁶ While promulgating it on 28 October 1965, Paul VI commended it to the “Separated Christian Brethren” and non-Christians “as object not of reprobation and mistrust but of respect, love and hope.” Thus, “it is a regrettable fact that due to implicit or explicit actions of the Church’s leaders or members, the stain of anti-Semitism and physical violence against Jews and Muslims mars Church history.”³⁸⁷ Vatican II asked how the Church could be “the Church” within the lightning changes of the modern world. It was as if the Catholic Church at Vatican II caught up to the better part of the modern world’s enlightenment many years ago. Henceforth, attention will be channeled primarily on what the text has said about Muslims.

The noted struggles that characterized the development of *Nostra Aetate* positively settle the Declaration into its foundational motivation in *Lumen Gentium*, in which we read that God’s salvific plan includes the Muslims.³⁸⁸ It is because of this link that Maurice Borrmans notes that the Church’s declaration on relations with Muslims was influenced by *Lumen Gentium*, no 16.³⁸⁹ Taken together, *Nostra Aetate* is a child born

³⁸⁵ This is truly seen in the notion that the medieval efforts of some Mendicant missionaries, for instance, Francis of Assisi, Ramon Lull; the role of those who engaged Islam in rational debates, such as, Peter the Venerable, Thomas Aquinas and the efforts for Christian-Muslim understanding by Louis Massignon, are significant encounters. However, they are largely lacking the vision articulated in *Nostra Aetate*.

³⁸⁶ Cunningham, Hofmann, and Sievers, *The Catholic Church and the Jewish People*, 284.

³⁸⁷ Bellitto, *Church History 101*, 135.

³⁸⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16.

³⁸⁹ Borrmans, *Dialogue islamo-chrétien à temps et contretemps*, 161.

when no one expected it. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the statement on the Muslims began as a pro-Muslim reaction and ended as a definitive statement that will shape Christian-Muslim encounter in the years after the Council.

3.1.1.3. *The statement on the Muslims (NA, 3): A Textual Analysis*

Fifty two years after its promulgation, a re-reading of *Nostra- Aetate*, no. 3, reveals the image of a Church that rethinks its relationship with Muslims and their religion, seeking to promote a new era of Christian-Muslim relations. Thus, Emilio Platti describes the declaration as “the moment of *Kairos* of the sixties.”³⁹⁰ This opportune time came, as already seen, when the council Fathers positively recognized the Muslims as sharing some spiritual bonds with Christians, and therefore deserving of “respect”:

The Church also looks upon Muslims with respect. They worship the one God living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to humanity and to whose decrees, even the hidden ones, they seek to submit themselves whole heartedly, just as Abraham, to whom the Islamic faith so readily relates itself, submitted to God. They venerate Jesus as a prophet, even though they do not acknowledge him as God, and they honor his virgin mother Mary and even sometimes devoutly call upon her. Furthermore they await the judgment when God will require all people brought back to life. Hence they have regard for the moral life and worship God especially in prayer, almsgiving and fasting. Although considerable dissensions and enmities between Christians and Muslims may have arisen in the course of the centuries, this synod urges all parties that, forgetting past things, they train themselves towards sincere mutual understanding and together maintain and promote social justice and moral values as well as peace and freedom for all people. (NA,3)

This is the most decisive positive statement on Islam in Roman Catholicism, and will influence the Church’s relationship with Islam in the years after the council. The Council, in a pastoral and exhortative style, declared its “regard” for Muslims and

³⁹⁰ Emilio Platti, “Islam: Dialogue or Confrontation?” *Philippiniana Sacra* 37, no. 111 (2002): 479. Here, Platti echoes the classical Greek time ‘Kairos’, meaning an occasion of grace to indicate that the change in attitude of the Church toward other religions becomes what God desires of the Church in the world.

committed the Church to interreligious dialogue. The text also mentions some basic elements of Islamic faith and practice, reflecting the special links that exist between Christians and Muslims. As evident as it appears, it is still pertinent to ask: Why does the Church reserve such respect for Muslims? The reasons can only be fully grasped through a deeper reflection on the conciliar statement.

3.1.1.4. Echoes of the Quran in the text: *Nostra Aetate*, 3

Emilio Platti has offered an analysis of the conciliar statement on the Muslims, and tried to locate the basic elements of the Muslim faith pointed by the text to their proper place in the Quran. Below the schematic table is a useful guide for easy comparison. The schema shows graphically the Council’s positive affirmation of some of the essentials of Islamic faith and practice and the links that exist between Christians and Muslims.

NOSTRA AETATE 3	REFERENCE TO THE QURAN
“...The Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent...”	Sura 2, 255: “God! There is no god but He, the living and subsistent”
“Merciful and almighty”	Sura 26, 9: “verily, your Lord is the Almighty, the merciful”
“the Creator of heaven and earth”	Sura 6, 1: “Praise be to God, who created the heavens and the earth”
“Who has spoken to men”	Sura 96, 5: “(God) taught man that which he knew not”
“They try to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God”	Sura 87.3. “(God) hath ordained by decree and granted guidance (). The admonition will be received by those who fear (God)”
“Just as Abraham submitted himself to God’s plan to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own”	Sura 2, 131: “(Abraham), his lord said to him; Submit (<i>a-sl-i-m</i>); and he said I submitted (<i>a-sl-a-m-tu</i>) to the Lord of the universe”, Sura 16, 120: “Abraham was

	indeed a model, obedient to God, a pure monotheist”
“Although not acknowledging him as God, they venerate Jesus as a prophet”	Sura 61, 6: “And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: () I am the prophet (<i>rasul</i>) of God”;
“His virgin mother they also honor, and even at times devoutly invoke”	Sura 19.20 “She said; how shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me” and He (God) hath made me blessed wheresoever I be”
“Further, they await the day of judgment and the reward of God following the resurrection of the dead”.	Sura 75, 1: “I call to witness the day of resurrection” Sura 1, 2.4: “Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds , Master of the Day of Judgment”
“For this reason, they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting	Sura 9, 71: “The believers, men and women, are protectors one of another; they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil; they observe regular prayers (<i>salat</i>), practice almsgiving and obey God and His prophet”; Sura 2, 183: “You who believe; fasting is prescribed to you”

Table 1: Reflections of the Quran in the Council’s statement on the Muslims

3.2. CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM MUTUAL DISCOVERIES

Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria today have no other agenda other than knowing, appreciating, and respecting each other and living as next door neighbors. It is the researcher’s contention that in order to achieve this, there is the need to have a learning agenda. The point of departure here is that the Christian-Muslim relations agenda has to include learning to respect what is positive and good in each other’s cultures and religions and be really more critical in what is destructive in them. This calls for a contextual approach for the study of both traditions. If the former approaches used

were oppressive and confrontational then a new approach has to be tolerant and respectful.

The Catholic Church's perspectives of Christian-Muslim relations are part of this new vision of interreligious interaction. Nigerian Christians and Muslims can recognize their diversity and specific visions in the Vatican II declaration of the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religion, *Nostra Aetate*³⁹¹ of 28th October, 1965.³⁹² The Roman Catholic Church reaches out to people of other religions with the understanding that spiritual values in any religion can be shared with others, for the purpose of building up better persons and better human society. Thus, Christians are urged not only to witness to their own faith and way of life, but to encourage these spiritual and moral values found among other believers.³⁹³ The quest has to affirm the need for a renewed understanding that will inspire the Catholic Church's role to effectively facilitate leading Christians and Muslims to a culture of dialogue and cooperation towards promoting the common good.

3.2.1. Islamic act of faith as spiritual bond with Christianity

Thus, it will, however, not be positive to see the future only through the prism of difficulties. Apart from the reality of violent conflicts, there are hopeful examples of Christian-Muslim dialogue and joint-service initiatives that may indicate some of the possible harmony between different religious groups in spite of the fact that these are,

³⁹¹ The declaration of the relation of the church to non-Christian religions went beyond Christianity to discuss Catholicism's relationships with other faith, the monotheistic Judaism and Islam as well as Eastern faith traditions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. The document acknowledged great respect especially for Jews and Muslims, who share with Christianity a common father in Abraham.

³⁹² In this document the church displays a positive approach to other religious traditions (N.A.1) and affirms also that salvation of Jesus Christ takes place in mysterious ways, a reality open to all persons of good will, and of whatever religious traditions. All are efforts of God's grace (N.A.2), Cf. A.G11. L.G.17 This being the case, the church is impelled to enter into dialogue and collaboration with non-Christians (N.A.2)

³⁹³ *Nostra Aetate* 2.

sometimes overshadowed by intermittent conflicts. Such models warrant the councils in their opening statement to acknowledge the heart of Islamic faith, which declares that Muslims “worship one living God the subsistent, merciful and almighty, creator of heaven and earth” (NA, no. 3).³⁹⁴

Islam understands itself as an act of faith; it is a religion that declares a fundamental belief in one God who has created humankind to find salvation in Him, through total obedience to His decrees. Thus, the very act of surrendering to God and professing his oneness (*tawhid*) is fundamental to being a Muslim. Similarly, the first article of the Christian creed, as professed by Catholicism, is the belief in one God (*Credo in unum Deum!*). This council’s recognition of Muslims’ vision of God is reinforced with an addition found in LG. no. 16, which says “along with us they worship the one merciful God who will judge humanity on the last day.” Nonetheless, it is now clear, even from the Nigerian perspective, that some Muslims and Christians do not share this conciliar idea that their two religions have such a theistic bond. For these Christians, the one true God adored by Christians- believed to be Trinitarian is not believed to be the same as Muslims’ God, *Allah*.

Most Muslims do not see Christians as pure monotheists. In view of that Fitzgerald attempts to resolve the problem by shedding light on the Vatican II method of stressing commonalities rather than differences. He opines that the council intends to teach that the Church understands that Christians and Muslims share a belief in and worship of the same God (not “different divinities”), irrespective of their different

³⁹⁴ *Nostra Aetate*, no. 3, The first thing to note about Islam is that the Quranic theology is uncompromisingly monotheistic: “God is absolutely unique, omnipotent, omniscient, and merciful”. This is the heart of the Islamic message. And, therefore, what Vatican II does is to acknowledge Muslim self-understanding of their faith.

conceptions of this God.³⁹⁵ This is to suggest that Christians and Muslims share faith in the same God, but differ substantially in the ways God is mediated by Jesus and Muhammad.

3.2.2. Abraham's Model of Submission to God

The council identified another quality to be esteemed in Islam, their belief in Abraham's model of submission to God. *Nostra Aetate* also affirms that Muslims adore the one God: whose decrees, even the hidden ones, they seek to submit themselves to whole-heartedly, just "as Abraham...submitted to God." This agrees with *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16, which affirms that Muslims profess the faith of Abraham. The wordings here are cautious. First, there seems to be some underlying hesitation about some claims of Islam. Second, one has to agree with Fitzgerald that the texts seem to affirm the faith of Abraham rather than describe his model of faith.³⁹⁶

However, the model of faith and submission to God's mysterious decrees linked to Abraham is central to both the Christian and Islamic traditions. For Muslims, Abraham is a pure monotheist, an archetype of submission to God, and the one who rebuilt the Ka'ba (the shrine to God at Mecca). Christians recall Abraham as a model of faith, in surrendering to the divine will. By their respective beliefs, both traditions can legitimately link themselves to the religion of Abraham. But what Vatican II speaks about is a spiritual heritage and not a physical link to the figure of Abraham. The council

³⁹⁵ Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, 76. See Fitzgerald, "From Heresy to Religion," 5-6;

³⁹⁶ For the second observation, see Fitzgerald, "From Heresy to Religion," 5-6: This author has in recent times defended Islam's non-historical relationship to the figure of Abraham. He prefers to interpret the claimed relations theologically.

fathers teach that Abraham's model of submission can be an important platform for Christian-Muslim mutual discovery.

3.2.3. Acceptance of Muslims' belief in the God who reveals himself

The claim to revelation is a permanent character of biblical theistic religions. Islam sees itself as a revealed and biblical religion, and accuses Christianity and Judaism of having corrupted their texts. The Council's affirmation seems to raise questions. How does the Council want this text understood in the light of the Church's insistence that revelation ends with Jesus Christ? Mikka Ruokanen³⁹⁷ gives a clue to the conciliar intent by indicating that Islam is recognized as a prophetic religion, in which Jesus is also venerated as a prophet, but 'not acknowledged as God' and that in this important content, Christianity and Islam differ; thus, the text does not see Islam as a revealed religion.

Further, Muslims are affirmed as adoring the God who has openly spoken to humankind. The next makes the meaning clearer; "to whose decrees, even the hidden ones, they seek to submit themselves." The sense of "hidden decrees" points to the effort to submit to "non-revealed perception of God and his will."³⁹⁸ The text affirms Islam's self-understanding as orthopraxis, a religion of learning to submit to the divine self-disclosure.

3.2.4. Muslims Recognized Mary, Mother of Christ

The council recognizes the acknowledgement of Mary the mother of Christ by the Muslims. In reference to the revered place of Mary in Muslim doctrine, the Council states that "they honor his virgin mother Mary and even sometimes devoutly call upon her."

³⁹⁷ Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions*, 77.

³⁹⁸ Ibid. The above view can hardly settle in some Muslims in relation to their idea of 'People of the Book'.

The image of Mary in the Quran (in Sura Maryam, 19 and Sura 43), despite being distant from that of the Christian Bible, and likely set against the Christian claim to Jesus' divinity, signals Muslim' exalted regard for the blessedness of Mary.³⁹⁹ Hence, this honor doesn't seem to be a complement towards Christians. It is essential to Islamic faith as a symbol of prayerful submission for Muslims. It expresses more clearly *Nostra Aetate's* approach, which emphasizes common points of religions as basis for dialogue. In this context, Mary could be the figure to bring Christians and Muslims together, even though their beliefs differ.

3.2.5. Reference to Islamic Eschatology

As is the case in Judaism and Christianity, belief in an eventual day of judgment is a central article of belief in Islam. The idea of the resurrection and Day of Judgment is fundamental to Islam.⁴⁰⁰ The text further makes references to the essential eschatological vision of Islam. Like the Christians, the Muslims await the Day of Judgment when God will require all people brought back to life. Indeed, it has been argued by some scholars⁴⁰¹ that the theme of eschatology, understood within the notion of negation of self-sufficiency, is the first message of Muhammad.

While there are certain similarities among the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic conceptions of the Day of Judgment, there are also distinct differences. The Christian concept of eschatology gives a detail explanation of Christian hope, and is celebrated mostly in the profession of faith in divine judgment and resurrection of the body. Even in

³⁹⁹ Mary is a figure present in the Quran, which dedicates an entire chapter (Sayyidattuna Maryam, Our Lady Mary) to her and mentions her as a symbol of prayer, daily submission, and sign for Islam in some thirty references.

⁴⁰⁰ Quran 75:1, for the idea of the resurrection; and also Quran 1:24;3;19;74;42-47, for the day of judgment.

⁴⁰¹ Nagel, *The history of Islamic theology from Muhammad to the present*, 13–22.

its ordinary sense, it seems true that both Christianity and Islam share a linear notion of history. This linear explanation culminates in a respectable vision of accountability and reward as realities of human existence. No wonder then, that the council fathers underline Islamic eschatology as one of those common elements that Muslims and Catholics share and can enable mutual appreciation.

3.2.6. Respect for Muslim Morality

The text also states that, as a result of Muslim' belief in judgment and resurrection, they esteem moral excellence while giving worship to God through prayer, alms-giving and fasting. In reference to these "elemental beliefs", the Council seems to have adopted selective appreciation also, probably in keeping with its approach. It is basically this reason that can readily allow a Muslim to come to terms with the fact that an important practice in Islamic spirituality, notably "pilgrimage" (Hajj), which draws devotees to the Holy shrine at Mecca, was not ignored.

About the moral life affirmed, the Council did not go into detailing the constitution of this morality. But from the conciliar process, certain sensitive wordings were suppressed between the text of the third draft and the definitive text. The third draft that stated "for moral life, for individual as well as familial and social," amended in the final text to read "they have regard for moral life." The reason for the change is not clear to us, but it is doubtlessly in line with the spirit and style of the declaration, which is conciliatory and dialogical.

Regarding the silence over the practice of pilgrimage, Troll opined that it was either because it is not a general practice, but undertaken by those who can afford it, or

that the Council did not intend it to be comprehensive.⁴⁰² Whatever the dominant reasons for the conciliatory, they suggest the place of language of dialogue in Catholic model of Christian-Muslim relations. Nevertheless, it is significant that both religions value the link between moral life and religiosity, how people practice those beliefs, and practices may differ.

3.2.7. Evidence in the book of Psalms

The inclusive language of the Book of Psalms is a clear induction of the place of Christians and Muslims in the salvific plan of God's redemption for all humanity. This could also serve as a certain basis for coming together and talking amicably. Citing the concept of God's mercy or *rahman* from the Book of Psalms and Quran, respectively "we may deduce that the concept of mercy in the Quran also has some aspects, especially the aspect of care (68 times), followed by the aspect of exemption or redemption (40 times), which is then covered by the aspect of forgiveness (46 times).

A fourth aspect is seen in all the periods of mercy as blessedness in heaven (13 times), as God's love is the basis of His mercy for "all" (Psalm: 103: 13). This is the area that Islamic theologians and Christians in Nigeria should explore in their efforts to enhance mutual relations and co-existence. In addition to sharing many traditions, Muslims believe that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is a repudiation of the oneness of God, a charge that Christians deny. Islam also teaches ethical principles that Christianity shares, such as care for the poor, obligation to family, and the value of prayer, for example. Muslim-Christian dialogue has many common bases on which to

⁴⁰² Christian Troll, "Changing Catholic Views of Islam," in *Islam and Christianity: Mutual Perception since the Mid-20th Century*, ed. Jacques Waardenburg (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 26.

build mutual understanding and respect for one another, but the prospects of success are tempered by the animosity that many Christians feel towards Muslims and many Muslims feel towards Christians. Nevertheless, talks are ongoing, and most Christians as well as Muslims hope fervently that dialogues will produce better understanding between them worldwide. In this way they will realize the enabling social climate to achieve the solidarity needed to foster the common good and prevent conflicts.

3.2.8. Invitation to Christian-Muslim dialogue

The last part of the text conceives the Church's mission to Islam as that of dialogue and co-operation and, thus addresses Christians and Muslims alike to build a new relationship of mutual respect and engagement. The theme of dialogue seemed not to be introduced by *Nostra Aetate*, since Paul VI had already encouraged interreligious dialogue in his encyclical letter, *Ecclesiam suam* in 1964.⁴⁰³ The council could have adopted it here to express the attitude that will define the Church's vision of renewed relations with Islam.

Taken alone, the council's urge to forget the past may appear simplistic, for it is evident that the Christian-Muslim catalogue of past relations is not easily forgotten. Thus, the Council, further, enjoins Christians and Muslims to jointly commit themselves to four essential issues of peace, freedom, social justice and moral values. It seems clear that the Council sees the mission of dialogue and collaboration (underlying the Church's relation to other religions) as a means for the solidarity needed among religious communities towards promoting peace and freedom. This central intent seems signaled in the

⁴⁰³ Catholic Church and Pope (1963-1978 : Paul VI), *Ecclesiam Suam*. Here referred in the footnote as *Ecclesiam Suam*

magisterium of John Paul II for the World Day of Peace in 2002, when he says that there is “no peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness.”⁴⁰⁴ No wonder the Church’s idea of religious pluralism is that of religions for positive fruits.

Having arrived so far in the discussions, the broad sense of the question why does the Church declare respect for Muslims has to be given a moral answer. Thus by declaring such, the Church honors Muslims and equally no longer wants any Christian to see within Catholicism a support to denigrate Muslims for there is much to be celebrated in the positive values found in Islam, particularly its shared values with Christianity. As a sequel to Vatican II’s approach to dialogue, accepting what unites both religions is encouraged. Vatican II provided a blueprint for Christian-Muslim dialogue. The implementation of this vision of dialogue years after the council is pertinent to the grasp of the Catholic dialogue initiation.

3.3. The POST-CONCILIAR OFFICIAL IMPLEMENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Far from affirming traditional Catholic doctrinal practices and condemning its opponents, as Trent had done, Vatican II produced documents that proposed significant changes in the life and teaching of the Church. The most influential and well loved among the Popes of the twentieth century was John XXIII. Despite his short reign (1958-1963), his vision for “updating” the Church culminated in the most important ecumenical council since the Council of Trent. Vatican II opened the Council on October 11, 1962, encouraging the delegates “to interact with the modern world rather than condemning it.”⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ Borelli, “From Tiber to Nile The Appointment of Rome’s Leading Arabist as Papal Nuncio to Egypt Will Give a Boost to Christian-Muslim Relations.”

⁴⁰⁵ Adair, *Introducing Christianity*, 308.

The council was unique in including many non-Catholic observers. The makeup of the Council was quite diverse, with 42 percent of the delegates hailing from Latin America, Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Vatican II produced documents that proposed significant changes in the life and teaching of the Church. When John XXIII died in 1963, his successor Pope Paul VI continued the work of the council, despite his own more conservative tendencies. Some of the innovations of Vatican II include the following:

The liturgy of the Church was revised, and the Latin mass was replaced with mass carried out in local vernacular languages. Protestants and other non-Catholic Christians were recognized as genuine Christians. The Church recognized that God speaks to and through non-Christian religions. Anti-Semitism, based on the theory that the Jews were responsible for the death of Christ was condemned. Original languages, was encouraged in the local Church. The role of bishops as colleagues, with the pope as their leader, was promoted.⁴⁰⁶

The Catholic Church that emerged after Vatican II was a much different Church from the pre-Vatican II Church, and not surprisingly, many traditionalists within the Church opposed some or all of the innovations of Vatican II. Nevertheless, the official position of the Church is that the reforms instituted in Vatican II are to be observed by all Catholics, and even the more conservative Popes who have followed John XXIII have upheld the validity of the council's decisions. The broad sense of the question in this section is: How has the Vatican II Church treated the teaching of the council on interreligious dialogue in general and Christian-Muslim relations in particular? To access this, we must review the official Catholic promotion of interreligious dialogue,

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 309.

particularly that between Christians and Muslims, focusing on post-Vatican II Popes⁴⁰⁷ and the relevant Vatican office for interreligious dialogue.⁴⁰⁸

3.3.1. Meaning of Dialogue

In the context, of Vatican II's message, it is proper to elucidate what dialogue is in the light of our understanding without presuming what it means. The English word 'dialogue' is derived from the Greek word *dialogos*, which is composed of two words, '*dia*, meaning 'his' or 'her', plus '*logos*', meaning 'word' or discourse'. Thus, dialogue denotes the method of discourse by which people jointly address issues of common concern, each through (dia) his/her own (logos) view of reality.⁴⁰⁹ Therefore, in both its etymological or philosophical senses, dialogue involves exchange of views, speaking one's idea of a particular-subject and listening to another's, so that everyone's concerns are heard for the attainment of mutual understanding that gives rise to conditions for a better future for all.

This is the goal of dialogue that is mainly of political or economic character. Thus, by its nature, dialogue is opposed to monologue, in which one person or party speaks or acts alone. According to, Mahmoud Ayoub, Muslims recognize "dialogue" in the Quranic term *jidal*, meaning "to be intimately engaged with someone in discussion or debate."⁴¹⁰ The instruction to Muhammad is: "invite (all) to the way of the Lord with

⁴⁰⁷ There are four of them: Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. This thesis discusses only the pontificates of Paul VI, John Paul ii and Benedict XVI. It deliberately omits the pontificate of John Paul i, due to the fact that the two allocutions dealing with interreligious concerns attributed to him are not immediately relevant to our present discussion.

⁴⁰⁸ Otherwise known as the Secretariat for, Non Christians, (and later as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue). We will use the abbreviated form: PCID in most of our references to this dicastery responsible for implementing the dialogue initiatives.

⁴⁰⁹ Amjad-Ali, *Developing Christian Theology in the Context of Islam*. As cited in David Kerr, *Christianity and Isalm; Clash of Civilizations or Community of Reconciliation?*

⁴¹⁰ Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity."

wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious” (Q. 16:125). Ayoub indicates that the emphasis is on wisdom and fair dialogue. In its Christian theological parlance, ‘dialogue’ is used to underline constructive interreligious relations with individuals and faith communities, aimed at mutual understanding and enrichment.⁴¹¹ The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue Guideline for Christian-Muslim Dialogue states unequivocally that dialogue is “engaged in by people desiring mutual enrichment from their different ways, fellowship in sharing common values and openness to whatever way the Lord might speak to them in the intimacy of their conscience.”⁴¹²

The accent is on truly religious encounters, defined by the goals of mutuality in learning spiritual sharing and engagement for the benefit of all. They also point to deepening of trust and friendship, which interreligious dialogue can bring into ethnic or social relations when complemented with a serious commitment to inter-ethnic, political dialogue, etc. However, in all, dialogue should always keep a space in the middle in order to allow difference of excessive and deficient views, since dialogue may not always lead to consensus. The broad sense of the question in this section is: What is the place of dialogue in addressing the questions of politics and religion in the Nigerian context?

The situation is that since religion or state cannot always offer satisfactory solutions, then it means that the state has to address the various levels of concerns of its citizenry, while religious communities, particularly Christianity and Islam in the Nigerian case, need to assist by entering into an honest dialogue that seeks deeper understanding.

⁴¹¹ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, no. 9.

⁴¹² Borrmans, Catholic Church, and Pontificium Consilium pro Dialogo inter Religiones, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, 10.

This form of partnership is in line with Nigeria's secular model, which needs not to be compromised since although religion and the state differ in their roles, they share the goal of promoting the common good for the benefit of the entire society.

3.3.2. Paul VI and Christian-Muslim Dialogue

In 1975 Paul VI released perhaps the most important document of his papacy, apart from the Vatican II documents, an apostolic exhortation entitled *Evangelii nuntiandi* (on Evangelism in the modern world). He defined the word evangelism broadly in a way that emphasized its root meaning of proclaiming the good news. For Pope Paul VI, evangelism included not only the conversion of non-Christians to the Christian faith but also the announcement to all people, Christians or not, that God loves them and cares about every aspect of their lives. However, Paul VI showed interest in interreligious dialogue. At the opening of the council on 29th September, 1963, he declared:

the Church looks, then, beyond her own sphere and sees those other religions that preserve the sense and the notion of the one supreme, transcendent God, creator and sustainer, and which worship Him with acts of sincere piety and base their moral and social life on their beliefs and religious practices.⁴¹³

This statement indicates the intention to build solidarity with other religions which are united with faith in God, without explicitly mentioning Islam and Judaism. It suggests the important place that dialogue will occupy in and after the council. This solidarity with and respect for Muslims as people of monotheistic tradition are also affirmed in the same Pope's message in Bethlehem, during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land (4-6 January 1964). Paul VI declares:

Our greetings full of respect and affection... in especial manner to everyone, who professes monotheism, and with us offers worships to the one true God, the living

⁴¹³ Catholic Church, Pontificium Consilium pro Dialogo inter Religiones, and Gioia, *Interreligious Dialogue*, 186.

and supreme God, the God of Abraham...our best wishes for peace and justice go to these peoples who adore the one God.⁴¹⁴

The significance of these allocutions is that they provided a lead to the emerging

Christian thinking about other religious traditions that become clear in the Vatican II

landmark declaration, *Nostra Aetate* and the value accorded to other religions after the council.

3.3.2.1. Creation of Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions

In 1964, on the occasion of Pentecost, Pope Paul VI created the Secretariat for Non-Christians by the brief apostolic letter, (*Progrediente Concilio*⁴¹⁵) as a special department of the Roman Curia to promote dialogue with other believers. As a sign of this desire to relate with adherents of other religions, this gesture is aimed at ensuring that “no pilgrim, no matter how distant he may be religiously...will no longer be a complete stranger in this Rome.”⁴¹⁶ As an organ meant to be distinct from the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, its responsibility was defined in the constitution of *Regimini Ecclesiae*:

To search for methods and ways of opening a suitable dialogue with non-Christians; It should strive, therefore, in order that non-Christians can come to be known honestly and esteemed justly by Christians, and that in their turn non-Christians can adequately know and esteem Christian doctrine and life.⁴¹⁷

The new secretariat had a handful of staff under Cardinal Paolo Marella as

president, with other members and consultants across the world. The Church showed that

it was time for respectful dialogue with the Muslims, and thus, Vatican II was barely over

when Paul VI advised the secretariat to promote a Christian-Muslim dialogue. With the

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 187. See Catholic documentation, no. 1417 (1964), 181, as cited in Paul VI, “Message to the World,” in *Interreligious Dialogue*

⁴¹⁵ Paul VI, “Apostolic letter, *Progrediente Concilio*,” AAS 56. The dicastery is known in its Latin name as *Secretariatus pro non Christianis*

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Paul VI, “AAS 59,” 919.

reorganization of the Vatican government in 1998, this secretariat was renamed Pontifical Council for interreligious Dialogue (PCID).⁴¹⁸ Its task has to be carried out in healing wounds done to religions, promoting mutual studies and knowledge and interreligious encounter⁴¹⁹

Furthermore, in 1974, Paul VI instituted a special “commission” for Religious Relations with Muslims”, by the Apostolic Constitution, *Pastor Bonus*, of the Roman Curia.⁴²⁰ The commission seeks to promote, in the Vatican II dialogue initiative between Christians and Muslims, its aforementioned task through conferences, seminars and workshops, as well as to facilitate contacts and dialogue between them.

3.3.2.2. Issuing of First Encyclical (*Ecclesiam Suam*)

Pope Paul VI issued his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam suam* (ES) on 6th August 1964. This document is published during the creation of the council, in order to help drive the dialogue initiative. Paul VI explains in *Ecclesiam Suam*, the theological foundation for the Church’s mission of dialogue to be the call to prolong the God’s on-going dialogue of salvation with humanity over the centuries. He describes four concentric circles of such dialogue to be engaged by the Church. They include dialogue with the world; dialogue with followers of other Christians; and finally, dialogue within the Church itself. In 1965, the Vatican II pastoral constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, reflects these same concentric circles, arranging them in reversed direction.⁴²¹ However, in *Ecclesiam Suam*, dialogue

⁴¹⁸ With the change of name, this dicastery came to be known as *Pontificium Pro Dialogo Inter Religionies*, See Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Interreligious Dialogue Directory, Recognize the Spiritual Bonds which unites us*, 48.

⁴¹⁹ C.f. more in this in Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, 132-134.

⁴²⁰ The first edition of the directory was published in 1995. This commission meets once in a year to review the dialogical relations between the Church and Muslims.

⁴²¹ Tanner, *The Church and the World*, no, 92. "Gaudium et Spes was one of the key documents to come out of the Second Vatican Council." In this volume of the Rediscovering Vatican II series, Norman Tanner

with Muslims is located within the special offer of dialogue to adherents of other religions. After the section on dialogue with non-believers, the next text reads:

We would mention first the Jewish people, who are indeed worthy of our respect and love...; then we have those worshippers who adhere to other monotheistic systems of religion, especially the Moslem religion. We do well to admire these people for all that is good and true in their worship of God.⁴²²

In the above statement, it is clear that admiration for other believers include the Church's desire to join them in promoting all that is good and true in their religions. It must be noted, however, that, while emphasizing promotion of interreligious dialogue, Paul VI does not concede equal validity of the Church and other religions. This is fundamental to his approach to other religions; respect for other religious paths and an unconditional stress on the centrality of the Christian faith for the validity of these religions. He writes:

...indeed, honesty compels us to declare openly what we believe, namely that there is one true religion...and...we do acknowledge with respect the spiritual and moral values of various non-Christian religions, for we desire to join them in promoting and defending common ideals...On these great ideals we share with them we can have dialogue.⁴²³

Paul VI's position is that Christianity is the 'one true religion'; the other religions represent natural religions based on human experience, to which the Church's evangelizing mission is directed. This position is well developed in his later apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nunciandi* (1975). This is why, without an explicit position on the place of dialogue in the Church's evangelizing mission, Paul VI seems to conceive the

traces the document's evolution from its beginnings to its eventual promulgation at the end of the council in December 1965. He reviews its reception by the Catholic Church and beyond and its possible future influence.

⁴²² Catholic Church and Pope (1963-1978 : Paul VI), *Ecclesiam Suam*, no, 107.

⁴²³ Ibid.

best missionary strategy on the part of the Church, to consist in carrying together dialogue and witness to the Good News.⁴²⁴

3.3.2.3. *Evangelii Nunciandi*

The two dimensions of respect for other religions and emphasis on the centrality of the Christian message in interreligious dialogue pursued by Paul VI, is retained in *Evangelii Nunciandi*. Thus, in proposing respectful dialogue with people of other religious traditions, we read that “nothing will stand between the Church and the proclamation of Jesus Christ. Neither respect and high esteem for these religions nor the complexity of the theological questions raised is an invitation to the Church to withhold from these non-Christians the proclamation of Jesus Christ.”⁴²⁵ This latter idea merely reinforces Paul VI magisterium on interreligious dialogue, and can be put simply as: the primacy of witness to Christ and openness to the other’s faith. This core approach is severally underlined in his allocutions to the Muslims.⁴²⁶

In evaluating Paul VI’s *Evangelii*, it could be said that he inspired and encouraged interreligious dialogue during and after Vatican II. In the same vein, Maurice Borrmans believes that Paul VI “pushed further the teaching of *Nostra Aetate*, consisting in inculcating loyalty and mutual respect, emulation in giving spiritual witness,

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 107.

⁴²⁵ Paul VI, “Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nunciandi*,” no. 53. The apostolic Exhortation was published one year after the 1974 Synod of bishops on Evangelisation. It is often postulated that it was probably the silence of this synod on the subject of interreligious dialogue that necessitated a magisterial statement on the Church’s approach to dialogue with world religions.

⁴²⁶ A good example is found in his address to the Mufti of Istanbul, Fikri Yavuz (26 July 1967) and his message to Africa (29 October 1979). In the latter, he said: “We desire to manifest our esteem for all the followers of Islam living in Africa, who possess elements in common with Christianity from which we enjoy drawing hope for a beneficial dialogue. Meanwhile, we pray that even in the social sphere, where Muslims and Christians live side by side, there may always be reciprocal respect and harmonious action, for the acceptance and defense of the fundamental rights of man.” See P. Rossano, “The Major Documents of the Catholic Church Regarding the Muslims,” *Bulletin Secretariatus Pro Non Christianis* (48) (1981), 209.

perseverance in the search for common values, and courage to appeal for pardon and reconciliation”⁴²⁷ Yet, his approach may face difficulties in the actual practice of interreligious dialogue, if Christians must in dialogue “declare...that there is only one true religion”.⁴²⁸ Further exposition of the Vatican II impetus on the real practice of dialogue is emphasized by Pope John Paul II.

3.3.2.3.1. John Paul II on Christian-Muslim Dialogue

John Paul II has often been described by the Christians and non-Christians as an arch-type of dialogue. In a number of ways he has proved this by addressing twenty- two Muslim groups within the first ten years of his pontificate.⁴²⁹ Commentators pointed to his recognition of the operative presence of the Spirit as the firm theological foundation of his blessing of interreligious dialogue.⁴³⁰ John Paul II believes that in meeting the Muslims in sincere dialogue, Catholics can be challenged and enriched. The next sub-sections highlight his numerous gestures, writings and speeches, and dominant themes that are relevant in understanding his concept of dialogue with Muslims.

3.3.2.3.2. Action of the Spirit above the Church

⁴²⁷ Isizoh and Arinze, *Milestones in Interreligious Dialogue*, 47.

⁴²⁸ Catholic Church and Pope (1963-1978 : Paul VI), *Ecclesiam Suam*, no, 107.

⁴²⁹ His apostolic visits to countries are heavily punctuated with interaction with Muslims, where they are present. Equally, many theologians point to the invitation of many religious leaders to Assisi to pray for world peace, which many Muslim leaders attended, as indicative of his shining model.

⁴³⁰ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 173. In this book, Jacques Dupuis brings together a lifetime of study, reflection, and experience in both Europe and Asia to outline a significant shift in Christian theological understanding of world religious pluralism. The premise of *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* is that the question has shifted from whether "salvation" occurs for members of other religious traditions

These encyclical letters, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), *Dominum et Vivificantem* (1986) and *Redemptoris Missio* (1991), contains the texts in which John Paul II developed his idea of the universal action of the Holy Spirit in other believers and the reasons for interreligious dialogue. In *Redemptor Hominis*, he indicates that the “firm belief” of the members of other religions is “an effect of the Spirit of truth operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body.”⁴³¹ He locates the activity of the Spirit, for example, in inspiring the universal “loving for God” in all peoples, often expressed in their prayer.⁴³²

Furthermore, in *Dominum et Vivificantem* (1986), he develops this theme by tracing the Spirit throughout the history of salvation. The accent is that its universal action is “orienting humanity to Christ” along with its social and religious institutions.⁴³³ In *Redemptoris Missio*, John Paul II declares unequivocally that the action of the Spirit is operative in both the religious life of the individuals and their religious traditions. “The Spirit’s presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society, people, cultures and religions⁴³⁴. Consequently, the text adds that the Church’s relation with religions outside her is dictated by a two-fold respect; “respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life and respect for the action of the Spirit in man.”⁴³⁵ These encyclicals teach that the spirit is actively present in the whole of history, in the world, in the people of other religions, and in their religions. For John Paul II, therefore, the Spirit that manifests itself in a unique way in the church is, at the same time, operative outside

⁴³¹ John Paul II, “Encyclical letter, *Redemptor Hominis*,” AAS 71 (1979); no. 6.

⁴³² Ibid. no. 11. He writes We may think that any authentic prayer is aroused by the holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in the heart of every human being.”

⁴³³ John Paul II, “Encyclical letter, *Dominum et Vivificantem*,” AAS 78 (1986); no. 53.

⁴³⁴ John Paul II, “Encyclical letter, *Redemptoris Missio*,” no. 28.

⁴³⁵ Ibid. no 29

the church.⁴³⁶ This implies that John Paul II has significantly contributed in clarifying the interplay between the active presence of the Spirit in the Church and in the world. This synthesis is most expressed in *Redemptoris Missio*:

The universal activity of the Spirit is not to be separated from his particular activity within the Body of Christ, which is the Church. Indeed, it is always the Spirit who is at work, both when he gives life to the Church and impels her to proclaim Christ, and when he implants and develops his gifts in all individuals and peoples, guiding the Church to these gifts, to foster them and receive them through dialogue.⁴³⁷

In this text, John Paul II's basic motivation for dialogue is summed up as mutual understanding and enrichment. On the part of the Christians, this means that they are not only making open the way of Christ to others, but also can arrive at a deeper appreciation of the Christian truths. This dimension of inclusivist theology stimulated the trend towards Trinitarian approaches, which sees the "good" in other religions as revealing certain aspects of the Trinitarian mystery.⁴³⁸ Thus understood dialogue becomes an occasion for deeper discovery of the Trinitarian self-revelation entrusted to the Church.⁴³⁹

3.3.2.3.3. Common ground in Spiritual Values as platform for Dialogue

The heritage of belief in one God and Abraham and piety common to Christians and Muslims have been shown to have a unique place in the Vatican II evaluation of religions, without much references to their different appreciations in both traditions. John Paul II firmly subscribed to these elements of spiritual bond between Christians and Muslims to his audience on Holiness in Islam and Christianity, lucidly expressed; "Your

⁴³⁶ Catholic Church, Pope (1978-2005 : John Paul II), and Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 53.

⁴³⁷ Catholic Church and Pope (1978-2005 : John Paul II), *Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate*. no, 29.

⁴³⁸ Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 210, 309–313. He shared Trinitarian understanding.

⁴³⁹ D'Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity*.

God and ours is one and the same....”⁴⁴⁰ His conviction in this recurrent gesture to Muslims is that so long as the different interpretations of this monotheism are respected, it provides common ground for dialogue and cooperation.

Vatican II honors Muslims’ identification with Abraham, particularly in the order of his submission to God, and wishes to see Christians and Muslims meet on this basis.⁴⁴¹ John Paul II pushes this appreciation further by seeking to persuade members of both traditions to what he considers its higher significance: honest living of their common affinity to Abraham’s faith as a firm foundation for uprightness, for moral conduct and life in the society. Obviously, John Paul II advocates a claim to the figure of Abraham that rather predisposes Muslims and Christians to transcend from mere attachment to Abraham to sincere commitment to the good.⁴⁴² John Paul II commends the piety of sincere Muslims and focuses his admiration on their consistent devotion to prayer, solidarity tax and fasting as expressions of conformity to God’s will. John Paul II’s respect for Muslims’ piety emphasizes its practical result, spurring in Muslims the willingness to be open to the learning process of human inter-relatedness before God.

3.3.2.3.4. Mission of the Church and dialogue: *Redemptoris Missio*

In this encyclical John Paul II positioned himself in promoting the Church’s mission of dialogue that never loses sight of authentic Christian witness. A principle question faced is the relationship between interreligious dialogue and proclamation in the

⁴⁴⁰ *Pontificium Consilium pro Dialogo inter Religiones*, “Pro dialogo,” 109.

⁴⁴¹ *Nostra Aetate* no. 3. Compared to Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son (Q. 37:102) Abraham seems to provide a perfect portrait of a Muslim who “strives to submit wholeheartedly even to (God’s) inscrutable decrees.”

⁴⁴² John Paul II, while addressing the leaders of the three spiritual descendants of Abraham in a colloquium in Lisbon, held in May 1985, highlighted the fraternal character of this shared patrimony. Oneness in unreserved submission to God’s plan is an important dimension of Muslim-Christian brotherhood.

church's mission. *Redemptoris Missio* teaches that dialogue and proclamation are two aspects of the Church's evangelizing mission.⁴⁴³ Interreligious dialogue conceived as a means of mutual knowledge and enrichment, is not apart from mission *ad gentes*,⁴⁴⁴ but is one of the latter's expressions.

They support one another; they are inseparable and are not opposed to one another⁴⁴⁵. The document proposes that this mission is directed to those who do not know Christ and his Good news, and are mostly members of other religious traditions. In communicating the Christian truth, the Church connects to the mystery of redemption present in a hidden way in the universe, particularly expressed in the religious treasures of all peoples, albeit imperfectly. Thus, *Redemptoris Missio* says of the relationship between dialogue and proclamation: "these two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; therefore, they should not be confused or regarded as identical, as though they were interchangeable."⁴⁴⁶ The full view of this relationship is seen in John Paul II's letter to the Asian Bishops. He notes that interreligious dialogue, as the Church seeks to discover the positive values present in other religious traditions as reflections of the "seeds of the word" and a "ray of that truth which enlightens all", does not fail to proclaim Jesus Christ as "the way, and the truth and life...." In so doing, the Church sees the religions themselves as "positive challenges" for

⁴⁴³ Catholic Church and Pope (1978-2005 : John Paul II), *Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate.*, no, 69.

⁴⁴⁴ In *Ad Gentes*, nos 2 & 5, the church declares its self-understanding as a revealer of the way of Christ, and the scope of dialogue with religions does not diminish the reality of this mission.

⁴⁴⁵ Catholic Church and Pope (1978-2005 : John Paul II), *Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate.*, no, 55.

⁴⁴⁶ Catholic Church and Pope (1978-2005 : John Paul II), *Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate.*

her, and is stimulated to discover the signs of Christ's presence and the work of the Spirit in other religions, as well as attain a deeper grasp of her own truth.⁴⁴⁷

Against this background, is the question: What is the contribution of John Paul II to interreligious dialogue in general and Christian-Muslim relations in particular? John Paul II expanded the theology of religions envisioned by Vatican II and fostered by Pope Paul VI, by declaring interreligious dialogue as integral part of the Church's evangelizing mission. This has never been stated so clearly before him. Further, he leaves no one in doubt about his special interest in promoting Christian-Muslim relations. His respect for Islam seems to focus on the latter's spiritual and ethical dimensions as capable of securing human transformation, and can be better harnessed by means of "peace and respect for otherness, desire for dialogue, appreciation of pluralism and commitment to universal solidarity"⁴⁴⁸ amidst the face-off involving some parts of the Muslim world. Yet, it must be stressed that his willingness for interreligious dialogue has been constantly moderated by explicit insistence that the Christian truth is not just one among many others, lest religious relativism is accepted. For him, while this must be held, the Church's practice of interreligious dialogue is a part of her mission.

3.3.2.3.5. Islamic Political Vision and the State

The Vatican II's statement on the Muslims is silent on their vision of politics and the state, its invitation to common commitment of Christians and Muslims towards respecting human dignity, freedom (even in a choice of religion) and fostering peace in the world (*Nostra Aetate*, 3) However, this silence has consequences for dialogue on

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid. nos, 56, 73. John Paul II says mission by means of dialogue and proclamation aims at helping non-Christian "freely asking for baptism."

⁴⁴⁸ Baum, *Amazing Church*, 122–123. This idea has been remarkably underlined in Baum

Islam and politics. Muslims, so often differ with Christians on the way the state has to be organized. For many Muslims, a just society (which guarantees justice, equity, and well-being of all) can only be possible under Islamic law. But whatever the positive values argued by advocates of this vision of an ideal state,⁴⁴⁹ the Catholic Church does not share the vision of Islam's political culture. Christianity distinguishes between spiritual and temporal competences, but also holds that they are mutually related.

Thus, John Paul II has expressed concern that Islamic political system doesn't always respect diversity, especially in contexts where Muslims and Christians live together as one national community. It seems his awareness of the situation of minorities in some nations with strong Islamic regimes leaves him critical of an Islam-determined state⁴⁵⁰. Indeed, in his address, to General Omar al-Bashir of Sudan, in 1993, he deplors disrespect for people's collective identities, and demands that rights of cultural or religious minorities be protected by law as follows:

The inalienable rights of every human person, irrespective of racial, ethnic, cultural or national origin or religious belief, means that when people coalesce in groups they have a right to enjoy a collective identity. Thus, Minorities within a country have a right to exist with their own language, culture and traditions, and the state is morally obliged to leave room for their identity and self-expression.⁴⁵¹

3.4. THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE (PCID)

⁴⁴⁹ The Muslims who argue for Islamic democracy, like M. Ayoub, often point to the practice of consensus (*ijma'a*) and mutual consultation (*shura*) in Islam as important ingredients of democratic participation. See Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *Islam, Faith and Practice* (Zaria; Open Press, 1991), 176.

⁴⁵⁰ From the church's point of view, Islamism has disastrous implications for the world, and more still, for a Christian minority, whose religious identity is often left insecure. Some people outside the theological circle, even point to acts of terrorism perpetuated today by those who present themselves as fighting for the Islamic cause, as diabolical aspects of Islam, sanctioned by early and medieval assumptions and polemics, and warned by medieval Christian writers. Nevertheless, while there may be link between the heritage of the past and the present violent acts, we insist on a distinction between Islam and terrorism.

⁴⁵¹ The address of John Paul II to the president of Sudan in 1993, in Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, "Recognize the Spiritual bonds which unite us". General Omar al-Bashir came to power in 1989, and declared Sudan an Islamic state. Since then, the Sharia law has been executed. There is no doubt that the denial of religious freedom by Islamic fundamentalist to their citizens gives him concern.

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue⁴⁵² formerly called the Secretariat of non-Christian religions, was charged with a three-fold responsibility, namely: (1) to engage in the in-depth study of other religions, in order to facilitate sufficient understanding of world religions among Christians; (2) to entrench among local Churches the importance of dialogue in relations with people of other faiths; and (3) to dialogue directly with other religions when necessary. The PCID's activities have involved studies and publications, as well as organizing and participating in interreligious meetings, conferences and gatherings etc. To examine its contribution towards elucidating the Church's position in Christian-Muslim dialogue, there is the need to focus on her three important publications namely: (1) *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, first published in 1969; (2) *Dialogue and Mission* published in (1984); and *Dialogue and proclamation* published in (1991).

3.4.1. Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims (1st Publication)

The Vatican endeavored in the implementation of the dialogue between Christians and Muslims after the council in both educational and cultural dimensions through its secretariat for non-Christians. In 1969, the secretariat published a guidebook that sets forth the general principles of dialogue between the members of the two religions, which was revised in 1990 as *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims* by Maurice Bormans.⁴⁵³ The forward to the 1990 text of the PCID guidelines described dialogue as a peaceful meeting of the faithful of both religions, whose aim is to witness to

⁴⁵² This became the name of the secretariat for non-Christians. As of 1988, when the Vatican offices were re-organized. Hereafter referred as PCID.

⁴⁵³ The French original was published in Rome, written by Louis Gardet and Joseph Cuoq. It was revised in 1981 by Maurice Bormans, and published in Paris by Cerf.

their faith, open up to the “other” in charity, and collaborate for the benefit of all.⁴⁵⁴ It asked that in dialogue, Christians and Muslims witness to their faith-convictions and open to the “other”, meaning that interreligious dialogue promotes an encounter that serves as a forum for religious debates. It also allows dialogue partners to realize in their religious ideals the, resources for promoting solidarity among persons. This seems to be a reaffirmation of the core of Vatican II’s idea of dialogue, namely commitment to one’s faith and charity to the conviction of the “other”.

The guidelines outline two main partners in Christian-Muslim dialogue: (1) the Christians in their Churches and communities and Muslims in their unity; (2) the Christian and the Muslim diverse representations.⁴⁵⁵ They explain the Christian approach in dialogue with Muslims to be split into two alternatives: similarities and differences. Some Christian Churches like Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches focus on elements common to Christians and Muslims, while others like the Reformed Churches stress the differences. The PCID guidelines evidently recognizes the many faces of contemporary Islam and notes that “the Muslim partners in dialogue today are characterized as much by their cultural environment and the national situation as they are by their faith.”⁴⁵⁶

Hence, they underline that dialogue with Muslims readily engages their working class, the Muslim intellectuals, modernists, as well as radical fundamentalists.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Maurice Bormans, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, trans. R. Marston Speight, rev. ed. (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1990), 2.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 14-27

⁴⁵⁶ Maurice Bormans, *Guidelines for Dialogue*; 17. No doubt, the PCID Guidelines here notes that dialogue with Muslims can only be realistic if the many faces of Islam and their respective values are brought into the dialogical focus. This does not preclude the possible anti-dialogical stance of some Muslim schools of thought in principle, but it may place some limitations on the condition under which their excesses can be based.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 21-27.

Notwithstanding these diverse approaches, it is claimed that the Christian partners seek to coordinate their efforts in their many interreligious meetings with the broader Muslim community (*umma*) or its diverse socio-cultural expressions. However, while encouraging Christian-Muslim dialogue, the document does not fail to affirm that dialogue with Muslims is difficult. This is partly because, apart from the immense differences between Christian and Muslim general understanding of religion, there are huge variants of the visions of Islam. “For the most part, other religions do not see their religion as a personal relationship. They will not see it as dialogical in the sense that we do.”⁴⁵⁸ Yet this way of understanding our faith defines and shapes the way we relate to other faiths.

3.4.2. Dialogue and Mission (2nd Publication)

In 1984, the Secretariat for Non-Christians published a document clarifying the attitude of the Church towards the adherents of other religions, as reflections from its plenary session that deliberated on matters of mission and dialogue. The secretariat, among others, focuses on the relationship between interreligious dialogue and the Church’s evangelical mission. This document treats its subject matter in three sections: (I) Mission; (II) Dialogue; and (III) Dialogue and Mission. In the section on mission, it offers new reflection that explains dialogue and mission in terms of the universal love of God in Christ, for which the Church in its sacramental sign sent (mission) to love all mankind after the manner of Christ.⁴⁵⁹ In expounding this Vatican II teaching (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 1), *Dialogue and Mission* sees dialogue as a vocation of the Church to

⁴⁵⁸ McDonald, “*Nostra Aetate*: Forty Years On.”

⁴⁵⁹ *Ecclesia catholica and Secretariatus pro non christianis*, “The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions,” no 9.

engage people of other faiths in mutual exchange of gifts and goodness, typical of Trinitarian love.

In the second section, the document locates *dialogue* within evangelization, and insists on it as a Christian task, not a choice.⁴⁶⁰ Interreligious dialogue can be carried out in four forms: the dialogue of life, which is open to all (nos. 29-30); the dialogue of action, in which faith inspires collaboration in works for common good (nos. 31-32); the dialogue of doctrines, involving theological experts (nos. 33-34); and the dialogue of spiritual exchange, whose accent is on prayer and contemplation (no. 35). In its third and final section, the text dwells on the relationship between mission and dialogue. They are understood as inseparable from, and interpenetrating, one another in the Christian faith and practice. In nos. 42-43, it highlights that true dialogue bears the fruit of mutual enrichment and transformation.

The importance of *Dialogue and Mission* lies in placing dialogue at the heart of the Church's mission, and insisting that it needs the urgent commitment of every member of the Church. This thinking has been developing since Vatican II, perhaps out of the concern that, Catholicism would need to clarify /further to the Muslims and other believers the nature and purpose of mission of preaching of Jesus Christ to them. Is it to convert them to Christianity or to bear witness to Christian faith to the understanding of the other? However, it appears, by placing dialogue and mission side by side, the Church seems to say that both mutual understanding and witness of faith can be engaged at the same time without contradictions.

3.4.3. Dialogue and Proclamation (3rd Publication 1991)

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid. no, 24.

The document *Dialogue and Proclamation* (DP)⁴⁶¹ was jointly published in 1991 by two Vatican offices, namely the Pontifical Council for Interreligious dialogue and the Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples. It aimed to clarify the inevitable confusion, felt within some Catholic circles about the real relationship between dialogue and the Church's mission to proclaim Jesus Christ to the world.

In seeking to clarify this issue, Dialogue and proclamation connects itself to the teachings of two earlier documents: the *Dialogue and Mission* and *Redemptoris Missio*.⁴⁶² Central to this Curia text is that interreligious dialogue and proclamation of the person of Jesus Christ are two inseparable, and not conflicting, aspects of the Church's evangelizing mission. The church engages its mission in both necessary ways, without reducing it to one or the other or interchanging them. The understanding of these two activities is clarified in three sections of the document. In the first section, *Dialogue and Proclamation* indicates that evangelization "refers to the Church in its totality."⁴⁶³ Dialogue is defined as "all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. It includes both witness and exploration of respective religious convictions."⁴⁶⁴

This definition states clearly that dialogue is about relations between respective believers and their traditions for the purpose of mutual understanding. But the accent is in placing "witness' alongside 'exploration", which suggests that remaining true to one's

⁴⁶¹ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation*. A joint document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation of Evangelization of Peoples

⁴⁶² *Redemptoris Missio* was issued when DP was at the final stage of its composition, and the latter document was published five months after the former.

⁴⁶³ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, no. 8.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.* no. 9.

faith and openness to the values of another's faith are not contradictory. Sincere dialogue has to hold the two together. The text explains 'proclamation' as "the communication of gospel message, the mystery of salvation realized by God for all in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is an invitation ...to entry through baptism into the community of believers which is the Church."⁴⁶⁵ These explanations emphasizes that both dialogue and proclamation are an integral part of the Church's mission. The document sustains the theological basis for the Catholic thinking on interreligious dialogue in the scripture and the patristic theology of religions. The mystery of redemption invisibly at work in the entire universe, and particularly in the religious traditions of peoples, has its uniqueness in Jesus Christ. Hence, it says:

The second Vatican council has given the lead for such a positive assessment.... It reaffirms the traditional doctrine, according to which salvation in Jesus Christ is, in a mysterious way, a reality open to all persons of good will. A clear enunciation of this basic conviction in Vatican II is found in the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. 'This holds true not for Christians only but also for all persons of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly...' (GS, 22)⁴⁶⁶

The position taken here is that members of other religions have their source of salvation in Christ, even as they remain unaware of it. The question is: how are they saved? *Dialogue and Proclamation* places Christ at the heart of the salvation of non-Christians. But it also explicitly credits other religious role in mediating salvation for their members, as it explains that non-Christians are saved:

concretely in the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions and by following the dictates of their conscience that the members of other religions respond positively to God's invitation and receive salvation in Jesus Christ, even while they do not recognize him as their savior (cf, AG 3, 9,11).⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁵ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, no, 10.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid. no, 15.

⁴⁶⁷ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, no, 29.

In another consideration, the document confronts the difficulty facing the practice of dialogue and proclamation. The religious-political and other factors that produce setback on dialogue, and proposes some dispositions that would promote true dialogue that precludes any design to make converts (nos. 47-48) The second section focuses on proclamation. The document underlines the nature of this message in relation to the Church's duty to proclaim it to the world, the method of proclamation and obstacles to proclamation.⁴⁶⁸ The text's treatment of 'internal and external' obstacles to proclamation as significant for explicitly acknowledging the difficulty some local Churches face in their effort to engage their mission in "both necessary ways" without reducing it to one or the other, as expressed in the third and final section.⁴⁶⁹ The text lists, for instance "an attitude of superiority giving rise to the supposition that a particular culture is linked with the Christian message and is to be imposed on converts."⁴⁷⁰ A historical suspicion of such classicist assumptions creates a gap between theory and practice in mission as understood by dialogue and proclamation. *Dialogue and Proclamation* has not been well received by some Muslims, who see it as anti-dialogical. Mohammad Talbi concludes that an invitation to dialogue is a cover-up for conversion of Muslims.⁴⁷¹ For Christians, this conclusion cannot be sustained easily, giving the overall contribution of dialogue and proclamation in developing our understanding of the salvific role of other religions.

3.4.4. Summing up Interreligious-Dialogue in General

⁴⁶⁸ For detail see *Ibid.*, 56-76

⁴⁶⁹ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, no, 82.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.* nos, 73-74.

⁴⁷¹ Talbi finds a ploy to conversion as something sinister afoot with dialogue and proclamation. See for a detailed discussion on Mohammad Talbi, *Plaidoyer pour un Islam Modern, cited in Emilio platti, "Dialogue Avec les Musulmans Et Annonce Du Christ," Transversalites 74 (2000): 43-57.*

Interreligious dialogue has promoted good relationship between Christians and Muslims and it is being appreciated as a task central to the Roman Catholic Church today. The second Vatican council gave a decisive direction on respectful contact, understanding, dialogue and co-operation between Christians and Muslims, and urged a mutual overcoming of past religious intolerance. The magisterium of successive popes provides doctrinal and practical directions on this vision of the Church. Catholic theologians have helped in clarifying this new agenda. After fifty- two years of this Vatican II initiative, the Catholic Church has made significant progress in developing positive relations with Muslims. Christians are encouraged to respect Muslims as other believers, with whom they share some common spiritual bonds, although they are understood differently.

Nevertheless, Muslims are understood as related to the Church since they belong to all humankind, graciously offered in God's salvation. The Church becomes a sacrament of the universal destiny of everyone. These inclusive frame works suggest that as one practice his/her codes of conducts and lives within the dictates of his/her conscience, one belongs to the universal horizon of salvation irrespective of religion. Therefore, the Church's mission to Muslims is to witness to her faith in Jesus Christ as the universal savior without persuading conversion and urges respect for each other's convictions and engages in dialogue in view of building bridges of understanding and cooperation in promoting the common good.

PART 2: 3.5. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MODEL FOR CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

What we are concerned in this section is how the Roman Catholic model for engaged Christian-Muslims relations can stimulate and guide followers of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria to more positive relations. The model of a more proactive Christianity is proposed, and subsequently described. The Catholic Church has continued to exercise a leadership role in interreligious dialogue in the world with what may be the clearest idea and programme of dialogue of religions and cultures. In the Nigerian context, this authoritative contribution to enabling positive relations is a factor that guarantees the leadership of the local church in interreligious dialogue and cooperation.

This factor is boosted by the fact that the Catholic Church is strategically positioned as the biggest Church with social influence. Hence, it is not surprising that it has engaged Muslims in dialogue initiatives beyond its Ecumenical partners. Such engagement may have brought about the common belief among Nigerian Muslims that the Catholic Church recognizes Islam and does not insult its adherents as some other Christians do.⁴⁷² Indeed, the Muslim leadership tends to have no confidence in any top-level Christian-Muslim dialogue without Catholic representation. This Muslim evaluation, obviously, recognizes the foremost place the Catholic Church in Nigeria occupies in interreligious relations, while reminding us of the disservice rendered to the Nigerian Christian community by the lack of a united Christian attitude towards the Muslims and others who believe differently.

⁴⁷² Nigerian Muslims are aware of the internal differences within the Christian community regarding the way Muslim leader are perceived. Most of them know that some Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches are yet to accept the fact anyone can belong to any other religion other than Christianity; not just any version of Christianity, but only the ones so often regarded as “living churches”. The reference to “living churches” point to the idea that the “mainstream Churches” (Catholicism, Anglican communion. etc) are not “Bible Churches”. Such churches imbued with “exclusivist” dispositions construct an image of Christian relations with the Muslims in terms of “Us” and “they”, and treats those understood as “they” (Muslims) with contempt as they do not worship the same God “Us”. This is an aspect of provocation in the history of Christian-Muslim tensions.

3.5.1. Interreligious Dialogue is the Mission of all Catholics

The foregoing discussion suggests that the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria has a leadership responsibility to promote dialogue between Christians and Muslims. It is not merely due to expediency, but because it is an integral part of the Church's life. This truism has been underlined by the various documents of the Church. John Paul II reiterates it in a message addressed to the *Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops* (10 April-8 May, 1994). He noted that interreligious dialogue in Africa "is not a question of mere practical need or an opportunity dictated by circumstances. Today, in fact, an ecclesial life devoid of dialogue or a spirit of ecumenism would be inconceivable."⁴⁷³

The emphasis is on willing engagement in dialogue and spirit of ecumenism as the way of being Church and Christian. This fact has also been acknowledged by the Muslim world, and most recently in a letter by 138 Muslim scholars to Pope Benedict XVI and other Christian leaders, entitled "*A Common World between Us and You*". The signatories to this letter, comprising of Sunni, Shia and Sufi Muslims, stated their conviction that improved relations between Christians and Muslims, based on dialogue, is a vital necessity, on which world peace could depend.⁴⁷⁴ Among them, there are six Nigerian Muslim leaders led by the Sultan of Sokoto, Sa'ad Abubakar and Lateef Adegbite.

It is now clear that a harmonious multi-religious and multi-cultural society may never be achieved through an exclusivist agenda. The reason is because no religion is an

⁴⁷³ John Paul II, "Sunday Angelus," *L'Osservatore Romano* (Weekly Edition in English), 16 March, 1994, 1.

⁴⁷⁴ Jordan, "The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, A Common Word between Us and You."

island. Interreligious way of life, which seeks the involvement of all, should be the socio-religious order. For Nigerian Catholics and Christians, this imperative is determined by the understanding that all believers constitute “the people of God” and so, whatever differences there may be in their interpretation of reality, Nigerians must form a single community called into solidarity, unity and peace. No wonder, the *First African Synod Working paper* harbors no pretensions when it acknowledges that Islam is an “important but often difficult partner in dialogue.”⁴⁷⁵ Islam is “important” because both Christians and Muslims are faced with the same human existential questions and condition of birth, death, disease, political instability, social injustice and moral depravity. Accordingly, they must engage together in the many problems of Nigeria for true liberation to be actualized. Islam is “a difficult partner” because of its diverse interpretations and some of its adherents’ reluctance to true dialogue. But the present situation of dialogue with Muslims should not diminish the common call of Catholics to the mission of dialogue; rather it calls for its intensification.

The reality is that dialogue has not become an internalized aspect of the average Nigerian Christian. The main reason being not just that not all parts of the country are directly affected by Christian-Muslim clashes, but mostly because the impact interreligious dialogue should have on our vision of Church, parish and Christian life has not materialized. In particular, the dialogue project has not advanced so much from being reserved for few clergy personnel. Such an approach keeps the ordinary believers at a distance, even when it was not intended to be so. However, by locating dialogue in the Church’s mission, it is meant to oblige all Catholics; it is not a matter of choice. This is

⁴⁷⁵ Francis A. Arinze, “An Agenda for Africa,” *The Tablet*, 2/9 April, 1994, 410.

why the church document, “*Dialogue and Mission*”, insists that all members of the Church have a duty to commit to any of the four forms of dialogue.⁴⁷⁶ Thus, it is now clear that the first common task of Christian believers is to make interreligious dialogue an indispensable way of being Church and Christian, in the view that mutual discovery and solidarity in the service of humanity involves real ‘participation and sharing by all.

3.5.1.1. Towards ‘Proactive Christianity

The present experiences of antagonism and clashes in Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria suggest that there is need for the Church to take a more active role in the task of improving interreligious relations. In responding to the challenge of mission to the Muslims, the Christian community seems to have been largely reactionary. This continuing reactive tendency has constantly expressed a fundamental flaw in the proper prevention of, or response to conflicts.

In view of the above disturbances, my proposed model will be clarified to equate our intention. In a general sense, pro-activity gives the idea of being on the forging end of history rather than the receiving end. Being, a “more proactive Christianity” means embodying the creativity, innovation and courage to take on the challenging characteristics of efficient leadership. It indicates being a leading Church that dynamically initiates rather than simply reacts to events. In the context of Christian-Muslim relations, a “more proactive Christianity” envisages a Church that embodies creative leadership; creating and developing strong strategy and attitude that actively

⁴⁷⁶ Dialogue and Mission, no. 24. We can recall four forms of dialogue with Muslims and other non-Christians as daily Christian virtuous living, or cooperating in actions for the good of all, or in theological discovery of Muslims, or in spiritual exchange.

impact relations between Christians and Muslims. A more proactive Nigerian Church seeks to make its own the impetus offered by the Vatican II on interreligious relations by appropriation into its specific histories and struggles for a harmonious Islamic-Christian society. As seen in the first chapter, the last two decades have been a period of troubled relations as demonstrated in cycles of violent sectarian and inter-communal clashes targeted at peoples, places, of worship and businesses; disagreements over OIC, *Sharia*, and other manifestations of Muslim affirmation.

Within this context, being a more proactive Christianity requires that the Catholic Church actively animates an enabling climate in which Christians and Muslims will not only see dialogue as a necessity, but have confidence in it, in resolving their disagreements and in uniting themselves for worthwhile goals. So, rather than enforce, this model envisages a local Catholic Church that seeks to convince and stimulate other Christian Churches and other religious communities. This very attitude is still missing within the Christian community in general, and the Catholic Church in particular, and may constitute part of the reasons for the slow advancement on the goals of interreligious dialogue. We can now consider some dimensions of a more proactive Christianity.

This model of proactive Christianity focuses more on certain trends and attitudes that exist within the Christian fold, and therefore, calls for re-examination. The first concerns the ecclesial structures that promote an encounter of dialogue with other believers, especially in the area of personnel. If dialogue assumes its rightful place in our vision of Church and parish, then, seeking to engage fully committed personnel to guide Catholics (Christians) in the vital necessity and principles of dialogue, will surely become

a priority.⁴⁷⁷ The second model focuses on attitudes, and it has to do with the inability of some Christians to see Islam positively. This is mostly reflected in the disdain with which some Christian Churches treat Muslims and their religion, which is also an embarrassment to the Christian dialogue project. This is why we suggest that a new positive attitude of utilizing a proactive Christianity model could be adopted with respect to Christian-Muslim relations and interreligious dialogue.

3.5.1.2. Adequate awareness of Christians regarding other-Religions

A new Catholic vision of a more proactive Christianity in forging improved relations between Christians and Muslims would seek to invest in ensuring that Christians are adequately aware of their traditions of thinking regarding other religions. The acknowledgment of both the Catholic Church and WCC of the common grounds between Islam and Christianity and their shared dialogue concerns⁴⁷⁸, can only achieve its goal when their respective members become accustomed to this new interreligious *modus vivendi* (way of life). In essence, it is hardly doubted that to dialogue with another's religion presupposes that one has deepened his or her own faith, in order to tackle relevant issues, together with other partners through his or her tradition's vision.

Thus, interreligious education is an imperative. It has to be admitted that there are people who refuse to be involved in dialogue, not because they fail to see it as part of their obligation, but because they are uninformed about Christian-Muslim dialogue. It

⁴⁷⁷ It is evident that in some dioceses in Nigeria, the bishops have fewer staff for interreligious dialogue. Some dioceses do not have trained priests or lay persons for coordination of dialogue with other religions, and in most of these local churches, no concrete solutions to this lack are being worked out. This kind of situation means inadequate disposition for responding to crisis, in a country as volatile as Nigeria.

⁴⁷⁸ Recalling important documents like: Maurice Bormans, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, trans. R. Marston Speight, rev. ed. (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1990); World Council of Churches, "Christian Meeting Muslims: W.C.C. papers on 10 years of Christian-Muslim dialogue (Geneva; World Council of Churches, 1977).

implies that emphasis on our common mission of dialogue is not enough; there is an urgent need to train Christians on their faith and their tradition's view of others. It is necessary to take this task seriously because of the need to balance effectively the ironical gap between the Church leadership and ordinary believers in terms of interactions with the Muslims. By this is meant that, while the church leaders may be the ones involved in formal dialogue, they don't often come in personal contact with ordinary Muslims; but it is the ordinary Christians, who, at most times don't know what dialogue is all about or cannot square dialogue with Muslims that encounter them on daily basis. Kenny rightly underscores this missing element as one of the problems affecting dialogue in Nigeria.

Most ordinary people are defensive about their religion, if only because it marks them off in a social category. Yet when they are in a situation where they must share their lives and work, they quickly make practical accommodations, without any guiding principles, in all sorts of matters affecting religion. Intellectual leaders are often unaware of the day today interaction of Muslims and Christians and the theoretical knowledge they have which could guide the people does not reach them.⁴⁷⁹

Within this consideration, the concern of educating the ordinary Christians in their faith and relations with other religions could be undertaken in the following way.

Firstly, there is need to stimulate ecumenical and interreligious interest through schools. This channel has not been well-utilized since the latter part of the twentieth century when the Nigerian government transferred Church schools into state control, as part of its plan to restrain the Church's influence on the education of young people after the civil war. Ironically, this situation, instead of uniting Christians against what they have criticized as unjust policy, further exacerbated disunity among Christians in Nigeria. In short, it deepened the antagonism that exists among the Churches, particularly Catholicism and

⁴⁷⁹ Kenny, "Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria," 187.

Anglicanism, in relation to the state school system.⁴⁸⁰ Since then, the public classrooms have not been fitting vehicles for particular religious instruction or formation.

However, this situation needs to be reversed in the light of emerging new situations. Many Churches own schools now. There has been also growing interest in schooling among the other faith-communities. In addition, many state governments have, recently, handed over some schools to their original owners and encouraged the Churches' intervention in education. Thus, the Churches could seize the opportunity and foster appropriate education and formation in positive appreciation of people of all religions. Particularly, the Catholic Church would need to make an effort to deliver fitting education in the way it is rooted in the Catholic tradition, inclusive in appreciating all young peoples and making positive difference in their lives.

Secondly, Church leaders would need to renew their strategies for the training of the faithful in interreligious relations and fostering genuine dialogue in the society and in the Church, in the universities and colleges, in religious congregations and in the seminaries.⁴⁸¹ The aim will be to instill in the young people and those who also contribute to the religious formation of others, the message of co-existence and friendly relations among religious peoples. It will continue to be matters of interreligious concern to have within the Christian fold, those who cannot square meeting or working together with Muslims. Renewal of strategies includes knowing how to convince those who feel they cannot face or love the Muslims after their harrowed experience of religious violence. In this case, it may need to be firmly announced that even the future depends on improved

⁴⁸⁰ Ozigboh, *Igbo Catholicism*, 82–113.

⁴⁸¹ Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, *Catholic Diary & Directory 2004* (Iperu-Remo: The Ambassador Publications, 2004)

relations rather than on indifference or resentment of dialogue. This is why it is crucial that the Church's firm belief about interreligious relations be emphasized and transmitted through the pulpit, religious instructions in schools, catechism classes, and other means of evangelization.⁴⁸²

In essence, the foregoing presents argument for the challenge of creative formation of ordinary Christians in their own faith and those of others in view of an informed dialogue encounter. Particularly among Catholics, encouraging such vision of informed participation of all the baptized in the mission of dialogue, that could be a vital way to discourage the persisting "passing the buck to the clergy" mentality. There is the need to inform the Catholic faithful properly in their own faith in order to equip them to engage in effective dialogue with members of other Christian Churches and those of other faiths.⁴⁸³ Indeed, Christians are to help one another to appreciate adequately the new understanding of other religions and walk in the new light of genuine dialogue with Muslims. This task needs to be seriously undertaken. That is an ecumenical task.

3.5.1.3. Unity within the Christian Community a Concern

This new ecumenical model lays stress on the important role of a united Christian attitude to Christian-Muslim relations. The critical assessment of the current religious situation in Nigeria has revealed that progress in interreligious relations depends, to a large measure, on the ability of diverse Christian to unite in their attitude towards adherents of other religions, particularly the Muslims. The idea of the vital necessity of

⁴⁸² For instance, Theophilus Chukwulete, Edith N. Obidike and Alphonsus N. Okonkwo, *The Quiz Book: What Do You Know About Our Diocese, the Bishop and His Teachings* (Enugu: Snaap Press Nigeria Limited, 2006), 31.

⁴⁸³ Browne, Africa Faith and Justice Network, and African Synod, *The African Synod*, 52.

ecumenical unity for interreligious relations, could be understood from the sense of togetherness expressed by the Igbo people of South-East Nigeria in the phrase “*Igwe bu ike*”, is translated into English to denote that “unity is strength.” It seems that it is in the best interest of the Christian fold that Churches pursue a specifically positive attitude of openness to dialogue in relations with the Muslims and other communities. This can only be made possible through commitment to the Muslims and other communities for Ecumenism, as the Vatican II and successive multi-lateral dialogues suggests. Christians could put their dividedness behind them, and pursue a common attitude.

What is this united attitude? The First African Synod, in its concern for dialogue, proposes that “openness to dialogue is the Christian’s attitude inside the community as well as with other believers and with men and women of good will.”⁴⁸⁴ After expressing concern for dialogue first within the Church as the place where Catholics cultivate the spirit of dialogue, the synod summons Catholics to:

develop an ecumenical dialogue with all their baptized brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations, in order that the unity for which Christ prayed may be achieved, and in order that their service to the peoples of the Continent may make the gospel more credible in the eyes of those who are searching for God.⁴⁸⁵

It is within this context of promotion of intra-Christian (ecumenical) dialogue that the Synod extends the challenge to all Christians to take seriously dialogue with adherents of Islam⁴⁸⁶ and African traditional religions, in which the Spirit of truth is at work.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁴ Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Africa, *Elenchus Finalis Propositio* 38, cited in John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Ecclesia in Africa* (Kenya: Paulines Publication Africa, 1995)., no. 65. Here after referred to as EIA.

⁴⁸⁵ Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Africa, Propositio 40, cited in ELA, no. 65.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid. Propositio, 60, cited in ELA, no. 66.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid. Propositio, 42, cited in ELA, no. 67.

The simple fact is that the Synod Assembly, sadly, discovered that the ecumenical movement has not been a great success in Africa.⁴⁸⁸ As previously discussed, the history of this movement in Nigeria lacks the much-needed progress and cohesion. The Anglican-Methodist-Protestant-Catholic dialogue is still being worked out.⁴⁸⁹ It is known that the ecumenical initiative that brings together the considerable diversity of the Nigerian Christian community is the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). But, the CAN's ecumenical character has been persistently flawed by intra-Christian rivalry and the daily rise of new sects, which, rather than endorse collective effort towards unity, "consolidates divisions."⁴⁹⁰ The Church in Nigeria aptly describes the current ecumenical problem as:

Lack of charity and humility has characterized the relation between Christian Churches whose pre-occupations have been the winning of converts. In this atmosphere of mutual disrespect, suspicion, dishonesty and ignorance, actual areas of unity are forgotten while imagined areas of differences are made bigger than the reality.⁴⁹¹

Within this context, it is still necessary to ask: Shall the Church simply surrender to the spirit of discord? The suggested response is: "no". In this regard, Cardinal Francis Arinze was persistently calling for proactive measures. He argued that the Catholic Church has to find ways of engaging the members of the independent Churches and sects in collaboration and "convincing them of the universality of the church."⁴⁹² Here, Cardinal Arinze seeks to awaken the Catholic Church to its challenge to be proactive in

⁴⁸⁸ John Onaiyekan, "The African Synod: Ten Years Later," (Warri: unpublished paper presented on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of Wari Diocese, Warri, Nigeria, 2004)

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid. Cf. Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, *The church in Nigeria*, no. 204.

⁴⁹⁰ Onaiyekan, "The African Synod. Ten Years later."

⁴⁹¹ Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, *The Church in Nigeria*, no. 204.

⁴⁹² Arinze, "An Agenda for Africa," 411.

ecumenical matters, based on his conviction that the challenge faced by the Christian mission demands that ecumenism must move on.

In the same vein, Anthony Akinwale observes that, often times, the real character of ecumenism is not well understood. Some Christians tend to believe that, it is all about teaming up to control political power or what he calls “political consensus”.⁴⁹³ He proposes that Christians should always bear in mind that ecumenism is concerned with deep conversion and striving, on the part of Christians, to realize that “unity” that Christ prayed for. It is the presence of this “unity” (a spiritual character) that animates any common front for socio-political actions or for safeguarding Christian interest. Within this perspective, it is clear that a divided Nigerian Christianity will find the task of developing more positive relations with Muslims difficult. The disunity in attitudes to Islam among the Christian Churches obstructs progress in Christian-Muslim relations, and could only be tackled with the right ecumenical programmes that can begin to change mindsets. Thus, as we seek to deepen the Church’s theology of interreligious relations and help Christian and Muslim peoples to turn their backs on religion-motivated violence, commitment to ecumenism is a necessary precondition. A more proactive Christianity would seek to find collaborative and effective ways to confronting exclusivists’ and confrontational attitudes toward other believers. Catherine of Sienna makes us to realize that independence or need for the other is intrinsically human and Christian.

⁴⁹³ Anthony A. Akinwale, “On the Ecumenical Responsibility of Nigerian Theologians,” *Orita* 34 (2002), 138.

The triune God has given “something to one, something else to another, so that each one’s need would be reason to have recourse to the other.”⁴⁹⁴ How therefore, can Christian mission neglect promotion of solidarity among Christians or religion and remain truly Christian? There is a need to approach the challenge of Islam with a united attitude.

3.6. GUIDELINE FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS

Interreligious dialogue needs direction. One of the important ways of ensuring guidance and informed involvement of the clergy and laity in the mission of dialogue is to articulate a directory for interreligious encounter and engagement. The PCID has remained an example in this regard.⁴⁹⁵ This important guideline for dialogue between Christians and Muslims highlights the vital subjects that Christians need to know about Islamic beliefs and practices, in order to be better equipped for dialogue with Muslims.⁴⁹⁶ Guidelines become more useful when they are appropriated at the local level where real dialogue takes place. It seems to us that this initiative is being raised in many other local Churches. In Africa, for instance, the South African Bishop’s Conference (SABC) has published a booklet for both ecumenical dialogue (2003) and interreligious encounters. In its preamble, the prelate states clearly that they intended “to place into the hands of priests and lay faithful, simple and reliable guidelines for dialogue and collaborations

⁴⁹⁴ Cathrine of Sienna, *The Dialogue*, trans, Suzanne Noffke and Guiliana Cavallini (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), no. 148:311.

⁴⁹⁵ This booklet has remained a reference guide for Christian-Muslim dialogue globally and by local appropriation.

⁴⁹⁶ The preface to the English Translation of Borrmans, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, 5.

with people of other religious traditions.”⁴⁹⁷ The religions in question are those that are locally present, and they include African Traditional Religion (ATR), Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism.⁴⁹⁸

At present a guidebook of this nature is lacking in Nigeria, and it is not clear whether serious effort is being made towards designing one. A more proactive Christianity requires such a handbook that clarifies dialogue with Muslims and followers of ATR, with whom Christians have a common journey together. It is hardly contested that to put such a booklet for encounters into the hands of Catholics is a vital element of proactively in matters of interreligious dialogue and collaboration. What could be done is to enlist the service of experts and those involved in interreligious dialogue to prepare a guidebook for all. Concretely, a guidebook on dialogue with Muslims would need to clarify the direction of dialogue; focusing on the shared values of Islam and Christianity, divergences, strands of Islam, mutual perception of Christians and Muslims, principles of dialogue, and areas in which the two religions can cooperate. For greater effectiveness, such a document has to be translated into local languages for easy understanding and communication.

3.6.1. Discovering partnership in Islam

The work of peaceful co-existence is not the work of Christians alone. It needs committed partners in Islam, who working together with Christians, will promote more positive relations, and render radical Islam unarmed. It has also become apparent that the root of the Muslim in -fighting is ideological; the divided ideologies in Islam are

⁴⁹⁷ South African bishops’ Conference, “Catholic Guidelines and Theological basis for Dialogue and Cooperation with other Religious Traditions,” (n.d): 5.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 23.

competing for influence. It means that Christian-Muslim dialogue has to focus equally on working closely with moderates within the Muslim community to tackle the ideologies that inspire “Jihadism”, Islamism and anti-Christianity, towards achieving a harmonious society.

These moderates can be identified as those members of Muslim community (individuals or groups), who work in a proven manner, to develop an Islamic case for Christian-Muslim co-existence, dialogue and cooperation. Such is the appeal of moderate Islam and in it, a new vista is being presented about Islam, different from its intolerant image. Thus, it has been made clear that Islam in Nigeria has in the past decades been competing with Muslim ideologies across the Muslim world. The situation is that while a number of Muslim organizations and clerics work to support the values of religious tolerance and peace, their moderate voices are often overshadowed by extremists. The *Wahhabi*-dominated Saudi state has provided support to some Sunni extremists that attacked both Christians and fellow Muslims. This was true of Gumi’s Izala puritanical group. The Iranian influence among *el-Zakzaky’s* ‘Shi’ite extremists has remained an inspiration for violent opposition to Nigeria’s secularity.⁴⁹⁹ Apart from peace spoiling Muslim groups, Christians nonetheless have potential partners among Nigerian Muslims. The Sufi fraternities represented by the orthodox Muslim leaders for instance, despite *Wahhabi*-backed efforts to discredit them, still offer a constructive voice of reason, especially when tensions run high. They may have often lacked the will power to tackle political Islam, but they try to work together with their Christian counterpart to preach a

⁴⁹⁹ Quinn and Quinn, *Pride, Faith, and Fear*, 44–46.

moderate and more tolerant Islam, as well as mediate peace between Christians and Muslims.

In the last few decades, two Muslim clerics, Muhammad N. Ashafa and Muhammad Sani Isah of the Inter-faith Mediation Center, Kaduna, have been lauded for peacemaking. Both men have been pushing their moderate views through practical engagements in resolving conflicts, despite the fact that their message has often been neglected. Such supporters need to be brought into more strategic and fruitful partnership in talking to all Muslim sides. As clerics committed to interfaith harmony, there is the view that both can positively influence the Muslim fanatical circles, having witnessed unparalleled access to those most directly involved in violence clashes.⁵⁰⁰ Another Muslim organization that is calling for a moderate vision of Islam is the “*Nasrul-lahi-il-fathi*” society or NASFAT, the fastest growing Muslim organization in Nigeria today. They seek to promote the spiritual and ethical values of Islamic worship, morality, peace and justice. Though NASFAT has often been overlooked, it may be a potential partner in actualizing improved relations between Christians and Muslims. Subsequently, many other voices of reason abound among Muslim intellectuals and clerics in Nigeria who solicit for a change in mindset through which Muslims would be able to reconcile their faith in modern times. Therefore, finding partners in these groups and individuals may be useful in the cause of dialogue and cooperation in Nigeria.

3.6.2. The Different levels of Dialogue in Nigeria

⁵⁰⁰ The personal account of Muhammad Ashafa and James Wuye in their book; “As former militant youth leaders, they have unparalleled access to those most directly involved in violence and local fighting.” Muhammad Ashafa and James Wuye, “Warriors and Brothers,” in *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution*, ed. David Little (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press 2007), 268-269.

The broad sense of the question in this section is: What are the different levels at which dialogue must take place in Nigeria? To be commonly addressed, dialogue has to come down to the level of religious and non-religious concerns. Specifically, dialogue among religious communities, especially in both its ecumenical and interreligious levels, is indispensable. It is also needed in the area of inter-ethnic relations, focusing on the political and socio-economic crisis. These levels of these crises call for the religious and political communities to take on the responsibility of dialogue, in order to discover mutual understanding and the path to a just society.

3.6.2.1. Ecumenical Dialogue

Ecumenical dialogue is important in Nigeria but how to overcome the obstacles to its course of unity is the question. How can the Nigerian Churches transcend the limits of differences, and promote purposeful ecumenical dialogue and cooperation? At this material time, it requires increasing the momentum of ecumenical enthusiasm by fostering serious commitment on the part of the Churches that will promote Christian togetherness at the present stage of ecumenical relations towards unity. Building communal unity and working together are necessary for all.

Nigerian Churches can get their local ecumenical experience by drawing in dialogue partners more closely as is possible. There should be new emphasis on personal relationships as a necessary determinant of ecumenical relations, aware that without it, formal dialogue remains ineffective. Over the years, there has been a deep-seated separation of hearts in many families, brought about by the intense exclusivism that has characterized the competition for souls involving the Catholic and Protestant

missionaries, especially of the Church Missionary Society (CMS).⁵⁰¹ The legacy of denominational antagonism is still persisting, and its force, sometimes, seems to over-ride family affections. Fostering personal relationships can take the form of encouraging visits during feasts and attendance to the funeral services of other communities, holding an annual week of prayer commonly at different Churches on rotational basis, and organizing football matches between Church groups. These friendly contacts could become great ways of building bridges.

The essence of these initiatives is to connect Ecumenism to the grassroots, taking fresh emphasis at homes, where the sense of Christian unity will be passed from parents to children. Since sectarianism begins in the family and is retained there, the ecumenical structures that are already in place at different levels should engage the ordinary people so that ideas will flow downwards as they flow upwards. Concretely, emphasis on anti-bigotry lessons, inter-denominational friendships, and respect for difference, as well as inter-Church meetings that promote common Bible study, spiritual exchanges, discussions on our common traditions and existing differences, and cooperation in social concerns could enable a change of mindsets and ecumenical interest, as well as build bridges and promote togetherness. There has to be greater emphasis on a sincere commitment toward full unity. It seems to us that John Maloney is correct when he argued against the position on exclusion of intercommunion in the present stage of ecumenism reiterated by the encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*: “All our human efforts

⁵⁰¹ Much has been written about the competitive motivation of the Missionary enterprise. For example, C.A. Ebelebe’s evaluation of this subject seems, to us, correct and fair. See Charles A. Ebelebe, “Irish Spiritan Missionary Enterprise in Igboland-a Critical Assessment,” *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology* 19 (2007): 70. Whatever, the outcome of such studies, it is clear that the presence of competition motivated the level of success recorded by both Catholic and Protestant missions, as well as perpetuating the continuing antagonism existing between Catholics and Protestants, especially in the Igbo mission.

at building the community which God has in mind are ultimately doomed to failure unless they keep returning to that God-given source of unity which is found only in God's gift in the sacraments."⁵⁰²

This view is helpful for commitment to genuine ecumenical goals. As Churches reach out in welcome to each other and grow in sharing faith together, they have to be motivated to renew their commitment to unity, bearing in mind that unity is much more than fostering togetherness.

3.6.2.2. Dialogue among Religious Traditions

For the main religious communities in Nigeria, Muslims, Christians and African traditional religionists- respectful dialogue cannot be a temporary means, existing as long as social life is disrupted by religious extremism. Rather, it has to assume its place as an integral part of their variant religious missions. The Church's invitation to the four forms of dialogue is open to all Christ's faithful and should be understood by Nigerian Catholics as a call to dialogue on common life, shared by Christians, Muslims and members of ATR. It is this enthusiasm for common life that can stimulate concerted action for the benefit of all and mutual exchange of doctrine and life.

Of course, real and many differences abound between Islam, Christianity and African traditionalists. Nonetheless they are not reasons for exclusions, but as Vatican II affirm, are motivations for "sincere respect".⁵⁰³ These religions also share accumulated wisdom on the sanctity of life, in keeping with the moral principle that "good must be

⁵⁰² John Maloney, "Intercommunion," *Priests and People* 18, no. 7 (2004), 275.

⁵⁰³ *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2. John Onaiyekan shares this view, as he expresses his conviction that Christians and Muslims in Nigeria must respect their differences, while forging bonds of togetherness based on their common nationality. See his "Muslims and Christians in Nigeria: The imperatives of dialogue," 283.

done and evil avoided”. By means of interreligious dialogue, each tradition contributes these spiritual and moral resources helpful for the common good. More particularly, the Bible and Quran have both “separatist” and “convergent” modes of discourse, and the former have been used to justify violence and exclusion of others. The meeting of Christians and Muslims in dialogue discourages the continuation of manipulation of such passages for other self-determined values, and emphasis the need for contextual reading of the sources of faith. It enables dialogue partners to harness those creative resources that build up practical relationships with other communities and stimulates love towards those outside one’s own religious circle. This is why believers in both traditions should not learn about each other from hostile sources.

The appeal of such interreligious collaboration is that respective believers may, thus, realize how much they need others, how much they need to learn, and how much they need to collaborate in order to address the issues that affect societies. Since religious communities are stronger when together than when separated, Nigerian Christians and Muslims need to see the challenge to base their dialogue on what unites them, namely, the joy, hope and anguish of Nigerian peoples, as both a shared responsibility and a way to being stronger together. Such a united stand will also fortify Christians and Muslims against extremism. To win the hearts and minds of those Muslims and Christians with combative mindsets, the mission of dialogue cannot but be proactive. While it is certain that this task cannot be an easy one, there is the need to confront the difficulties with love towards ensuring that fresh understanding and cooperation become an integral part of lives in the communities and neighborhoods. It is important that, at both ecumenical and interreligious levels, the attitude of dialogue and cooperation should be found, in addition

to books, in art, theatre, folklore, songs, in the liturgy, and all other means that help to spread friendship among believers.

3.6.2.3. *Inter-Ethnic Dialogue*

A purposeful Christian-Muslim dialogue depends also on the commitment of the government to addressing the urgent task of fostering dialogue in the extremely tense area of ethnic relations, as part of its immediate political task. It has been clearly argued in this work that, in Nigeria, questions of ethnic and religious concerns are so interlocked that both areas must be addressed in any purposeful solution to Christian-Muslim relations. Indeed, as ethnicity and religion are “the basis of identity and common action,”⁵⁰⁴ discriminatory practices and ideological differences based on them, have caused conflicts. Not surprisingly, the inter-ethnic cleavages over land and political advantages that have led to violence, bloodshed and wars have been portrayed as religious crises.

These inter-ethnic conflicts are mainly crises of inequity, and are exacerbated by experiences of colonialism, ethnic politics, the civil war (1966-70) and military dictatorships that are retained in peoples’ memory. Arguably, the current rise of ethnic militias, notably Ralph Uwazurike’s group named “Mobilization for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra” (MASSOB), and its counterpart, the Odua People’s Congress (OPC), led by Fasheun are political expressions that are directly rooted in ethnic discontents.⁵⁰⁵ Ethnic dialogue in Nigeria’s context, therefore, would mean a constructive engagement of all ethnic groups in a spirit of give and take towards mutual

⁵⁰⁴ Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria. *The Church in Nigeria*, 21

⁵⁰⁵ For the case of the MASSOB and the feeling of deprivation of the ethnic Igbo peoples, see Jude Uwalaka, *The Struggle for an Inclusive Nigeria*, 119–136.

understanding and development. The proper forum for such dialogue is a National Conference. A demand for such was yielded in the convening of national political reforms, in 2005, by President Obasanjo. In the aftermath of the conference, inter-ethnic and interreligious hostility and political conflicts still prevailed, because the national conference failed to address sincerely the structural origins of the conflict.

There is a need for an honest national conference that will address the causes of conflict, eradicate every constitutional ambiguity, and work out a fair basis for common life to which the various compositions in Nigeria will commit to. Examples of such political dialogue could give confidence to aggrieved groups or give a hearing to the views of communities in conflict. It will also search for specific just solutions that, among others, give the marginalized a sense of national or state belonging. Since injustice is not resolved in an atmosphere of confrontations, the positive response of political dialogue of ethnic diversity may be the only constructive way out. Further, it may be that what may have caused ethnic nationalism in Nigeria is the desire for separate existence, respect and sense of belonging.

If this is the case, then calls for self-examination of conscience on the part of the mainstream ethnic groups on how they treat the smaller ones, as well as how these pose a challenge to the political will, are essential to reform the imbalances. For example, the ethnic Taroks' attack on their neighboring Hausa/Fulani, in 2004, was meant to be a protest against the way the latter have overused the 'Yelwa-Shendam' for their own advantage, dispossessing the former politically and economically. This is only one instance of the levels of disparities which marginalized Nigerian ethnic peoples are made to face. Thus, the political community has a task and a responsibility to respond

positively to the challenge of ethnic dialogue among Nigerian peoples. It involves engaging all the ethnic groups in candid discourse towards fostering a true plural order, in which the nation's diversity is appreciated and harnessed into rich fruits for all. This true plural context can only be achieved in a new social order, in which all persons, irrespective of their religious or ethnic affiliations, enjoy equal rights and opportunities, and none is neglected.

Such dialogue may see harmonious co-existence and peaceful management of conflicts become the norm of relations. Once such ethno-political dialogue has taken place, religious groups are better able consolidate its result and hopes, by entering into further dialogue to prevent potential conflicts. Thus, they encourage these new plural and social orders through sustained commitment by bringing their spiritual resources to the quest for just and reconciled communities. Since dialogue is not a once and for all event, but a dynamic process; dialogue as a means of engaging plurality would need to be a way of life for reconciling ethnic, political, social and economic issues in the life of the nation. In essence, honest commitment by government and political leaders to forging a constructive dialogue of ethnic relations could be a guarantor of social equality and foster a culture of inter-ethnic solidarity, as well as a climate for peace among religions. The religious communities, on their own part, would need to support the secular solution by engaging in a dialogue that seeks deeper understanding, healing of divisions and building up the common good for benefit of all.

3.6.2.4. Inter-Ethnic Deprivation: a condition of Social Inequalities

When inter-ethnic dialogue comes down to the level of deprivation of persons or groups in allocation of resources, the objective will be to eradicate the disparity in

political and economic opportunities, access to social services, and marginalization. The feeling of deprivation plays a key role in the formation of religious groups. An American sociologist, Charles Glock, defined deprivation as “any and all of the ways that an individual or group may be, or feel, disadvantaged in comparison either to other individuals or groups or to an internalized set of standards.”⁵⁰⁶ Individuals or groups can be subjected to five types of deprivation:

It could be *economic*, when deprivation originates from unequal distribution of income and limited access to necessities of life; *social*, when rooted in the inequalities in distribution of desirable attributes; *organimistic*, in the case of those who, in relation to others, do not enjoy the mental or physical health; *ethical*, when a person can no longer realize meaningful living in the dominant values of the society (causing a desire for one’s acceptable ethical prescriptions); and *psychic*, a result of unresolved social deprivation.⁵⁰⁷

In the condition of deprivation as mentioned above, the disadvantaged are driven by the desire to overcome the resultant suffering. It is primarily the struggle to overcome some of those deprivations that leads to social conflict and may ultimately lead to the formation of a new social or religious group.⁵⁰⁸

In the Nigerian context, it is now clear that in the condition of social inequalities most disadvantaged people become vulnerable to a construction of religion or ethnic identity that is intolerant of those outside it. This is true, not only in the growing tension between Muslims and non-Muslims, Hausa-Fulani Muslims and other Muslims, but also between the so called “ethnic indigenes” and ethnic settlers” (strangers). It is also

⁵⁰⁶ Glock, University of California, and Survey Research Center, *The Role of Deprivation in the Origin and Evolution of Religious Groups.*, 27.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 27–29.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 27. For Glock, deprivation is the “necessary pre-condition”, although not the “sufficient condition”, for it will also require other conditions such as: shared deprivation, no sign of any alternative institutional arrangement for resolution of deprivation and a charismatic leader with new ideas for overcoming the deprivation. In this context, religion serves to compensate for deprivation, not necessarily to eliminate the causes of it.

evident in the continuous growth of fundamentalist strands of Islam and Christianity. Yet, using religion as an excuse for violent behavior is, apparently, misguided, because what the alienated largely need is essentially political solution, and religion cannot presume to satisfy it in full. To this end, the government needs to realize that people want to see an end to their deprivation and marginalization. It means that the secular authority could use a dialogue forum of all ethnic groups in Nigeria to address the crises that originate from the unjust structures that affect the way resources and services are disproportionately accessed towards building just social structures for solidarity among Nigeria's diversity.

3.6.2.5. Just Structure as a Condition of Just Society

Just structures are the basic value of social co-existence, for without them, it is impossible to entrench lasting peace and social harmony. However, it is observed that the frameworks through which people think and act are through just social structures (institutions and unjust historical structures of inequalities, (seen as the destruction of freedom).⁵⁰⁹ No one could doubt that the marginalization of groups, greed and corruption have characterized political governance in Nigeria and can hardly be separated from the impacts of historical and existing social structures.⁵¹⁰

In Ricoeur's⁵¹¹ idea, rectifying this unjust social order will involve, the establishment of just structures and institutions as a guarantor of equal opportunities and protection for all members of the society and true freedom of persons. Just structures

⁵⁰⁹ Paul Ricoeur, "The Problem of the Foundation of Moral Philosophy," in the *Foundation and Application of Moral Philosophy: Ricoeur's Ethical Order*, ed. H.J. Opdebeeck (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 14.

⁵¹⁰ In Ricoeur's perspective, this would include the historical forces of slavery, colonialism, war, globalization, and indeed, all structures of inequality whose effects can influence social practice.

⁵¹¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans Kathleen Blamey (Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 180-181. His theoretical view on social settings argues firmly for the imperatives of just social structure, by three moments of freedom.

require that politicians live above personal interest, and commit to exemplary leadership that seeks to harness all the visions in Nigerian diversity for the benefit of all. This process of dialogue will enable the government to identify the just structures it is necessary to create and the oppressive ones to eliminate, and can bring an opening to just peace. Consideration of redressing injustices and marginalization at all levels of Nigeria's societies, obviously, offers ethical and political consistency with the international demand on the protection of the rights of minorities. Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights legally binds States that ratify to it, a commitment to guaranteeing that the rights and "characteristics" of the ethnic, religious or linguistic minority elements that live alongside the majority population are secured⁵¹²

On the basis of this provision, Article 1(1) of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities clearly states that: "States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity."⁵¹³ The article continues; "states shall adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends."⁵¹⁴ This declaration, thus, guarantees the personal and communal rights of minorities to enjoy their culture, to profess and practice their religion or adapt to free thought and conscience, and demands that they be effectively safeguarded and promoted. Such a vision of equality of all is an impetus to working to overcome all discriminatory practices towards persons or groups in

⁵¹² "Fact Sheet No.18 (Rev.1), Minority Rights, Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights." Available from <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet18rev.1en.pdf>.

⁵¹³ A/Res/48/138. Adopted by the UN General Assembly Resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992, available from <http://www.hri.ca/uninfo/treaties/20.shtml>.

⁵¹⁴ Capotorti and United Nations Centre for Human Rights, *Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities*, 100. Capotorti was the Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

Nigerian societies on the basis of their religious or ethnic identities. It seems that current cases of exclusion of persons or communities, including the official discrimination of non-Muslims in *Shaira* states against the principle of non-discrimination in the human rights laws, stand in contrast with their legitimate rights as *bona fide* citizens of Nigeria. There may not be true peace if the right social order is not entrenched and restorative efforts extended to victims.

As it remains, only dialogue can provide an adequate basis for a common search for a new social order and for meaningful interaction within Nigerian's diversity. By means of dialogue, the solidarity needed among ethnic and religious communities to jointly oppose religiously motivated violence and foster the common good can be achieved.⁵¹⁵ Religions positively contribute to the development of this social order by being a force for solidarity in the society. They do this by advocating for a just and inclusive society, which reaches beyond narrow ethnic and religious interests, and uses all available talents, not discriminating against some. Through mutual understanding and solidarity, they will, not only help one another to resist the attempt by politicians to drum the irrational sentiments of religion and ethnicity in national issues, but also ensure that the state fulfils its task of promoting the common good.

3.6.2.5.1. Specific areas of Christian-Muslim Cooperation

There are many areas in which Christians and Muslims can work together on behalf of humanity. The ones that can be highlighted at this point in period are the concerns for political stability and social work.

⁵¹⁵ The renewed understanding of Vatican 11 ideas of dialogue in Frederick, "Dialogue and Solidarity," 89-97.

3.6.2.5.1.1. Political Stability

The increasing suffering of the majority of Nigerian peoples manifested in the poor standard of living, lack of means for procuring basic education, social services, elementary health, and their resultant scourge of diseases and hunger are inevitable results of Nigeria's corrupt political system. Chinua Achebe, Nigeria's literary writer, 25 years ago, recognized the problem as "a failure of leadership":

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely, a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land and climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, or to the challenge of personal example, which are hallmarks of true leadership.⁵¹⁶

Indeed, it is the plague of bad leadership that has kept this giant of Africa from rising to actualize its potentials. After 54 years of self-rule, Nigeria has remained plagued by corruption,⁵¹⁷ absence of rule of law, economic crisis, insecurity and mismanagement. This situation has remained because personal enrichment, vote rigging and electoral violence are central parts of Nigeria's political system. Not surprisingly, the country failed again in the 2007 General Elections, which were marred by alleged malpractices of intimidations, fraud, use of violence and unfair polls.⁵¹⁸ The fiasco that has characterized the latest elections impels the urgent need for political reforms that will establish conditions for true democracy and elections. They will include an orientation for mental development, a de-emphasis of money driven politics and independence of the electoral

⁵¹⁶ Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, 1.

⁵¹⁷ Y.A. Obaje describes the level of corruption in Nigeria as follows: The epidemic of corruption has reached a lamentable proportion as no area of life is spared. We have made and accepted corruption as a way of life, where tribal interests supersede national goals, where self-interest takes over public concerns, where bribery justifies wrong actions, where legitimate duties are not performed unless there is gratification..."

⁵¹⁸ Information about 2007 Elections are found in Tony Momoh. "The River Bathers," *Sunday Vanguard*, 18 March, 2007, 16. Cf. Kola Animasaun. "Can we ignore the facts," *Sunday vanguard*, 18 March, 2007, 13.

commission, both in its constitution and functioning. Such reforms may prove a good start toward empowering the consolidation of true democratic culture. The fact that politicians fail to serve the common good, but rather are concerned about their private pockets, render the tendency to continuously blame colonial intrusion for Africa's under-development to be poorly conceived. Indeed, it is this putting selfish interest above the common good that has continued to render the post-colonial Nigerian state politically unstable.

This pattern of political uncertainty could be extremely harmful to the future of the already volatile relations between Christians and Muslims, historically and currently. It is, therefore, necessary and important that Christians and Muslims unite in being sustained voices for good administration in all areas of political responsibility. At this stage in the development of Nigeria, we must seek leaders that are broad-minded and those that have the requisite exposure to help them in understanding the value of diversity as well as democracy. Peter Ovat, calls leadership "an institution of service. It is one that demands selfless service, transparent honesty and an exemplary character." He draws from Plato's description of a good leader as "one who must be a well balanced man, who is neither mean nor ungenerous, neither boastful nor cowardly, one who can hardly be difficult to deal with or unjust."⁵¹⁹ Agreeing with the above position Okafor noted that an "effective leadership can sustain democracy without putting it into jeopardy, and only effective leadership is quality leadership. A quality leadership therefore is a leadership of service."⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁹ Ovat Peter, *Ethical Revival in Nigeria*, Lagos: Gogaps Production and Service, 2002, pp.20-24

⁵²⁰ Okafor F, *Africa at the Crossroads: Philosophical Approach to education*, N.Y: vantage press, 1974,pp.74f.

Various forms of leadership systems exist in Africa and Nigeria. In many earlier societies it was the monarchical system, which was hereditary, that provided the community with its leaders, from one generation to another. “In plutocracies, it was the rich barons who selected the wealthiest among them to rule. In aristocracies it was the elite who did the same, trying to sample out those they considered to have the best qualities. It was not open to all, it was not democracy. Many old African societies had the system of gerontocracy that is the rule of the aged.”⁵²¹ It was believed that the oldest had the wisdom of the gods and ancestors and were therefore best suited to rule, either singly or as a council of Elders. In the contemporary Nigerian context, politics shows until recently a consistent bent of the domination of the position of leadership by the Northern section of Nigeria consisting predominantly of Muslims. Biafra lost the 1967-1970 secession war and this swept the Easterners by the wayside of leadership. The West mainly (*Yoruba*) was slow for competing for the country’s leadership. Constitutionally speaking, the top posts of Nigeria are for everyone from any part of country and from any region. This is public’s demand for equal opportunity in the choice of leadership. There was for a long time (1966-1999) the situation of a handover from one northern Muslim to another. This however has stopped. Equal opportunities must be given to all to assume the position of presidency. Hence, the traditional practice of the choice of leaders based either in gerontocracy, monarchy, or hereditary need to end.

Doing so is necessary for the above methods do not give all a chance to participate in leadership. “Worse still, they do not help in the selection of military

⁵²¹ Patrick O Iroegbu and Matthew A Izibili, *Kpim of Democracy Thematic Introduction to Socio-Political Philosophy* (Benin City, Nigeria: Ever-Blessed Publishers, 2004), 141.

intervention in politics in many African nations.”⁵²² For military rule, being dictatorial, violent, unjust, illegitimate and lacking participation of the members is against the spirit and substance of communalism. The ability of the people to change their leader as and when due is the central core of democracy or any other system that will be satisfactory for a people with civil and communal interests. The process of representation must be the one with the system of choice and continuity and that should be given most consideration. Perhaps the challenge in Africa and Nigeria in particular, is to develop a system that is known, practicable and workable to the people. Such a system must be able to have its roots.

3.6.2.5.1.2. Social Work

Social tasks are explained within the Christian meaning of liberation as being concerned with the lives, safety, wholeness and well-being of each individual person within God’s purpose for everybody.⁵²³ Nigerians have the right to decent life, personal dignity and having access to necessities of life, as continuous with their right to personal spiritual development. Islam shares, reasonably, this profound sense of authentic development of the whole person, materially and spiritually.

This divinely rooted anthropological base impels Christians and Muslims to cooperate in social concerns. There are many areas in which joint action could and need to be taken. The first is rebuilding the lives of those devastated or displaced by cycles of violence. The victims need justice and rehabilitation to authentic social life. Christians

⁵²² Ibid., 142.

⁵²³ C.f. *Evangelii Nunciandi*, no. 33; *Populorum Progressio*, no. 21. Indeed, the entire message of Paul VI’s “*Populorum Progressio*” is that true human development attends to the whole person, in hi/her material and spiritual dimensions.

and Muslim leaders could work together to encourage cooperation among religious organizations themselves and between them and their local political authorities to assist them to rebuild their lives. The second is in the area of alleviation of poverty. Many religious organizations are already involved in easing the plight of the poor. Perhaps, the area that merits special attention is support for common poverty alleviation initiatives and anti-poverty measures. Really, it will serve the good of Nigerian peoples if more cooperation is seen in upholding and defending human dignity and rights. This will consist of, not only standing together in raising voices against trends endangering life, justice, peace, and freedom in the affairs of the nation, but also in pointing out the path to these values. Indeed, the challenges that call for concerted action are as vast and as the *Compendium of Catholic Social doctrine of the Church*, points out:

So many needy brothers and sisters are waiting for help, so many who are oppressed are waiting for justice, so many who are unemployed are waiting for respect. ... 'How can it be that even today there are still people dying of hunger? Condemned to illiteracy? Lacking the most basic medical care? Without a roof over their head?...And how can we remain indifferent to the prospect of an ecological crisis which is making vast areas of our planet uninhabitable and hostile to humanity? Or by the problem of peace, so often threatened by the specter of catastrophic wars? Or by contempt for the fundamental human rights of so many people, especially children? (4)⁵²⁴

The third possible area of cooperation between Christians and Muslims is through a practical understanding of apostolate and service to the under-privileged in Nigerian society. A concrete example of such an area is the aged and the aging of the society. As people who had once given their full energy and love for the building of the society, it would be a great service of thanks to their efforts to seek combined ways of improving their conditions as old people. They once helped to build the parish, diocese, the

⁵²⁴ City of Vatican and Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 5.

universal Church, the mosque or even the shrine (depending on their belief-system). Their religious diversity should also be an advantage in old age. That is why they require and deserve the pastoral care of both religions when they become feeble. That is why their joys and sorrows should also be ours.⁵²⁵ They require the regular visit of the pastoral team, headed by the priest or the imam. This service to elders becomes a task in the wake of Christian-Muslim claims to be missionary religions. To undertake this duty rightly places Christian and Muslim leaders in an advantageous position to correct the often misplaced impression that their goal in Nigeria is exploitation and marginalization of the existing culture of hospitality, respect for the human person, and enhancement of the African spirit of communalism. To support this proposition, I will delve into the Biblical and Quranic foundations for the promotion of this seemingly neglected area of theological and interreligious inquiry.

The fourth area in which joint action is needed is empowerment of youths. There is a great need to prevent the abuse or neglect of the vulnerable young people. And more, the religious community could assist them to have stake in the future by being at the forefront of education and promotion of youth skill development projects. Nigeria, has the structures in place to educate and empower the youth to work for peace. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is a good example of youth involvement in the life of the nation. Perhaps the NYSC could serve as a platform for launching a national campaign for peace building at the grassroots by emphasizing education for peace building in the NYSC curriculum. "Education so to speak is the instrument for adorning the different classes of people that make up the state in accordance with their natural endowments."⁵²⁶

⁵²⁵ Flannery A, *Vatican II Document, Gaudium Et Spes*, 1, 1965, x-xi.

⁵²⁶ Obasi, *Historical Introduction to Education in Nigeria*, 121.

The (NYSC) scheme introduced in Nigeria in 1973 by General Yakubu Gowon- led military administration in Nigeria is an idea borrowed from ancient Greek education. The purpose of the NYSC scheme is to create in Nigerian youths the spirit of selfless community service and to foster the sense of oneness and the siblinghood of all Nigerians in spite of socio-cultural and ethnic and religious differences.

Overall, Nigerian youths must remain true and open to their identity; they could begin to share with others the rich traditional resources for peace building and conflict resolution already present in the culture. The existing cultural and religious diversity can be harnessed by the youth to affirm their strength and commitment to peace. This calls for prophetic leadership. In summary then, the main work of peace building is the on-going effort to construct bridges of love, solidarity, mutual co-existence and peace at the grassroots. At this level, the youth of our nation have important roles to play on both the local and global levels.

3.7. THEOLOGICAL/PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Today, in spite of what it seems, conversations are taking place among Muslims, not just at the periphery but within the mainstream. Discussions around religious communities' visions of religion and society (focusing mainly on the way each constructs its self-image), which form the basis of its members' attitudes towards those outside their communities and towards public life, are involving wider concern and multiple voices. This is because of the modern challenges of living the faith in a pluralistic world.

Theological study offers Christian-Muslim relations an important place in Catholic theological studies. The question of fostering theological reflection on the

meaning of “Islamic-Christian Encounter” came up during the First Synod sessions. In his intervention, Bishop Gagnon of the Muslim- dominated Algerian Sahara said:

The very existence of Islam, its vast differences and the number of its faithful (one billion) have not failed to raise serious problems on their own, such as the prophetic character of Muhammad, the place of Islam in the divine plan of salvation. All of that may be thought of as a stimulant to our own theological thinking and to our understanding of mission.⁵²⁷

Apparently, while bishop Gagnon wants the study of Islam and Christian mission to be intensified, several other submissions calls for reflections for the deepening of dialogue. The emphasis is that theologians have to take Christian-Muslim study seriously. A decade after the first synod till now, fresh attentions has been directed towards the “second synod for Africa”, the demand for accelerating theological study and reflection on the Islamic-Christian encounter has become more urgent.

The first reason for such a demand is that, in the religious realm, as much as fruitful encounters are taking place in many parts of Africa, such as Nigeria and Sudan, there persists worrying cases of less-positive relations. Such a situation makes clear, particularly with respect to Nigeria, that the ability to dialogue is not just about convening dialogues but it is about accelerating the result of our dialogue and cooperation. The second reason is that the challenge posed by socio-political problems to all religious communities is becoming very difficult to deal with. These problems are largely associated with the increasing culture of materialism, the erosion of traditional mores, the escalation in the sufferings of Nigerian peoples and the rise of combative religious extremism. In the face of these common challenges facing Christians and Muslims the document *-Pastores Dabo Vobis*-⁵²⁸ that insisted on the theological study of

⁵²⁷ Browne, Africa Faith and Justice Network, and African Synod, *The African Synod*, 157.

⁵²⁸ Catholic Church and Pope (1978-2005 John Paul II), *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 54.

Islam comes to mind. To this end, there is need for commitment to ensuring that the concern for theological study of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations is not undervalued in its many forms. It is expected that Nigerian Church leaders, clergy and religious missionaries, philosophers and theologians will have some knowledge of the fundamental beliefs and practice of Islam. Such tenets are the place of the Quran and the five pillars in Muslim faith, the Church's position on dialogue with Islam, and the Christian-Muslim shared beliefs.

Whereas, theological faculties are not part of the units in Nigerian universities (probably because of Nigeria's secular character), some Churches currently establish their own theological schools.⁵²⁹ Catholic seminaries have proven to be at the lead of theological education of the clergy. Many of them are yet to take seriously the need to teach interreligious dialogue and Christian-Muslim relations. The reason given is normally that Islam does not challenge the Catholic faith in that side of the country, as much as traditional religions do. In as much as there is some truth to this view, mission theology and dialogue are inseparably central to the Vatican II vision of a Church that is open to the world and all people.

At this material time, interreligious dialogue and Christian-Muslim relations seem to be reserved only for priests wishing to specialize in such areas in western institution of learning. The Church mission cannot separate dialogue from its challenges as Terrence Merrigan noted: it could well be that the way mission theology and dialogue is taught in Catholic educational institutes today will determine, in a great measure, the way the

⁵²⁹ Kalu et al., *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria*: Essays in honor of Ogbu U. Kalu, ed. Chima J. Korie and G. Ugo Nwokeji (Lanham-Boulder-New York-Toronto-Oxford: University Press of America, 2005), 146-147.

Catholic faith is to be practiced by future generations of Nigeria. This counts why interreligious dialogue is crucial in Catholic theological learning.

The challenge facing this aspect of theological education in Nigeria is to instill the interreligious mode of life in which Christians remain true to their religion and yet continue to be open to sincere mutual exchange with other religions' perspective of reality. Such an attitude has no room for undermining the self understanding of other religions. Obviously, such objectives demand that greater effort be made to increase the momentum of awareness of theological issues in Christian-Muslim relations among pastors and their co-workers in the diocese, parishes, and houses of formation. Increasing the momentum of familiarity with interreligious issues include not only deepening Christian-Muslim dialogue in its local experience and presenting an undistorted understanding of Islam; it entails also reflections seeking to tackle the problem with which believers and non-believers are grappling. The question of religion and violence and the discordant voice of religion on nation-building demand such attention. The theological enterprise has also to discover those elements in the understanding of indigenous structures that can serve as platforms on which Christians and Muslims can meet and work together. One such is the "family" and the new rediscovery of the Church as the family of God.

3.7.1. The Church as Family of God

The prospect of the metaphor of the "family" in fostering mutual understanding and inter-dependence in Christian-Muslim relations has been well received in the Church locally and globally. However, its full implication is still being developed. Roman Catholicism has conceived of the "family" as a cultural resource that could enable a

theological understanding of the nature of the Church and its mission. The rediscovery of the Church as family of God began in response to the socio-political questions that confronted the First African Synod and the theological impetus of the Church as family realized in the mystery of Christ.

The synod bishops easily adopted this metaphor of Church as family as adequate for the African understanding of Church and mission, because “it emphasizes care for others, solidarity, warmth in relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust.”⁵³⁰ With this in view, the synod underscores that dialogue with Muslims has to emphasize common spiritual and moral values.⁵³¹ The Nigerian bishops have stressed that “the water of baptism is much thicker than the ethnic blood-relationship,” so much so that Christians are “brothers and sisters in a very real sense with all for whom Christ has shed his blood.”⁵³² They insist on the need for education of all “people of God” in this regard. They also taught that the same motivation should inspire a sustained dialogue with Muslims and combining efforts with Muslims for more positive results.⁵³³

This theological approach is presently gaining appreciation in Nigeria.⁵³⁴ There is urgent need for such values that characterize the family in terms such as the spirit of solidarity of brothers and sisters, loving and joyous relationships, promotion of common good, and structure of living together to be promoted theologically. That is part of the

⁵³⁰ Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for *Africa, Elenchus Finalis Propositionum, Propositio* 8; ELA, no. 63.

⁵³¹ Ibid. ELA; no. 66.

⁵³² Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, *Church in Nigeria*, no. 61.

⁵³³ Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 205–207.

⁵³⁴ The Catholic Bishop’s conference of Nigeria identified with this metaphor in the national pastoral Congress held in Ibadan from 11-15 November 2002, under the theme, “The Church in Nigeria; Family of God on Mission.” During its first synod 10 February 2002), the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi, at its inauguration identifies itself as “Family of God” explored the theme, “Living the Faith in the Family of God on Mission in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi.” Some other Dioceses have also appropriated this vision through one ecclesial event or the other.

education urged by the bishops. Theological reflections on African concepts can deepen the dialogical visions of Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. The Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria, for example, perhaps, constitute today's hope of Christian-Muslim co-existence, of mutual tolerance and affection, presenting a case of possible improvement of Christian-Muslim relations through deepening of this cultural resource. Here, families have been real grounds for harmonizing diverse religious identities. They have shared a common journey together towards God and one another in acceptance and respect, such that religious commitments are harmonized with family loyalties, so much so that religion does not divide hearts against house.⁵³⁵ These family values can be deepened through theological reflections, and be rescued from the present danger of erosion due to Nigeria's socio-economic crisis.

3.7.2. Concluding Remarks

From the preceding chapters, it has come to light that since Vatican II, the Catholic Church has remarkably taken the lead in promoting positive relations between Christians and Muslims through dialogue and cooperation. This initiative fosters increasing changes in perceptions of Islam and the Muslims, particularly on the part of the Catholic Church. But it is commonly known that developing mutual exchange between members of the two traditions has not been easy. This is due to a number of factors that have been shown to be based on history and traditions.

⁵³⁵ Among the Yorubas, Islam blended with elements of traditional religions, suitable for the Yoruba multi-religious character. This brand of Islam distinguishes itself from other spheres, such as politics and culture. And as we have suggested earlier, it is in this vision of separation of the religious and other spheres that Islam in the Southwest has both remained tolerant and been victim of popular prejudice of the Northern Muslims as unorthodox.

Nonetheless, Catholic perspectives of Christian-Muslim relations show a commitment to seeing the members of the two religious traditions respect each other, and stimulate each other to work for human well-being. Hence, the central idea is that dialogue and cooperation should characterize the relationship between the Christians and Muslims. Attention should be paid to the values shared by Islam and Christianity, and largely blessed common elements and concerns as the starting point of dialogue and cooperation. Thus, the Catholic Church has given hope to Christian-Muslim relations, based on the progress she has made in this regard. It remains to apply these two major proposals offered towards consolidating constructive relations between them.

The first proposal is a call for a proactive Christianity in Nigeria. This model argues that it is by embodying a proactive Christianity that the Catholic Church can give leadership to a Christian witness of faith that promotes authentic interreligious dialogue as the means to the solidarity among religious communities, needed to build true humanity and progress in Nigeria. The second proposal is on addressing the basic issues of a socio-political nature that confront life in Nigeria (and Africa in general), and which have impacts on Islamic and Christian faiths, the relationship between their adherents and hence call for a theology and practice of interreligious dialogue. Consequently, these two proposals motivates the third which suggests practical proposals for dialogue at different levels, directed towards mutual understanding and concerted action for the good of all. For the promotion of the common good, therefore, there is the need for the religious and political communities to see their respective roles as a way of uniting. It becomes imperative to foster a harmonious co-existence of what Arch-bishop Teissier and John Onaiyekan call the “Islam-Christian” Nigerian society.

Hence, Christians and Muslims have to dig deep into their traditions, and bring what it takes to live with others in peace. Issues of solidarity, accountability and equity are at the heart of Christian social doctrines and Islamic ethics. Christians and Muslims should unite in being sustained voices for good administration in all areas of political responsibility. This initiative has to be followed up in the Churches and mosques through preaching and is to be kept in view by their respective organs for social concern. By constructively engaging each other, they will help one another to be truly committed to their respective religious identities and to a just social order that advance moral values, truth, peace and progress.

CHAPTER FOUR: TOWARDS IMPROVED CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN NIGERIA

INTRODUCTION

A hopeful feature for Christians and Muslims to close the book on the shared “conflictual” past and work for a more inclusive, peaceful and just world is in progress. Though effort has been slow, many Christians and Muslims circles strive actively to engage in developing the spiritual and ethical values of their traditions destined towards formulating more positive patterns of relations in the societies in which they live.

At this point in time, the broad sense of the questions raised for the two traditions are : (1) what could be the way out of the tense and conflictual Christian-Muslim situation? (2) How do Christians and Muslims need to understand their respective traditions towards fruitful cooperation in a pluralistic Nigerian society? To answer these questions, it is necessary to argue two proposals that actually express the position of this work which are presented here in two sections. The first section in this chapter suggests the need for a new vision of religion and society in Islam in Nigeria for a harmonious Christian-Muslim society. In pursuing this quest, it examines the Islamic visions of Khan on religion and society and the challenges and contributions they hold out for Nigerian Muslim adherents towards living alongside other groups in peace. The second section argues that the Church’s mission has to emphasize the imperative of interreligious dialogue, fostering the solidarity needed among Christians and Muslims to build a better society for all.

SECTION A: 4.1.THE ISLAMIC VISION OF KHAN

In pursuing a new vision of society in Islam in Nigeria, Khan's vision of Islam as it contributes to actual social realities in India can be instructive. Nigerian Muslims may draw inspiration from his theology for authentic pluralistic living. Khan is a Muslim modernist thinker of Indian origin. He embarked upon a deeper search for meaning and relevance of Islam in today's world. He has also written extensively as enumerated below. Though his immediate focus is India, his presentation of Islam is relevant beyond his own context, since he seeks to reconcile the Islamic faith and with a modern way of life in a globalized world.⁵³⁶ Khan pleads for a de-emphasis of political Islam, offers new insights on an Islamic vision of religion and society, and articulates how Muslims can contribute to the formation of authentic Islam.

Khan implores his readers to give Islam a living status and re-applies the Quran and prophetic tradition to challenges Muslim face in the contemporary society. He conceives this path as a rediscovery of the spiritual and ethical core of Islam. His central idea is that Islam is essentially the worship of God and an invitation to the transcendental values of peace, truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom. "It is not a political ideology."⁵³⁷ He emphasizes, among other things, that Muslims need to commit to respectful and

⁵³⁶ Omar, "Rethinking Islam." What does Khan mean by modernity? There is no explicit definition of "modernity" or modern times" in his writings. But It seems he uses these concepts in terms of a contemporary Western understanding of the term that refers to universal human values and principles, such as human rights, individual freedom, democracy, equality and non-discrimination. Needless to say, the word "modernity" has remained problematic to Muslim sensitivities, and has been subject of many debates. Yet, it is apparent that Khan finds this notion acceptable and wants Muslims to come to terms with its reality.

⁵³⁷ Omar, *Rethinking Islam*, 153.

harmonious interreligious co-existence and interpretation of the Sharia. His modernist vision opens a new vista to understanding Islam as a religion of peace, moderation and tolerance.

In its theological analysis of Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria, Khan's work especially recognizes "the need to recognize and enhance the 'otherness' of the other in a spirit of 'I-- Thou' relationship. This is very basic in the attainment of mutual co-existence in a pluralistic society like Nigeria especially in the 21st century."⁵³⁸

4.1.1. Early Life and Works of Khan

Khan was born in 1925 at Badharia, near Azamgarh, in the former Eastern united provinces, now the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.⁵³⁹ Under the patronage of his uncle, Sufi Hamid Majid Khan he partook in Islamic traditional education at Madrasat-ul Islam, in Azamgarh, and graduated in 1944.⁵⁴⁰ However, the apparent poverty of the traditional vision of Islam in addressing the modern challenges of life in a pluralistic society such as India motivated Khan to begin to work to render Islamic thought and culture anew.

The relevance of this point is that it helps us to understand the context under which Khan's Islamic ideas developed, and to appreciate his insistence on reinterpreting Islam for a modern situation. In reviewing his works, we can easily see that many of his writings (written in Urdu and published mostly in India) have focused on reconnecting to the essentials of Islam as determinant of other dimensions. This concern has resulted in

⁵³⁸ Nwanaju, *Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria*, 407.

⁵³⁹ For biographical notes on Khan, see Sikand, "Peace, Dialogue and Da'wa," 33–35. Troll, "A Significant Voice of Contemporary Islam," 3-5.

⁵⁴⁰ Omar, "Islam and the other: The ideal Vision of Khan," 426; Sikand, "Peace, Dialogue and Da'wa," 33.

reflections on subjects such as the principle of separation of religion from politics, pluralism, and interreligious relations and peace. Some of Khan's works have been translated into English, Arabic and Hindi languages, and are widely read beyond the Indian Subcontinent. In 1955, Khan authored his first work, *Naye Ahd Ke Darwaze (On the Threshold of a New Era)* in Urdu; published *Madhhabaur Jadid calanji* in 1964, and its translation in Arabic, *Al-Islam yatahaddi*, in 1970, and in English, *Islam and Modern Challenges*, in 1985. The Arabic version reportedly became a best-seller in the Arab world, and has been included in university curricula in not less than six Arab countries.⁵⁴¹

Khan has also published other vital works, including the two volume Urdu commentary on the Quran, *Tadhkir al-Quran* (1985); *Fikr-I Islami: afkar-I Islami ki tashrih* (1996). He has also published, among other recent works, *Islam Rediscovered: Discovering Islam from its Original Sources* (2001); and *The Ideology of Peace; Towards a Culture of Peace* (2003). Khan has also been involved in editing periodicals. He edited the weekly magazine, *Al-jami'at*, from 1965-1975. In September 1976, he established the Islamic (Research) Centre in New Delhi, India, and launched the Urdu monthly journal, *Al-Risala*, in the next month. *Al-Risala*, which began to publish its English and Hindi versions since 1984 and 1990 respectively, has mostly served to publish Khan's ideas. He has also contributed to several national and international journals and periodicals. His active contributions in promoting peace and interfaith harmony in India since 1990s rest on his version of religions as embodiments of peace.

In one of his main works on peace, he asserts; "Indeed, peace is the essence of all religions, the reason being that the objectives of religion can never be fulfilled without

⁵⁴¹ Cf. Troll, "A Significant voice of Contemporary Islam," 4. Cf. Sik and, "Peace, Dialogue and Da'wa," 34.ersda

peace.⁵⁴² Thus, before we delve into Khan's central ideas, it is of crucial importance to examine the principles that constitutes his approach to the Quran and Hadith

4.1.1.1. Modernists' Approach to Islamic Sources

Most modern thinkers engage in critical approaches to Islamic canonical sources, with the conviction that it is the way to keep the faith alive and make it responsive to contemporary times. It is by this reasoning that they criticize both the defenders of conservative interpretations of Islam and fundamentalist beliefs and their unwillingness to engage modernity, thereby denying Muslim societies of modern benefits.

The spiritual approaches to Islam constitute a unique contribution within this modern outlook. Khan's spiritual approach is both traditional and modern, in that it seeks to rediscover and "re-explain" the orthodox teaching of Islam in a modern setting. Khan's work reaches towards a 'rediscovered' Islam that is relevant in today's religiously plural world in an Islam that balances tradition and modernity. Perhaps, the most distinctive feature of Khan's oeuvre lies in its claim to express the original meaning of Islam from the root of Quran as a "challenge"; that is the mystical, existential dimension of faith. According to Emilio Platti, it is on this fundamental level of Islam that interreligious relation can seek a point of departure, and the reinterpretation of the faith can be freely pursued.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴² Khān, *Islam and Peace*, 197. Khan, *The ideology of Peace: Towards a Culture of peace* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2003), 87. In other words, whatever the dominant image given of Islam by Muslims, Islam in its original form is a peaceful religion. This seems to be the impression Khan is offering here.

⁵⁴³ Emilio Platti, "Islam: Dialogue or Confrontation?," *Philippiniana Sacra* 37, no. 111 (2002), 494.

Generally modern Muslim thinkers⁵⁴⁴; use and defend the principle of *ijtihad* (independent judgment) as a vital tool for reinterpreting Islamic thought in our day. This involves the use of hermeneutics, comparison of various systems of meanings, history, and critical principles in conceptualizing religions. This exercise is proposed to offer Islam a rational explanation and sustain it as an open discourse, one that is not closed to new ideas and ways of thinking. This privileging of *ijtihad*, as Mar Gregorios observes, allows modernist Muslims to freely question some of the traditional views of Islam, without violating its fundamental principles.⁵⁴⁵

This is perhaps, the reason some followers of this trend represent a more open view of religion, and its relations to the state, human rights, and pluralism.⁵⁴⁶

The fact that the modernist Muslim thinkers are concerned about addressing these contemporary issues suggests a very significant shift in Muslim thinking about the role of religion in modern society and especially in encouraging reconciliation between different faith traditions. Our contemporary pluralistic context is increasingly more challenging and, accordingly, people are more likely to value a faith that can be applied to new life-situations. The relevance of this point is seen in the fact that the attempts by some Muslim traditionalists and revivalists to promote a “closed” religiosity, seems to be part of the crisis in which the Muslim community has found itself.

⁵⁴⁴ The sense of modernism felt in the sphere of Christian theology witnessed the tendency to subject traditional matters of religious beliefs to the modern criterion of thought. This tendency blossomed in the 18th century European Enlightenment, which emphasized reason and independence against tradition. See Paolos Mar Gregorios, “Liberalism and Fundamentalism in Islam and Christianity,” 4-5 he explains the targeted external authorities to include religion or revelation, metaphysics, and tradition. See Muhammad Talbi, “Unavoidable Dialogue in a Pluralist World: A personal Account,” Encounters 1 (1995), 55-69.

⁵⁴⁵ Gregorios, “Liberalism and Fundamentalism in Islam and Christianity,” 9.

⁵⁴⁶ This is clear in Muhammad Talbi’s approach, who takes an open, inclusive notion of salvation in relation to non-Muslims, See Muhammad Talbi, “Unavoidable Dialogue in a Pluralistic World: A personal Account,” Encounters 1(1995): 55-69. This is just to indicate the significant differences between his modernist thinking and fundamentalist or traditional position but not to approve Talbi’s thesis.

It is often easily concluded that Islam and modernity cannot agree. To many, this claim is without rigorous proof. They see the current situation not in terms of incompatibility between Islam and modernity, but rather as a challenge of adapting Islam to the modern world.

Emilio Platti and John L Exposito represent this perspective. Platti, seeks to provide new momentum for rediscovering the Islamic challenge,⁵⁴⁷ while Exposito insists that “the compatibility of Islam and modernity itself is not the issue... The debate is on the direction, method, and degree of change required.”⁵⁴⁸ What can be affirmed in this context, therefore, is that the Islamic Liberalists’ project deserves attention and must be viewed as religious activity that seeks to revitalize Islam. The work of Khan can be seen within this vein. What follows, then focuses on Khan’s view of his spiritual and hermeneutical approaches to the tradition.

4.1.1.2. Khan’s Approach to Islamic Sources

Khan has argued that a new vision of Islamic faith can be found through a reexamination of its foundational sources. The corpus of the Quran and the *Hadith* (Traditions of the Prophet) constitute the basic sources for his re-interpretation of Islam. He sparingly refers to medieval traditional, Quranic interpretations (*tafsir*), and jurisprudence and legal scholarship (*fiqh*), because he believes that these commentaries are not free from human and historical limitations of the particular contexts in which they

⁵⁴⁷ Platti, “Islam; Dialogue and Confrontation?,” 495-496.. Further challenges may be some Islamic doctrines that are incompatible with the modern approval e.g is the duty that urges a Muslim to fight until every person in every country is Muslim, enslaved or dead. (Quran 2: 244: 2: 191).

⁵⁴⁸ Exposito, *Islam and Politics*, 216.

were developed. Khan's chief instrument for re-reading Islam and its sources is the practice of *ijtihad* or independent judgment.⁵⁴⁹

From Khan's perspective, the principle of *ijtihad* seeks to "re-apply" or "re-explain" Islam in our day. When closely studied, one discovers that this intellectual instrument is at home with contemporary Islamic studies; it is an independent rational approach to Islamic sources common among many Muslim thinkers. Perhaps, what is unique to Khan's work is his understanding of this concept, independent judgment in terms of "re-application" and his emphasis on the imperative of *ijtihad* for understanding Islam. At this point, the question to ponder is this: what is the significance of the application of independent thought on Islamic sources for Khan? Here Khan argues that it is only through reinterpretation of the Quran and Sunna in service of rediscovering the essential dimension of Islam that Muslims can authentically realize it. This is because the ideal Islam for Muslims' faith and practice for all times is "the time" of the prophet."⁵⁵⁰ The Quran and Hadith therefore provide the model and criterion for what is most essential to Islam.

While the Quran and the prophetic traditions contain divine truths relevant for the past, present and future, their interpretations (*tafsir*) according to Khan rely on human formulations and, therefore, are susceptible to human and historical limitations. Thus, at this point of informed appreciation of the Muslim faith, Khan was determined to separate the ideal Islam predicated upon the Quran and Hadith and the centuries of interpretations and legal systematizations by the traditional '*ulama*' formulated by the Islamic

⁵⁴⁹ The theme of "*ijtihad*" has been treated elaborately by this author in his publications. For example: See Troll, "A Significant voice of Contemporary Islam," 6-9. Khan also discusses this subject in Khan, *Islam Rediscovered*, 62-74, 181-188.

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. Troll, "A Significant Voice of Contemporary Islam," 6.

establishment.⁵⁵¹ He insists the latter may reflect truthful dimensions of the Quran and Hadith in relative, but not absolute terms. Due to the historical nature of Islamic traditional interpretations and *fiqh*, Khan sees these commentaries as incapable of offering true and complete meanings and understanding for Islam today. It is rather by re-visiting the foundational sources, in the light of new contexts, that contemporary Muslims will realize their life of faith.

Thus, it is hardly surprising that in his contextual hermeneutics, Khan places his accent on the ‘spirit’ of the Quran or the prophet’s injunction, and the crucial task of discernment is best realized through independent religious reasoning. In this way, the message of the Quran is interpreted afresh in the light of new situations, since any meaningful re-explanation must reckon with the time. Khan is convinced that this right vision of *ijtihad* has been absent in his Indian context, due to most Muslims’ unquestioned accent to the pervasive medieval prejudice that Islam is unchanging. Thus, Khan challenges the common traditional standpoint that the door of *ijtihad* is closed, arguing that this idea is neither supported by Islamic history nor informed by a right understanding of God’s purpose for religion.⁵⁵² He contends that from historical facts, “this door” was never completely sealed, since Muslim scholars across history have practiced independent religious reasoning. From the reason of divine intention, he contends that God has destined Islam to have a dynamic, living status, in order to provide answers to new questions. Thus, he declares:

The truth is that the closing of the door of *ijtihad* is not possible, neither on legal (*shar’*) nor on rational (*‘aqli*) grounds. As the work of legal effort was operative during the first three centuries, in the same way it is fully operative today. Its door was neither ever closed nor is it possible that a person could ever close it in the

⁵⁵¹ This perspective agrees with the contributions of Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam*, 34.

⁵⁵² Cf. Troll, “A Significant Voice of Contemporary Islam,” 6-7.

future. As a river flows for ever, so the work of legal effort will continue to the Day of Resurrection when there will be no more need for words arrived at by *ijtihad*.⁵⁵³

The task of *ijtihad*, therefore, occupies a central position in contemporary Islamic thinking. Khan explains that Muslims are called to engage in two forms of *ijtihad*, re-application to particular matters and application to more general ones. The *ijtihad* of particular matters (*juz'*), which is mainly the Sharia (Islamic law), is argued on the basis that the legal codes, which were derived from the Quran and the Tradition of the Prophet, do not have universal validity for all times like their divine sources. Rather they are greatly limited by their specific original social contexts, and therefore a proper exercise of independent thought is constantly needed in the area of Sharia law. In other words, it seems appropriate, if not necessary in accordance with the spirit of the Quran that those legal prescriptions be renewed to be compatible with new understandings of justice.

The second *ijtihad* of general subjects (*kulli*) constitutes the “re-application” to the wider field of Islamic thought and exegeses. This allows for fixed traditional concepts to receive modern and contextual relevance, and highlight an essential understanding of Islamic faith. Such re-application of course, implies that the Sharia has to be reinterpreted. It also implies that Muslim communities have to seek to liberate the Sharia from the limits placed on it by medieval legalism in order to recover its original spiritual and ethical dimensions. The emphasis on the “spirit” of Islam in Khan’s hermeneutics clearly expresses the significance of his spiritual approaches to Islamic faith and practice. He argues that the goal of Islam is spiritual. In engaging the Quran and Hadith, the individual makes a spiritual journey in search of the truth, or what the Quran sees as the

⁵⁵³ Ibid’ 7.

cultivation of a “restful soul” (as achieved by the pre-Islamic *hunafa*) those who withdraw into solitary places in search of the truth). Hence, Khan describes Islam as “a scheme of spiritual development.”⁵⁵⁴ Thus, Khan asserts that the Sufis are better representatives of the spirit of Islam, although he insists that the spiritual quest is not exclusive to them. “This will to search for the truth is implanted in everyone.”⁵⁵⁵ Accordingly, he identifies “spiritual Islam” as “the genuine impetus for Islamic faith” for it is the hinge for the ethical (praxis) motivation of Muslim faith directed towards transforming the social order.⁵⁵⁶

In his hermeneutical approach to Islam, Khan seeks to integrate his classical Islamic learning with modern epistemological approaches in order to resolve an important tension in religion today. This style seems to keep him both committed to the original Islamic tradition and open to the positive ideas of modern science, with the aim of making Islam meaningful to Muslims and non-Muslims today. Thus, Khan affirms that “the modern age versus religion is basically a case of reasoned argument versus the acceptance of revelation.”⁵⁵⁷ Within this context, he tries to create a modernist outlook for a contemporary Islamic mission, summarily conceived as “the process of preservation,” “the process of *da’wa*”.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁴ Khan, *Principles of Islam* (New Delhi; Goodword Books, 1998), 38.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁵⁶ Khan and Khanam, *The Ideology of Peace*, 122. This includes Muslims’ understanding of their relationship with other religious traditions (transforming characters in social relations). See his discussion on the spiritual goal of Islam, Khan, *Islam and Peace*, 48-49.

⁵⁵⁷ Khān and Farida Khanum, *Islam and Modern Challenges*, 43. This work, establishes an argument against the claims of logical positives, particularly of T.R. Wiles’ religion and the scientific outlook, that religious statements are unfounded. It demonstrates that religion is compatible with science.

⁵⁵⁸ This author dedicates a whole chapter in his work, *Islam Rediscovered*, to discussing the three important perspectives of Islamic mission. They are very significant for an appreciation of his approach to Islam. See details in Khan, *Islam Rediscovered*, 181-188.

Through the process of preservation, the *umma* endeavors to safeguard the immutable essentials of the faith, such as *tawhid* and the Quran; by the process of *updating*, it re-applies historical matters, such as injunctions, prohibitions (i.e, the sharia law) accordingly to the extent that they are valid for the moment. The process of *da'wa* legitimizes the adequate method for spreading the Islamic message in the modern situation.⁵⁵⁹

In sum, Khan claims that for Islam to be revitalized, the Quran and Hadith must be re-read and recontextualized. His insights into these foundational sources give him clarity on Muslim life of faith. Khan seems to have a clear sense of the essence of Islam and its true role in society; for Khan, Islam has to be a force for good. Thus, he asserts that Islamic fundamentalism is “one modern form of transgression, as forbidden in the Quran....⁵⁶⁰ The next subsection examines the general views of modern Muslim intellectuals on political questions that are featured in Christian-Muslim discourse.

4.1.1.3. Islamic faith in the Religious History of Humankind

The religious history of humankind as expressed in Islam, Christianity and Judaism, is united by a vision of God’s engagement with cultural and religious diversities in a divine plan to conform humankind to his will. The question is: What is the place of the concrete experience of Islam in this plan of God? In this context, Muslims, like

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 187. Re-application does not involve “reform,” in the sense of revision of Islamic prescription, since Islam does not change (is not corrupted), as other religions have. Khan does not contest the Muslim understanding of the religion of God to be one and the same. However, he recognizes that the human society is ever evolving, and therefore, argues the necessity of adapting religion to changing contexts. He explains that the Quran recognizes two major parts of Islam: the permanent aspect (religion) and the changing aspect (the sharia)-this, requiring the task of *ijtihad*, as the process of recreating meaning of Muslim life of faith. As he states, it is the way “to keep Islam permanently updated”.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., 132. Such attitude is not allowed by the Quran: “Do not transgress the bounds of your religion,” (Q.4:17) he recalls.

Christians tend to argue uniquely and universally. According to Muslims, Islam is believed to be the original religion (*al-din*), and the true religion.

Khan's interpretation of Islam partakes in this mainstream Muslim understanding, for he claims that Islam surpasses all others as the perfect religion.⁵⁶¹ This position flows from the Quran, which also describes the *umma*, as the "best of communities" (Q. 3:110a). Islam is also explained as the ultimate revelation of the original religion (*fitra*); it is a religion for all.⁵⁶² In this latter understanding, Khan employs the term "Islam" in terms of its Quranic inclusive definition as that universal expression of submitting to God's sovereignty and decree.

Elsewhere, Khan reiterates: "Islam is the religion of Nature, and in treading its path, it is non-discriminatory, finding room within its scheme of things for every segment of society. Rigidity is quite alien to its process of development."⁵⁶³ In an evolutionary understanding of the religious history of humankind, Khan views "Islam" as the same divine message addressed to all peoples, the 'one Religion of God' preached by the prophets: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, and finally Muhammad.⁵⁶⁴ This sense is expressed further in the following way:

The Quran and the Bible both tell us that, ever since the advent of man on earth, God has sent his prophets to convey His message to mankind. According to a Hadith from Adam to Jesus Christ, more than one hundred thousand prophets have come to the world. Every prophet brought God's religion of submission, and communicated it to his people for mankind's redemption. This divine scheme has continued in every age and in all places.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶¹ Khān, *Islam Rediscovered*, 101–105.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, 47. According to Khan, "Islam is a religion of the universe." For a more detailed discourse, see Khan, *Islam as It is* (New Delhi: Al-Risala Books, 1992), 108-114.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 256. Khan acknowledges this to be the meaning of the Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, in order to demonstrate that non-Muslims have role to play in the development of Islam.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 22–23.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

Yet Khan understands this essential character of religion to be proper to institutionalized Islam. While the different religions share their common origin in the original universal din, this primordial religion exists as a unique form in Islam. The Quran insists on *tahrif* or the corruption of earlier revelations before Muhammad; as Khan contends, “One can safely say...that for a seeker after the truth, there is no whole range of opinion. He has only one choice to make. And that is the choice of Islam: the only religion having true historical credibility”⁵⁶⁶ Thus, he argues for the excellence of Islam in terms of being a “preserved” religion; it is not corrupted or corruptible. Its principles are eternal. On this basis Khan argues that there can be no reform or revision of Islam, for it is immutable. He assesses other traditions differently:

All these religions brought by God’s messengers were one and the same. Originally, there was no basic difference between one religion and the other. But it happened that none of the concerned peoples were able to preserve the teachings of their prophets. Either these religions survived in a distorted form, or they vanished without leaving any trace.⁵⁶⁷

Not only is Islam the repository of the unity of divine message to the prophets, Khan asserts also that divine revelation was no longer necessary after the Quran. “But after the Prophet of Islam, the world will see no further prophets, for the book which the prophet gave to the world the Quran is still fully preserved in its original form.”⁵⁶⁸ The aforementioned discussion suggests how Khan struggles with the traditional understanding in the tension between particularity and universality of Islam. He dialectically relates Islam in its universal sense and its institutionalized sense, and his

⁵⁶⁶ Khān, *Islam Rediscovered*, 42–43.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 41. This view of distorted religious traditions is also defended elsewhere with the conclusion that Islam embodies the exclusive truth about God. See Khan, *Islam and the modern man* (New Delhi: The Islamic center, 1998), 19-21.

⁵⁶⁸ Khan, *Islam as It is*, 41.

avowed commitment to the latter sense is clear. In addition, while he asserts Islam's difference from other religions, he seems to emphasize the common origin and goal of the Abrahamic religions, however differently understood. We are being persuaded that "Islam" is fundamentally "submission" to the sovereignty of God. If this view is right, the concrete form of this act of surrender in Islam may not assume claims of self-sufficiency, in the sense of having no need of, or disrespect for, the other.

This knowledge has assumed a significant place in contemporary intellectual discussions within Islam. For example, as a starting-point of his call for an Islamic theology of religious pluralism, Mahmut Aydin asserts that "the terms 'Islam' and 'Muslim' are used in the Quran, not in the sense of an established or institutionalized religion of Muslims, but as submission to the authority of God and obedience to God's orders."⁵⁶⁹ While both Khan and Aydin may be united by the concern for reconciliation of Islam with other faith traditions and its relevance in modern times, they differ in how to go achieve this goal. Khan argues for the primacy of the institutionalized Islam along with openness to other religions as sharers in universal Islam. Aydin, influenced by religious studies thinkers, William Cantwell-Smith, John Hick and Paul Knitter, seeks to encourage Muslims to appreciate other religious traditions based on their equal validity.⁵⁷⁰

In any event, the significance of this is that some Muslims are seriously working to interpret a more inclusive framework for Muslims that maintains loyalty to the Islamic faith and yet encourages respectful dialogue with other believers. For Khan, this approach

⁵⁶⁹ Mahmut Aydin. "Religious Pluralism: A Challenge for Muslims-a Theological Evaluation," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 38, no. 2-3 (2001): 342.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 351.

is at the center of his philosophy and is meant to address the unsustainable intense loyalty that can promote hostility towards religious outsiders. It is also meant to prompt Muslims to rethink how they realize their fundamental duty to spread Islam.

4.1.1.4. Peaceful Islamic Mission (Da'wa), Not "Political Islam"

In Khan's thinking the primary task of Muslims to preaching Islam (da'wa) to non-Muslims flows from the centrality of "submission" to God and his orders. He conceptualizes Islamic da'wa as Muslims extending the mission of all the prophets and messengers of God to make people aware of their duty to surrender to God's authority and decrees. It is a central task, since Islam is understood as a way of life that requires believers to not only to live by its all-embracing prescriptions for personal and collective existence, but also to convert others to the faith.⁵⁷¹ The question that the Muslim faithful faces therefore becomes: What is the proper method to pursue the missionary goals of Islam?

This question assumes particular concern in the Indian context from which Khan writes. Muslims are a minority within the multi-cultural and multi-religious context of a politically secular and democratic India. They are charged with spreading Islam to other communities that have long distrusted the Muslim missionary strategy. Given Mawdudi's emphasis on the struggle to establish Islamic rule and its ideological promotion of "jihad," as, to say the least, the question of the demands of modern da'wa is particularly crucial. Indeed, to fulfill their missionary duty within India means that Muslims have to

⁵⁷¹ Troll, "A Significant Voice of Contemporary Islam" 14-16. Generally, this central idea in Khan is at the heart of his Islamic vision. Indeed, it is a direct criticism of Mawdudi's politicized view of Islam. In many of his works, this theme continues to be the focus of his reflections.

frankly confront the questions of inter-cultural and interreligious relations, pluralism and the secular state.⁵⁷²

Khan rejects Mawdudi's theology as deviant from the teaching of Islam, and the attempt to use it to determine the da'wa as primary task of preaching Islam. He argues for a reinterpretation of Islamic mission for two reasons: the attitude of the Quran and the Prophet, and pragmatic considerations. In the first case, he reminds his readers that Islam is a religion of peace, and the call to Islam (which is da'wa) is to invite people to "the path of peace"⁵⁷³ Da'wa, Khan argues, is in itself divine (hence, the Quran describes it as "nusrat of God, i.e., helping the Almighty (3:52),"⁵⁷⁴ and its basic meaning "to invite", emphasizes its persuasive, non-coercive nature and approach. Hence, those who engage in Islamic missionary work are to bear peaceful witness to Islam in line with this divine intent. Aggression towards others therefore has no place within Muslim missions. Khan asserts that, honesty to God and kind presence among all peoples are the main criteria for such work.⁵⁷⁵

Khan emphasizes the necessity of the virtue of patience for missionary work, as exemplified in early Muslim inviters (da'i), who declared: "We will exercise patience regardless of the harm inflicted upon us. (Q.14:12)."⁵⁷⁶ This missionary disposition, Khan feels, is as relevant for carrying out the Islamic mission today as ever before. As a traditional scholar, Khan cites the Quran to justify his argument for peaceful da'wa: "So remind. Thou art only one to remind (*mudhakkir*). Thou art not a warden (*musaytir*) over

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Khān, *Islam and Peace*, 170.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 187.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid. Again, it is an important element of Khan's fundamental challenge to the distorted vision of Islamic mission, in which some Muslims no longer see themselves as missionaries (du'at) of peace, but as agents of Islamic rule, which must be spread by confrontation.

them (referring to non-believers).” (Q.88:21f.) Commenting on this passage, he notes that:

Muslims are not asked to--nor is the objective of Islamic mission...to impose the Islamic system upon non-Muslims. Rather, we (Muslims) are asked to communicate the message in the context of peace. The responsibility of the Muslim da'i (*inviter*, missionary) is to communicate the message. After that, it is the responsibility of the one 'invited' (*mad'u*) to accept or to reject it.⁵⁷⁷

The above reference in the Quran and the interpretation offered by Khan make clear that the peaceful propagation of faith is at the heart of the Quran, and functions to caution against understandings of certain verses by those who view the text through the lens of a “jihad” mentality. Situations in which violence is permitted need to be put into perspective. In his second argument for peaceful da'wa, Khan takes refuge in the practical effectiveness he affirms to be exemplified by Muhammad. According to Khan, spreading Islam in peace as the Quran enjoins, provides the pragmatic means open to Muslims in modern times. Such a peaceful approach offers a realistic and productive goal for Muslim communities who must practice their faith alongside other religious communities, most times, in democratic and secular settings.⁵⁷⁸ This complex situation of modern societies makes peaceful da'wa the only practical option. As Khan sees it, this challenge of peaceful witness should duly inform Islamic missionary activism. The significance of this point is that it necessitates a recovery of the Quranic notion of “jihad” as urging Muslims to be witnesses of good deeds. In this context, the concept of “jihad” precludes violence, since the “struggle for Islamic rule” rather, refers to the “great” internal moral struggle consistently to choose good over evil; the purpose of da'wah is to

⁵⁷⁷ Cited in Troll, “A significant Voice of Contemporary Islam,” 15.

⁵⁷⁸ It is arguable that no national frontier in the world today remains unaffected by multi-religious challenges of existence, not even Saudi Arabia and the overwhelmingly Muslim state of Pakistan.

align people with that moral struggle. As Khan writes, the Quran calls da'wa itself a great jihad: "Do with them (that is, the non-believers) the great jihad by the help of the Quran (25:52)."⁵⁷⁹ Commenting on this Quranic verse, Khan points out that:

The Quran is a book, not a weapon. 'Great jihad with the Quran means a great religious endeavor; da'wah work is therefore a great ideological struggle. It is a supreme intellectual effort which stretches to the utmost capacity of the human being.⁵⁸⁰

As understood from this interpretation of the notion of jihad, "Islamic activism" is not realized through a political struggle for an Islamic nation, revolt against constituted governments, or other violent confrontations waged in the name of Islam. Such activism refers to an intense "course of action" towards intellectual and spiritual development, and sublime disposition towards others.⁵⁸¹ Again, Khan cites the Quran as evidence:

O (you) who believed stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety; and fear Allah. For Allah is well acquainted with all that (you) do (Q5,8).

This idea appears consistent with the impression Emilio Platti offers in his recent call to reinterpret the Quran in the context of modern day Islam. In his book *Rethinking the Quran in the Context of Contemporary Islam*. He examines the Quranic sense of jihad in the light of recent extremists' justification of suicide actions as acts of martyrdom. Platti explains Suras 5, 8 and 4, 135, indicating that the concept of "*shahada*", translated as "witnesses", (and its singular: "*shahid*." (witness) is not used in the Quran in reference to those who kill themselves and murder others. Rather, Muslims are urged to be

⁵⁷⁹ Khān, *Islam Rediscovered*, 78.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Khān, *Islam Rediscovered*, 80. in several places in his works, denounces the use of confrontation by Muslims, as this constitutes a key issue in the negative image of Islam and Muslims in the world. Here, he argues specifically that violent behavior in the name of Islam is un-Islamic.

“witnesses of righteousness, sincerity and justice.”⁵⁸² Thus, the Quran views the “path” as simply one based on steadfast righteous efforts, even in the face of persecution or confrontation.

Within this perspective, the Quranic charge on Muslims to strive to establish Islam as a dominant political system that must be understood as conditional, not absolute. Khan argues that establishment of Islamic society must not take a counterproductive method of violence, since it is un-ethical, and above all, since it falls short of the “*invitation*” that characterizes *da’wa*.⁵⁸³ A proper establishment of Islamic society, according to him, must be non-confrontational and diplomatic, modeled after the seventh-century Hudaibiyya experience.

At Hudaibiyya, Muhammad took the path of peace in the face of imminent conflict between the Medinan Muslims and the *Quraysh* family, with the humiliating results that Muslims would not be able to perform the pilgrimage to the ka’ba, and his title *rasul Allah*, was not mentioned in the text of the treaty. In as much as this was an embarrassment for Muslims, and in as much as the Quran (Q. 22:39) had permitted Muslims to fight (*qital*) the *Quraysh*, the Prophet did not succumb to confrontation. Khan not only interprets this episode as a key model of non-violence for Muslim in the early stage of Islamic expansion, but views it also as a practical option that is open to Muslims in modern times. Hence, Khan formulates the greatest problem of Islamic faith today as

⁵⁸² Platti, “Rethinking the Quran”: 360.

⁵⁸³ Khan has often insisted that the idea of Islam as a complete ideology is pragmatic; that in practice, Islamic method, from the time of Muhammad, has been to go for what it is possible in a given situation. Hence, if Islam begins with a struggle, then it may clash with the status quo.

one in which “Muslims have almost totally forgotten the Sunna (prophet’s way) of non-violence.”⁵⁸⁴

In short, any promotion of force in the propagation of Islamic values is not only impractical, but also contrary to the example of Muhammad, and in fact, a deviation from the real spirit of Islam. Khan’s viewpoints can be summed up as follows: Islam as a political system is lawfully established only by the free choice of the people . . . ,not by any forceful imposition upon the population. Imposition by force is neither practical nor desirable. The use of violence and force constitutes a crime; and in no way is in conformity with Islamic principles.⁵⁸⁵ Within the context of the foregoing arguments, Khan proposes two-fold criterion for renewing Islam, going back to Islamic sources or a truer understanding and “re-applying” Islamic faith in dialogue with modern contexts. As Khan would argue, one inevitable and energizing element of the call of modernity, on the part of Islam, is interreligious dialogue. The underlying belief here is that believers from other traditions have significant contributions to make towards the renewal of Islam. Let us now examine what he thinks about dialogue of religions.

4.1.1.5. The Principle of Separating Religion from Politics

The subject of Islam and politics is central to Khan’s concern for correct understanding of Islam. He argues that the separation of religion from politics is a legitimate principle for Muslims.

⁵⁸⁴ Khān, *Islam Rediscovered*, 112. For a detailed view of the discussion on the relevance of the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyyah.

⁵⁸⁵ Cf. Troll, “A Significant Voice of Contemporary Islam,” 16.

Khan first identifies the root of the problem in certain Muslims' mistaken notion of what the "all comprehensive" character of Islamic way of life means, and therefore, sees the problem as partly hermeneutical. This error in understanding has often been construed to promote Islamists' political agenda⁵⁸⁶ it is within this perspective that Islam is argued to have laid down the blueprint for the state, since it appears to motivate struggle for the transformation of the society in the light of a religiously based political order.⁵⁸⁷ Khan hence, underlines the poverty of these Islamists' interpretation, by pointing out that it reduces the 'the theological system' (Islam) to political rule (*hukumat*), which inhibits relations with people of other faiths and cultures, rather than encouraging it.

In Khan's view, Islam is an "all-embracing" scheme, because it seeks to bring all facets of life and activity of believers into a coherent unity with God's will. Thus, the target is not political ascendancy, but performance of its ethical principles; to understand this unitary experience as a quest for political dominance is to miss the point. In his work,⁵⁸⁸ Khan highlights crucial considerations in the relationship between Islam and politics: (1) Politics is "only a relative", and not an "absolute" dimension of Islam; (2) Political power is entirely gracious, not a matter of struggle; and (3) The establishment of the Islamic state belongs to the collective will, and is not a purview of certain individuals.

Khan offers a detailed explanation of these important interpretations. The core of his argument for separation of religion and politics is in line with his main thesis that the integrity of Islam is secured by distinguishing what is essential to the faith from what is

⁵⁸⁶ The view that Islam is a comprehensive way of life is at the heart of Khan's ideal Islamic order, and has continued to influence many Islamists' aspiration in our time.

⁵⁸⁷ Omar, "Islam and the Other," 429.

⁵⁸⁸ Khān, *Islam Rediscovered*, 147–150.

relative. If it is accepted that Islam is essentially spiritual, encouraging mystical relationship between the servant and the master then, it must be understood that it is this spiritual dimension that may curb worldly pursuits, such as political power or domination.

Politics is only a relative and not the real part of Islam. This difference between a real and the relative feature is that what is relevant in all circumstances and at all times, whereas the relative is required only in relation to particular sets of circumstances. Wherever such circumstance does not exist, relative features lose their relevance and therefore their desirability.⁵⁸⁹

This explanation, which is based on the relationship between the Quran's absolute and relative injunctions, is further illustrated in Khan's discussion of the *Hajj* (Pilgrimage). "Pilgrimage to the house of God is a duty to God for all who can make the journey," (3:97). The fact that 'pilgrimage' is prescribed side by side with 'capacity', indicates that being a Muslim does not necessarily make performing pilgrimage a compulsory act. The injunction to perform the hajj is binding on only those who have the resources and ability to pursue it.⁵⁹⁰ Khan concludes:

The same is true of politics. That is, if a group of Muslims find themselves in a position to establish the political system of Islam by peaceful methods, and without any violence, then the *Sharia* will require them to do exactly that. But those who do not find themselves in such a position, it is not their... duty to establish an Islamic political system, nor are they required to set in motion political initiatives calculated to create opportunities to do so.⁵⁹¹

The second point is that although political ascendancy is utterly granted to an Islamic community by God, it is not something secured through struggle. Khan references Quran 24:55 and 24:41, to argue that whereas Muslims are to strive "to

⁵⁸⁹ Khan *Islam Rediscovered*, 147.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵⁹¹ Khān, *Islam Rediscovered*.

inculcate in people the Islamic character and the true spirit of Islam,⁵⁹² it is God who bestows political rule on a Muslim community according to God's own terms.⁵⁹³ In a third necessary consideration, Khan notes that the task of establishing Islamic states based on Islamic laws is charged on the community, and not an individual. The accent here is on the popular will as the origin and basis of the organization of the Islamic state.⁵⁹⁴ It becomes an imposition when the 'gratuitous' roots of Islamic polity are lacking.

Apart from the Quranic insinuation, Khan's assessment of Islam and politics seeks to justify separation of religion from politics on the basis of Muhammad's example, namely opting for what is circumstantially practicable for the sake of the end result. Khan's insights into the Sunna, apparently, gave him the clarity that in event of collision between an essential spiritual character of Islam and socio-political concern for the cause of Islam, it was Islamic to focus on the former. Khan illustrates this principle with three events in Muhammad's life.⁵⁹⁵ (1) He changed the direction of prayers towards the *Ka'ba* in early 624 CE, seeking to distinguish, as Khan sees it, between the *Ka'ba* (the building) and the idols it contained;⁵⁹⁶ (2) He observed his ritual prayer in al-Aqsa Mosque during

⁵⁹² Ibid., 149. Although he does not state it explicitly here, in Khan's reading of Islam, this communication of Islamic religiosity should be by witness of life (example of its adherents), not by force, because in Islam there can be no compulsion.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 148–149. The above Q. 24–25; makes clear that God gives political authority to a Muslim community for his cause: "God had promised those of you who believe and do good works that he will make them Masters in the land...in order to strengthen the faith He has chosen for them, and to change their state of fear to a sense of security...."

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid. 150. This author did not go further to say how this popular will is authentically known.

⁵⁹⁵ C.f. Three episodes in the Sunna of the Prophets reported in Bukhari, as reflected in Khan, *Islam and Peace*, 78–81. However, it has to be noted that the relevance of Khan's reflection on this Sunna of the prophet in relation to the principle of separating religion from politics, is immediately given in the context of achieving peace in Jerusalem, which is strategic to Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

⁵⁹⁶ *Khān, Islam and Peace*, 78–80. It must not be forgotten in a hurry that, at the time, it was self-contradictory for Muslims (upholders of Monotheism) to direct their prayers to the Meccan "house of gods".

his Night Journey (*isra*) and Ascension (*mi'raj*), (undaunted by Persian domination at the time), indicating that worship and political affairs are to be kept apart; and (3) He and his companions, not fearful of his *Quraysh* tormentors, entered Mecca in 629, and performed the rituals of *umrah* (the minor pilgrimage) and circumambulation of the Ka'ba.⁵⁹⁷ For Khan, these three episodes suggest that Islamic faith and the quest for political control are two separate matters, and suggest the separation of the religious and the political realms.

Khan also attempts to resolve the hermeneutical tension between commitment to living out Islam as a coherent unity and the principle of separating religion from politics for concrete plural situations in the modern context. He asserts a distinction between the dimension of belief (*'aqida*) and of action (*'amal*). On the level of belief, and ideally, Islam unites every believer's life and activity, be it religion, politics, culture, and social life. However, in real engagement with the civil society, this principle must be reconciled with actual world situation.⁵⁹⁸ This means that the appreciation of Islam as a complete way of life may not obscure the vital need to fashion a harmonious settlement for co-existence with citizens from other faith traditions. It demands prudent adjustment to the ethos of civil society on the part of Muslims.

This view has serious implications for "political Islam". Khan regards the politicization of Islam that goes beyond the believer's religious social repositioning as a threat to social harmony and peace. Whereas the Quran has not provided any blueprint for political organization of the state, he affirms that it has laid down the general

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 81.

⁵⁹⁸ For his explanation of the contemporary relevance of the prophet's example in separating religion from politics, see Troll, "A Significant Voice of Contemporary Islam," 18-19.

principles for engaging in political activities. Muslims need to “re-apply” these general principles in the context of the contemporary situation and to respond to them prudently so that their dual loyalties to religion and citizenship are not compromised. This is most vital in secular contexts. It is precisely for this reason that Khan speaks of the prevailing secular system in India, which permits Muslims to order their personal lives according to Islamic law (sharia), while secular law controls in all other aspects and is, “perfectly in consonance with Islam”.⁵⁹⁹

Islam’s role in politics is to infuse the political space with Islamic values through measured action. To the political structures, Islam can contribute the values of justice (*‘adl*), solidarity, generosity, care of the poor and weak, freedom of religion, common (*jama’ a*) interests, *shur’ a* or rule through consultation, and equal rights for all. In fulfilling their political responsibility, Muslims not only express loyalty to their country of citizenship, but also affirm their religious obligation to be subject to the constitution and laws of their given country.⁶⁰⁰ Indeed, a Muslim who disagrees with the laws of his or her country can only licitly emigrate (*hijra*); either by withdrawing from political participation (*maydani hijra*) or by physical departure (*makani-hijra*).⁶⁰¹

In essence, Khan’s insights into the principle of the separation of religion from politics can be appreciatively seen as a call to Muslim societies to reconsider the combative Islamist understanding of their faith in relation to politics in this age of

⁵⁹⁹ Cited in Troll, “Sharing Islamically in the Pluralistic nation-state of India,” 258.

⁶⁰⁰ Khān, *Islam and Peace*, 176–178. Khan speaks of revolt against a constituted government as forbidden in Islam. In this context, he mentions the ‘ulama’ (religious leaders) did not rebel against the depraved hukkam (rulers), but kept apart the two spheres, of authority. This clerical class used this view to consolidate Islam in other spheres, what Khan calls “non political opportunities”. It is, indeed, these non-political spaces that sustain Islamic faith amidst the corruption of Muslim establishments.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 79. Khan seems here to explore realistic options to peace and non-violence, rather than approve a model of conflict and aggression characteristic of Islamic “activism” promoted by some Muslim leaders of the Indian subcontinent, before and after the partition.

dialogue. The Muslim community may not be able to fulfill its mission unless it engages a wider discourse for common good.

4.1.1.6. Commitment to Interreligious Dialogue and Peace

Interreligious dialogue and peace are primary concerns in Khan's presentation of Islam. In the majority of his works, he argues for dialogue and peace in view of the fact that peace cannot be built on a foundation of violence or isolation. Positive relations with people of other religious traditions by means of dialogue and engagement must be embraced as a new way of being *umma* in our day. He relies on the frameworks of the practice of Muhammad and the Quran, in his attempt to fashion a theology of religious pluralism that can enable Muslims to develop more positive models of inter-cultural and interreligious relations.

Khan does not question religious plurality, but assumes its role. He rather argues that Islam has positively resolved this dilemma. First, he appeals to what he evaluates as Muhammad's model for Muslims' attitude to religious dialogue that served mutual understanding of the religious diversity in Medina. As he recalls: "Fourteen hundred years ago the prophet of Islam held in Medina a three-religions conference- in modern terminology, a trialogue--to exchange views on religious issues."⁶⁰² He mentions also Muhammad's reverence during the funeral procession of a Jew accounted by Al-Bukhari,⁶⁰³ This act and the "trialogue," he contends, represents to the Muslim faithful the impetus for religious tolerance and respect for all peoples in the modern context.

⁶⁰² Khān, *Islam and Peace* . 111.

⁶⁰³ Khān and Farida Khanam, *Principles of Islam*, 125. "One day, as the Prophet was sitting outside with his companions, the funeral procession of a Jew passed by. At this, the Prophet stood up, whereupon one of his companions said, 'O Prophet! It was the funeral of a Jew, not a Muslim,' The Prophet replied, 'was he not a human being?'" (Al-Bukhari, See Khan, *Principles of Islam* 125), According to Khan this comes directly from the heart of a truly spiritual man. A genuinely religious person always feels compassion for

Apart from the prophet's tradition, Khan expounds two main reasons for dialogue from the Quranic points of view.⁶⁰⁴ Firstly, he argues that, the mission of interreligious dialogue today fulfills the Quranic summons: "O! People of the Book, let us come to a word common to us and you, that we will worship none but God" :(3:64).

This Quranic verse, Khan explains, compels religious communities to dialogue with one another on the basis of their shared elements of faith ("words common to us"). Religions universally share a vision of a common humanity, promotion of the values of love, compassion, peace, and concern for the weak members of our society-these are meant to serve as common resources for dialogue.

Khan admits that religious groups usually have difficulty in reaching agreements on religious matters, as they tend to stick to their respective visions. To move these groups beyond this impasse, he insists that nothing less than continual striving in the midst of the failures and tensions is needed, despite them. Yet, this obviously strong attachment to one's respective religious vision necessitates what he recommends as the second attitude put forth in the Quran: "To you your religion and to me mine" (109:6).

Here, Khan thinks the Muslim sacred text provides a practicable option in terms of inter-community relations, and explains how the Quran provides both the "formula for religious harmony" and the "principle of religious co-existence."⁶⁰⁵ This is realized through a realistic strategy for peaceful coexistence that includes the 'acceptance of differences' and 'tolerance and respect for the other'⁶⁰⁶ He thinks that this strategy has an

all men and women, and loves them all equally. But when one is lacking in spiritual and religious values, one tends to become frightened and distrust those around us." This Hadith of Al-Bukhari means for Khan, a traditional authority affirming the importance of tolerance and respect for all peoples, cultures, and religions.

⁶⁰⁴ Khān, *Islam and Peace*, 111–115.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶⁰⁶ Khān, *Islam*, 120–122.

even a deeper ethical foundation: Islam respects the rights of the religious freedom of persons, as evident in the fact, as he says, that Muhammad enjoined Muslims to respect every human being and “honor one of another creed.”⁶⁰⁷

The consequence of this Quranic imperative is that disagreement, or absence of common grounds in religious matters, should not lead to communal conflict; rather Muslims and non-Muslims in all countries should affirm respect and good will for one another. In these respects, religious differences are best handled through “peaceful negotiation” for the common good. It is precisely at this point that Khan highlights the exemplary role of today’s globalization as a network of relationship in promoting interreligious peace.⁶⁰⁸

With the Quran and prophetic tradition as the foundational support for interreligious dialogue, Khan conceives the modern situation as the third motivation. His main argument is that the “spirit of the age” necessitates dialogue. As new forms of social communication draw people closer together, the isolation and barriers between different peoples and religions decrease. He writes that, “in the course of this continuous and vast interaction, for the first time in human history, people seem less like strangers to one another. A great gap has been bridged...” and he underscores that because of the contemporary situation: “making concessions to one another has become a need of the people themselves.”⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁷ Based on the Sunna of the Prophet as related by Fathul Bari, 3/214, as cited in *Khān, Islam and Peace*, 47–48.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 112–113. Khan, seeks to justify the need of mutual engagement on the basis of increasing globalization which he sees as a network of relation.

What Khan suggests is the mutual discovery of common values: concession and peace are at the core of modern religious and civil life. Religious intolerance and violence must be overcome, and religious people cannot allow them to flourish. For Muslims, this task remains most urgent. Khan shows optimism that in building bridges with other believers, more boundaries are opened for mutual understanding. Thus, dialogue and peace are underlined, not only as ideals of Islam, but also as essential for dealing with the challenge religious pluralism poses for the Muslim community.

Khan's interpretation also gives rise to certain ground rules that are meant to guide Muslim participants in interreligious dialogue. First, Muslims must be humble, and they must cease to see Islam from the viewpoint of "Muslim kings of bygone days."⁶¹⁰ Second, they must also depart from exclusion of all that is outside the *umma*, and focus on reinterpreting the Quran in the light of the urgent need to dialogue with other believers in our day. Thus, Khan challenges an exclusivist reading of the following Quranic injunction: "He that chooses a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and in the world to come he will be one of the lost" (3:85). Khan insists that this is an out-of-context interpretation and is certainly not correct.⁶¹¹

In addition, he points out this Quranic verse precludes claims of superiority of one religion over another and insists that Muslims must consider non-Muslims as worthy in terms of salvation.

This verse rules out the concept of community superiority for any given group; even Muslims have been bracketed here along with other religious groups. The content of this verse makes it very clear that salvation, by Islamic standards,

⁶¹⁰ The Moral Version of Islam, 48. Khan has in mind the collapse of the global legal system that once made Islam great.

⁶¹¹ Khan argues that this verse must be read along with its explanatory verse (Quran 2:62), in which the Quran affirms the faith of: "Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Sabeans--whosoever believes in God and the Last Day and does what is right--shall be rewarded by their Lord: they have nothing to fear or to regret."

depends upon the individual's own actions, and that is not the prerogative of any group. No man or woman can earn his or her salvation by the mere fact of associating with a particular group. Salvation will be achievable only by a person who truly believes in God and the world hereafter, and who has given genuine proof in this life of having lived a life of right action.⁶¹²

Nevertheless, for Khan, promoting interreligious relations on the basis of shared visions does not mean that one religion is as valid as the other. He is convinced that Islam is the perfect religion.⁶¹³ Dialogue does not ignore the differences or distinctive beliefs that exists among religions, but encourages Muslims to tolerate and respect the valued convictions of other believers.⁶¹⁴ It does not surrender the duty of Muslims to preach Islam either, but as he argues, it offers new way of inviting others to Islam through friendly and peaceful relations with others.

In summary, Khan argues that in today's world of interconnected life, entering into dialogue with people of other religions is an urgent necessity for Muslims. It is not only because the Quranic and prophet's tradition permit it, but also for the sake of peace within a pluralistic world. For Khan this is certainly true of Indian society. He recalls "many names or attributes of God, one of them being *As-Salam*, that is Peace," and conceives "peace" as normative value in Islam. Muslims must be promoters of peaceful relations as they seek to defend their religious identity.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹² Khān, *Islam and Peace*, 90. Khan develops his idea of religious harmony in a way that does not down play the Islamic firm belief that reality is one. But, in recognition of differences in religion to which human beings associate themselves, he thinks of how to bring harmony between them.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, 86–88. Khan resorts here to "exclusivist" claims. He seems to fail to realize that if Islam is the perfect religion, interreligious dialogue becomes a mere "condescension" for while Khan's stresses the complementarity between Muslims' identity and empathy for people of other faiths, as present in Islamic tradition, he has not explicitly left open the possibility for the Muslim being changed by contact with the riches of the faith of other people.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 101–105.

⁶¹⁵ C.f. Khan, *The Ideology of Peace*, 98-99.

Khan's idea of peace challenges the view point of those Indian Muslims who embrace jihad as a response to Hindu extremists' aggression. For Khan, violence rooted in the Islamic faith is wholly untenable, and is ultimately self-giving in an unprincipled and unproductive way.⁶¹⁶ Genuine inter-community peace can only come through dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and not by violence of any sort. Khan seems convinced that Islam embodies values and resources for the society at large. Hence, in working together with other believers, Muslims contribute their divine prerogatives to modern society, counter Islam's reputation among non-Muslims as a religion of violence, and are best able to enjoy the benefits of the modern globalized order.⁶¹⁷

SECTION B: 4.2. RE-INTERPRETATION OF ISLAM IN THE LIGHT OF KHAN'S ATTITUDE TO ISLAM AND SOCIETY IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria, the questions of political struggle, secular constitution and *Sharia* law, ethnic and cultural differences, access to national resources, and more, have produced divisions between Muslims and non-Muslims in modern society. Some Muslims tend to magnify nearly every incident to the level of national conflict. Christian-Muslim relations remain unpredictable.

This situation calls for a re-examination of the character of Islam in Nigeria against the backdrop of genuine Islamic piety and the national aspirations of unity, peace

⁶¹⁶ Khān, *Islam Rediscovered*, 63. Khan has shown in many of his writings that a confrontational approach to conflicts between Muslims and Hindus has convinced him of the self-serving motivations behind the mindset of violent Islam.

⁶¹⁷ Khān, *Islam and Peace*, 194.

and nation-building. The intense conviction held by some Muslims that they must dominate politically, the pervasive politicization of Islam, the imposition of Sharia law on a mixed population, a reluctance to dialogue, and religious militancy, stem from an attitude and a self image that are in need of re-examination. Khan's insights drawn from his re-interpretation of Islam can assist Nigerian Muslims in the quest to live peacefully with their compatriots.

4.2.1. Islam and the Construction of a Political Religion

What should be the values promoted by the Muslim faith; and what are the goals of an Islamic faith commitment? These questions are central in any re-examining of Muslim self-image and for a deeper understanding of Islam in Nigeria. Islam is a set of beliefs, essentially professing submission to a transcendent and creator God and living out (obeying) one's commitments to God's orders (Q. 7:29). Thus, it is fundamentally defined by faith, submission, devotion, a witness to God's unity and transcendence, and to upholding ethical relationships between human beings as God's *khalifa* (responsible lieutenants of God). This means that advancing of the God-humankind encounter or the inner (spiritual) dimension of faith by doing God's will is central to Islam. As Khan writes, "this inner transformation finds expression in his (the individual's) external behavior, in worship, in character, in social relations, etc. To produce a person like this is the main target of Islam."⁶¹⁸

According to Khan the implication of Islamic ethical obligations is that human beings are servants of humanity; Muslims have a duty to join efforts with others, to work

⁶¹⁸ Khān, *Islam Rediscovered*, 52.

together for justice, peace, respect for the rights of religious freedom for all persons, and to prevent conflict. These values are promoted by Islam, and are, according to the Quran oriented toward peace with God (Q.19:62). In essence, true piety does not just reflect our relationship with God, but our relationship with one another. It is this spiritual-ethical character that defines Islam. It means that the other agenda, such as politics which Muslims can be engaged in the spirit of their religion must be determined by this fundamental faith. Politics and Islam are not interchangeable.

Khan suggests that the reason that political dominance has erroneously become a defining concern of Muslim life is due to historical limitations on the part of the Muslim community.⁶¹⁹ Centuries of Islamic conquest inform Muslims' self-image and continue to spur Islamic fundamentalisms. But such a view often merely satisfies political self interests. Khan is not alone in this position. Nazih A. Ayyubi, a Muslim scholar, stresses the importance of separating religion from politics in order to maintain the proper character of Islam. He notes that Islam is not a particularly "political" religion and identifies a general trend in this misconception. He insists:

On the contrary, Islam is a religion that stresses above all the collective enforcement of public morals. It is this 'collective' and 'public' nature of its conception of morality that have induced many people, especially in Orientalist and fundamentalist circles, mistakenly to attribute Islam a specifically political nature. But a distinction between the two areas is absolutely basic to any understanding of the nature of Islam as a belief system.⁶²⁰

According to this view, it is comprehensible that Islam directs its ethical summons to the community, but to understand its social role in terms of political

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁶²⁰ Gallagher, "Political Islam," 35. If this thinking, which is in agreement with Khan's viewpoint, is convincing, as we think is then, it is conceivable that Islam can keep its integrity in tact by remaining firm in its spiritual and ethical cores, while still taking its rightful political responsibility.

legitimacy is wrong; it is a dislocation of the religion from its spiritual essence. Khan's thinking reinforced by Ayyubi, presents a serious challenge to the nature of "political Islam" in Nigeria. As defined by David Jackson, "political Islam" "is any variant of Islam serving as a vehicle for political mobilization or activity."⁶²¹ Thus, political Islam can become positive or negative in its concrete expression. On the positive end, a political interpretation of religion becomes laudable when it promotes political participation among Muslims. On the negative end, the integrity of Islam is violated when it is politicized, and thus used to legitimize efforts at political dominance and supremacy.

Currently, the nature of politicized Islam in Nigeria is decidedly negative. As this work reveals, it is hardly about the constructive application of religion to the political sphere. Rather Islam is susceptible to ideological abuse in terms of political manipulation for the enhancement of personal fortunes by northern political elites. Such political exploitation of religion by the religious and political leaders of the Northern ruling class to ensure Muslim domination was manifest in the 1979 Presidential polls.⁶²² President Shagari justified this religious platform mobilized in his favor, by running an intensely divisive Islamic form of government, which was toppled by military rule in 1983. This was equally the case in General Buhari's attempt to use Nigeria's sharp divisions to secure Muslim votes in the 2003 elections by running a campaign based on a similar religious platform : "Muslims must not vote for non-Muslims."⁶²³ In 1999, Ahmed

⁶²¹ Dickson, *Political Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa the Need for a New Research and Diplomatic Agenda*.

⁶²² Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, 153. Kukah relates the account of how a Muslim composed a song, which enhanced the electoral chance of Shehu Shagari and the NPN religiously, by linking him with Ahmadu Bello and the vision of the Islamization of Nigeria. It was said, "since the time of Ahmadu Bello, there has never been another leader with power, except Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the trusted one..." More on this could be gleaned in the first chapter, as we have attempted to describe this and other aspects of the political manoeuvres of the northern oligarchs in some details.

⁶²³ Cf. Shola Oshunkeye, "Buhari and the Abachas," *Tell*, 3 February 2003, 36.

Yerima mobilized votes for the governorship of Zamfara State by pledging to introduce Sharia penal code if he was elected to power. In 2000, he fulfilled his pledge and sparked the Sharia crisis. Politicians have also manipulated religious leaders and groups for purposes of motivating violence, as is seen in the Kaduna state crisis of March, 1987.⁶²⁴ Such confluence of religion and politics in a constitutionally secular Nigeria where politicians are, at least in principle, discouraged from appealing to religious sentiments, has transformed Islam into a political phenomenon.

Given this history, Nigerian-Muslims need to rethink the relationship between Islam and politics. Here Khan's insights might prove fruitful. His framework provides Muslims with an alternative perspective that might inform an Islamic political theology that is relevant for Nigeria's setting. The dilemma of political Islam in Nigeria is that it seems to be completely empty of moral legitimacy; it appears to have no empathy for views of others and only serves the political self-interests of Muslim elites at the expense of the majority. Ultimately, despite reducing Islam to a functional form, political Islam has not realized the ethnic or religious homogeneity of the *umma* that it seeks to achieve.

Is it not much better, then, to redirect current energies focused on the Muslim "enemy" to establishing a more life-enhancing vision of religion (Islam) in politics? Could there not be efforts to "re-apply" the general Quranic principles to politics, in order to infuse Nigeria's corrupt political space with alternative Islamic values? Religious communities should be partners with each other and the state in promotion of common good. Islam has much to contribute to political structures that promote values of justice, solidarity, care for the weak, and equal rights, through an ethical witness. Alam

⁶²⁴ Ibid., 186.

Khundmiri (1992-1983) describes this as adapting Islamic ideology to an understanding of democracy, “giving to the democratic idea a spiritual content,” that can be the greatest contribution of Islam to the modern world.”⁶²⁵

Nigerian Muslim- Christian counterparts, particularly the mainline Christian Churches have often realized their prophetic role in a more productive manner. The Roman Catholic Church has been Nigeria’s most important religious voice of conscience, in national affairs.⁶²⁶ Much can be achieved when Muslim and Christian leaders and groups join efforts in fostering common responsibility towards a just political and social order.

4.2.2. Adapting Sharia Law and it’s Concern in Nigeria

Many critical issues regarding Sharia advocacy in Nigeria need to be re-examined. In terms of constitutionality of the Sharia, there is evidence that points to the incompatibility of recent measures and the existing constitution. Two Nigerian legal experts have offered resources for Muslim reflection in this regard. Mohammed Bello, former Chief Justice of Nigeria and a prominent Muslim scholar, has noted the illegality of the application of Sharia in the Northern states.

The first is the legal supremacy of the 1999 Constitution...the next ...is section 36 (12)...it should be stated here, for the avoidance of doubt, that the Sharia law as stated in the Quran, Hadith and other sources is not a ‘written law’ within the meaning of Section 36 (12) of the 1999 constitution...there is yet another...section 38 (1) of the constitution ensures for every person the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his

⁶²⁵ Khundmīrī and Ansari, *Secularism, Islam and Modernity*, 272.

⁶²⁶ Most of the pastoral letters and statements of the Catholic Bishops’ conference (CBCN), from 1960-2002 are published in Catholic Church, Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, and Schineller, *Voice of the Voiceless*.

religion or belief, whereas under Sharia, *ridda* (change of religion) is a capital offence.⁶²⁷

The violation of fundamental human rights guaranteed by section 38 of the Nigerian constitution has also been highlighted by Vincent O. Nmehielle.⁶²⁸ He cites the right to public expressions of religious beliefs, the right to change one's religion, the right to freedom of association and protection from all forms of discrimination (in faith, schools, transport regulations, etc.) and the right to fair trial, which non-Muslims would hardly receive in Islamic courts.⁶²⁹ These and other similar considerations might compel Muslim leaders and thinkers to reconsider the full application of Sharia law in the light of shared constitutional domain and its consequences on a fruitful coexistence and shared dialogue with other believers and cultures.

It seems that this expanded position would also help Muslims in evaluating the current Sharia revolution. Thus, it has been carried out by a Muslim school that argues that an Islamized society offers the right opportunity to live Islamically.⁶³⁰ But the sitting governors of the Northern states that hatched the current revolution seem to be driven by the desire to score a political goal with religion, and have not included in their argument concern for active change of official corruption and social injustice. These contradictions become clear in the recent book, *The Phantom Crescent*,⁶³¹ in which a Muslim cleric,

⁶²⁷ Mohammad Bello, "Obstacles before the Sharia," *Tell*, March 6, 2000.

⁶²⁸ Principal Defender Special Court for Sierra Leone and formerly Bram Fischer Chair of Human Rights law. The Mandela institute, School of Law, University of the Witwatersrand.

⁶²⁹ Nmehielle, "Sharia Law in the Northern States of Nigeria," 751–752.

⁶³⁰ Alternatively living Islamically means to live justly as a Muslim which entails being on a journey, both external and internal, toward attaining a state of peace.. In other words to engage in such striving in the cause of Allah is the purpose of a Muslim's life.

⁶³¹ This book meant to be spread through theatrical play-acting and shows, has been banned by the upper Sharia court in Tudun Wada. According to media information, the book, among other things, contains scenes that depicted Governor Sani Yerima "selectively approving amputation and stoning to death for Buba Jangebe and Safiya respectively, while sparing Bala Dainna, Chairman of the governor's party," See "Parallel Government: Sharia Court bans Circulation of Book" at <http://odili.net/news/source/2007/oct/11/560html>.

Malam Sani Shehu describes the “hypocrisy” of Sharia practice in Nigeria. In the wake of the controversy surrounding his work, Shehu, describes the “Sharia hypocrisy” in terms of the use and manipulation of Islam for material gains by politicians in collaboration with clerics and traditional rulers. According to Shehu:

since the introduction...of the Sharia legal code in the Northern states, all the promises that have been made by the politicians have not come to pass... They advertised the code as the solution...but eight years after, there has been no change. We have seen a systematic and institutional looting of the treasury of the states by the governors who had paraded themselves as Sharia-compliant. We have seen the application of double standards on the part of the governors. We have seen clear cases of human rights abuses perpetrated by the so called *Hisbah*, the Sharia enforcement police....⁶³²

Shehu’s account seems to confirm the dubious nature of the intentions of the politicians who enforce Sharia penal codes. The sense that the introduction of Sharia law will promote the re-ordering of Muslim society may well be unrelated with what is on the ground. Emerging realities seem to suggest that Nigerian Muslims might need to liberate the Sharia from politicization, in order to recover its true spiritual and ethical character. While Muslim concerns about identity are valid, the Islamist agenda of the ruling class, continues to undermine other crucial concerns. Ultimately, the crusade and advocacy for Sharia based on Muslim identity requires the dissolution of national values and the destruction of national identity. Integration, engaged pluralism, and neighborhood engagement, mean little or nothing to the current Sharia informed movement. These are critical issues that surround Sharia, some of which have been underscored by Christian advocacy groups, government officials, and human rights workers. The present

⁶³² Ibid.

revolution does not signal an end to the crisis, but rather, has emboldened both Sharia proponents and opponents. It is vital then to be re-examined.

Sharia is meant to inform the character and conduct of adherents of Islam, and indeed guide an Islamic life of faith. This vision has served the pre-colonial Islamic, societies of Northern Nigeria, where the Sokoto caliphate supervised a version of Sharia civil and criminal code over that of the empire. However, the reason for the suppression of Islamic penal codes in Nigeria's legal system since the Colonial rule is not something that can be dismissed by the twelve northern states simply on the grounds of claims of desire to live in accordance with religious demands. Despite the justification of Sharia law, Muslims must seriously investigate whether Sharia is compatible with Nigeria's pluralist context. Here Khan is most relevant with his call for the proper exercise of direction, or "*ijtihad*" in matters of Sharia. The fact that the Islamic sacred laws are limited by their context of origin, in my view, demands that Nigerian Muslims should consider the contemporary context of their religious life and practice. The challenge is to reconstruct Islam in Nigeria in a way that serves the peaceful co-existence of multiple identities-an ideal true to the Islamic faith

Then negotiation and co-existence of a secular legal system with Sharia law may be Islamically acceptable. This is because, while keeping Muslims firmly rooted in their religion, such a compromise positively establishes the diversity to others as an Islamic commitment. To allow the Sharia to control the personal lives of Muslims in a secular and multi-religious country is a concession; and to reserve criminal punishment as a matter of secular law is necessary for state control and national unity. The (forceful) introduction of Sharia has raised concerns for the unity of the Nigerian people. It must

not be forgotten that the prevailing post-independent legal system was negotiated and established in 1958 by representation that included the northern political leaders led by Saduana of Sokoto, and Sir Ahmadu Bello.⁶³³ Besides religious and ethnic affiliations, Nigerians are called to live together in harmony.

In essence, reconsidering the arbitrary enforcement of Sharia by the twelve predominantly Muslim states does not devalue Islamic faith, but rather such a discussion encourages a balanced consideration between religious identity and national progress. Furthermore, such a reevaluation may serve as one step in addressing the mutual suspicion between Christians and Muslims and open the doors to a sustained interreligious dialogue.

4.2.3. Islamic Militancy in Nigeria

Before one can answer the question concerning the defining aspects of Islam and the productive values promoted by the Muslim faith, one must first investigate the status of militancy in the spiritual and moral vocation of Islam. Perhaps, no other place in recent times, has had local disagreements and international incidents that touch upon Islam produce religious violence and concerns for potential sectarian conflicts more than Nigeria.⁶³⁴ Ustaz M. Ashafa and James M. Wuye⁶³⁵ noted that between 1977 and 1997,

⁶³³ John Onaiyekan, "Muslims and Christians in Nigeria: The Imperative of Dialogue," *Sedos Bulletin* 33, no. 11 (2001): 282.

⁶³⁴ Here, we recall that such incidents as Christian opposition to extension of the scope of Sharia and its implementation in (1980 and 2000). Recent events include Miss World Beauty Pageant (2002), the cartoon satirizing the Prophet Muhammad, the US bombing of Afghanistan, the onslaught of Boko Haram. All these show how religion, rather than serving peace, has been made to bring pain and hardship on Nigerians.

⁶³⁵ Muhammad N. Ashafa and James M. Wuye, *The Pastor and the Imam: Responding in Conflict* (Kaduna: Muslim/Christian Dialogue Youth Forum, 1999), 87-88.

thirty-five sectarian and inter-communal conflicts occurred in Nigeria. Incalculable lives have been lost, many have been displaced and churches, mosques and property destroyed.

The religious intent behind the razing of churches becomes more disturbing when such acts are viewed as incompatible with the Quranic view of the inviolability of houses of worship. Mosques and Churches are among the houses of God, dedicated “for the celebration, and glorifying God’s name in the mornings and in the evenings” (Q. 24:36). Furthermore, the Quran asserts that God protects such places of worship by uplifting those who will defend them from those who seek their destruction. This verse can only be sufficiently interpreted by scholars of the Quran in full consideration of its context. But the significance of these verses and similar ones is a reminder of the Islamic call for peace and justice, core of the challenge of the Quran. Within this context, these verses and similar ones represent the Quranic foundations for their examination of religious militancy. Mutual respect and honoring differences also entail preventing conflicts and prohibiting the use of violence in the name of God.

On the basis of the central character of Islam as a force for peace and justice, the question of violent acts perpetrated by few Muslims needs to be commonly addressed, focusing on eliminating the tendency from its root. Mona Siddique, a Muslim scholar, identifies this root in extremist ideologies of hate. In her words: “We (Muslims) should tackle the issue of extremism not just at the point it translates into violence. We have to be sensitive to the theologies of prejudice and dogmatism that permeate a range of issues, on gender, on pluralism and civil society.”⁶³⁶ This implies that a concerted effort is needed to deal with the motivations which simply degrade Islam and the so-called

⁶³⁶ Mona Siddique, “Faith Requires Voices and Action to Pull It back from the Clutches of hateful Ideologies,” *The Tablet*, July 7, 2007, 9.

‘others’, or the ‘Muslim world and the rest’. These are the challenges facing uprooting Islamic militancy in Nigeria. To renew the modern Islam that came to be through the military tradition of ‘Uthman dan Fodio⁶³⁷ can be difficult.⁶³⁸ But it could still be dangerous to be captive to Islam’s militant and political expressions. Hence, renewing Islam may result in a fresh appreciation of religion and civil life that offers no room for hatred, discrimination and violence. The need for the Muslim community to take a leading role in refuting ideologies of violence is reinforced by the fact that such ideologies are preached in the mosque, church and among families and in social circles. There is also the need to condemn the actions of those Muslims who justify violence against others by claiming that such activities are justified by the Quran and are in line with Islam.

Tackling the extremists’ attempt to read their values of militancy in the Quran might also require investing in de-radicalization initiatives. Such active change initiatives would enable the radicalized members to rediscover an alternative Islamic piety. This could be an effective way to offer young people an alternative to interpretations of extremists, whom they see as Muslim role models. It is also against this background that the motivations and interests of foreign Islamic governments and funding agencies should

⁶³⁷ Uthman Dan Fodio was a Fulani from Gobir who was opposed to unIslamic practices by Muslims. He was also an outstanding reformist who carried out a jihad of the sword in Hausaland with the intent of purging Islam of pollution.

⁶³⁸ Lamin Sanneh, “Christian Experience of Islamic Da’wa, with particular reference to Africa,” *International Review of Missions*, 65, no. 258 (1976), 416. Sanneh shows that despite the link between the current adulation of jihad and the image of Muslims suffering in Muslim countries, there is continuity between current Muslim militancy in Nigeria and Dan Fodio’s militant spread of Islam. He argues that, unlike the situation in Mali and other countries where Islam has spread through peaceful strategies, the expansion of Islamic influence in Nigeria did not ensue through the power of preaching, but by “Uthman dan Fodio’s might and his lieutenants by military campaign.” The “jihad” was directed against unbelievers who were judged to have compromised the Islamic faith. Hence both concerns share in the same militant tradition.

be religiously re-examined. It will not be quite helpful if the Islamic environment in Nigeria is determined by foreign extremist visions of Islam from Iran, Libya or Saudi Arabia. A genuine experience of Islam needs to breathe with local cultures; it has to reconcile itself with Nigeria's history, composition, struggles, and destiny.

4.2.4. Interreligious Relations in Nigeria

The need to review Muslim attitudes towards other believers is very much at the heart of reconsidering the relationship between religion and society. This involves re-examining the image of Islam that Muslims have constructed in the light of the concerns, sensibilities and achievements of Christian-Muslim dialogue, and indeed, in view of the reality of other religious and cultural identities. The religious history of Nigeria suggests that, even in the 18th century Sokoto Caliphate North, religious plurality existed, even though the predominantly Christian and traditionalist Middle Belt refused to be incorporated into the Islamic system. Contemporary Nigerian society is marked by its increasingly multi-religious character. As such, the task of developing more positive relations of religions is more urgent than ever.

Promoting harmonious relations between Muslims and Christians should, therefore, be one of the Muslim community's principal concerns. More specially, the challenge involves transcending the path of confrontation and rivalry between Muslims and Christians that some *sheikhs* and *imams* promote and re-orientating Muslim's focus on avenues of mutual understanding and cooperation. This task needs to be emphasized in the Islamic mission in Nigeria today, especially as there are increasing calls for interreligious coexistence and peace by interfaith initiatives (e.g. the mediation center in

Kaduna) and among certain scholars of Islam.⁶³⁹ These, and similar projects in favor of peace, may well signal that a confrontational strategy is no longer tenable, and that developing a viable model of Christian-Muslim relations has become an inescapable reality.

Of course, conflict, as a collision of viewpoints can play an important part in achieving social change. But as Robert Lee observes, conflict “need not be destructive”⁶⁴⁰ It can lead to positive change in the society. This is why religious traditions must train believers to recognize that differing voices and competing convictions are important elements of civic life, and need not lead to violent acts against those with whom we disagree. The Catholic Church made this shift forty years ago, when it led the way in challenging the attitude of religious groups towards those outside them by introducing the declaration of the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions (*Nostra Aetate*). Within this context, there is the need to think that the challenge of religious plurality is only for Muslim leaders and scholars to commit to understanding of positive interreligious relations. The demand goes further as representatives from the Nigerian Muslim community are drawn into discussion with their Christian counterparts in the aftermath of violent confrontations. Muslims practitioners must begin to appreciate and engage religious diversity. In essence, the concern will be to develop a contextual theology of religious diversity that takes into account the pluralistic character of Nigerian society and defines dialogue as a defining aspect of Islamic mission.

⁶³⁹ From December 13-15, 2004, notable Muslim leaders and academics, and participants from other religions gathered at Giginya hotel, Sokoto, to explore the theme; “Peaceful co-existence, pluralism and nation-building.” The conference was jointly organized by Usman Danfodiyo, University of Sokoto, some key national research institutes and the Sokoto state government.

⁶⁴⁰ Lee et al., *Religion and Social Conflict*, 4.

Islam and Christianity have their own distinct vision of reality, yet with shared elements. Through dialogue, respective believers can deal with the critical questions common to their concerns, discover the other's culture and cooperate in a common responsibility toward the human good. It is precisely within this theo-ethical vocation that Nigerian Muslims need to embrace sincerely the Quranic urge to eschew a mindset of superiority and "view with each other in good deeds."⁶⁴¹ This is the essence of engaged pluralism. In seeking to cooperate with one another in "good deeds", the common good is supported rather than eschewed. It is this author's view that the authentic identity of Nigerian Muslims lies in promoting better relations with other religions and cultures in order to jointly build a better society.

4.2.5. India/ Nigeria: Religious Fundamentalism Compared

India is the largest country in Asia to be colonized by the United Kingdom while Nigeria also is the largest country in Africa that was colonized by the United Kingdom. According to its constitution, India is a sovereign socialist, secular democratic republic. The central government has greater power in relation to its states and its central government is patterned after the British Parliamentary system, while Nigeria emerged from military rule and enjoys a democratic government that has been modeled after the one in the United States.

India became an official republic in 1950 with 66 years of independence. Currently, India is the second largest country in Asia with a population of over 1.2 billion people. India is made up of 28 states and 7 union territories. It has a parliamentary system

⁶⁴¹ This fact has also been emphasized in Asghar Ali Engineer, *Rational Approach to Islam* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2001), 149, Khan, *Islam Rediscovered*, 78.

governed by constitutional law, which came into force on 26th February 1950. On the other hand Nigeria became a republic in 1963 with 53 years of independence. Nigeria has a population of 127.1 million people and 36 states with Abuja as the Federal capital territory ruled by the head of state.

India, like Nigeria is the land of religion in a special manner. Amid the complex of spiritual development in India, Hinduism is probably the most prevalent religious persuasion of the subcontinent. “According to the most recent census figures, 83 percent of India’s population is classified as Hindu, a total of perhaps 700 million Hindus.”⁶⁴²

This anthology reflects the dominance of Hinduism among the religions of India. It is simultaneously a developed cultural tradition and a social structure. Hindu itself is so complex that there is no such thing as Hindu doctrinal orthodoxy. Today 13.4 percent of Indians are Muslim, 2.3 percent Christians, 1.9 percent Sikhs, and 0.8 percent Buddhists. There are other multiple local deities, cults, ceremonies and beliefs which belong to the people in a very special way. The experience of these religions among the people however is powerful and most effective in bestowing meaning, value and direction to the life process. Similarly, Nigeria too hosts a very religious people. Her three outstanding religions are Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. Today 0.8 are Traditionalist, 45 percent are Christians and 50 percents are Muslims.

The vitality of religious fundamentalism and its impact on public life in the form of riots and religious- based political parties has been among the greatest challenges to Indian political institutions in the 1990s. However, the most spectacular was in 2008 when militants from Lashkar-e-Toiba, a Pakistan based organization with established

⁶⁴² Lopez, *Religions of India in Practice*, 5.

links to the country's security made a bloody assault on Mumbai India's commercial capital. Although it has been insisted that Islamic extremism had not developed among its Muslim communities but now India has to accept that a small section of its 160 million strong Muslim communities accounting for 14 percent of the largest Hindu nation has become radicalized. Furthermore, this course will not fail to mention the growing radicalization of Hindu on the other hand with the pogrom against Muslims in Gujarat, where the toll on Muslims was much higher than in the Mumbai event. Why has some Hindu resorted to violence of this kind? Is it because of fear from Muslims or is it revenge or both? Primarily many have condemned the Indian government for failing to neutralize Islamic terrorists. "Had the state been able to act tough on terror emanating because of the Kashmir issue effectively...there would not have been any Hindu resorting to such violence."⁶⁴³ This is not to support the violence perpetrated for it is an inhuman act.

Fundamentalism in recent years is a slippery term that has come to stand for rather different things. Fundamentalist "perceives God working through them and regards themselves as his elect and the means by which he is believed to mediate his past, present, and future."⁶⁴⁴ In addition, the work of Marty suggests that fundamentalists are not necessarily inspired by religious considerations. He argues that those who "advocate fundamentalism do so largely as a smokescreen since they are, in reality, encouraged by

⁶⁴³ Sushma Jaitly, "Hindu radicalization- Who is to blame?" *IndiBlogger*. Accessed November 23, 2012. <https://www.indiblogger.in/indipost.php?post=44911>

⁶⁴⁴ Stephen J. Hunt, *Alternative Religions A Sociological Introduction* (UK: University of the West in England, 2001), 64.

their psychological dispositions and may be interpreted as a product of social forces and historical events.”⁶⁴⁵

In Nigeria, it is true that religion has continues to play a destabilizing role in the socio-economic life of the people. It is also true that many of these conflicts are not purely religious in conception but religion is only used to deploy them. But the question is what religion constitutes the destabilizing factor? Is it Christianity or Islam? All religions claim to be advocates of harmonious existence but without digging too deep into the past, we can trace the roots of the current religious problem in Nigeria to Muhammad Marwa popularly known as Maitatsine, a Camerounian by birth who became a resident of Kano where he raised a fanatical group. At first his name did not ring a bell in anybody’s ears but in December 1980 his dangerous group struck the nation with murderous intent. “Their onslaught against the nation was tagged in the war against infidels and was the first in the series of the many religious wars that have shaken Nigeria to its foundation.”⁶⁴⁶

Islamic extremism today has developed differently in the name of Boko Haram another fundamentalist group. This sect is an extension of the dreaded Al-Qaeda Islamist sect which launched global terror with September 11, 2001 attack on the twin towers in New York. Boko Haram has used relatively large followers of fundamentalist Muslims in Northern Nigeria to render Nigeria volatile and vulnerable to religious fanaticism. This group was founded by Muhammad Yusuf in 2003. This religious group is against Western education and has unleashed terror in Northern states through kidnapping,

⁶⁴⁵ Marty M, *Fundamentalism* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, July 1996) cited in Stephen J. Hunt, *Alternative Religions a Sociological Introductions* (UK: University of the West in England, 1978), 66.

⁶⁴⁶ Odey, *The Sharia and the Rest of Us*, 20.

bombing, killing and destroying property worth billions of dollars. It has been pointed out that this sect has serious foreign backing in terms of funding and logistics. For example it is suspected to be affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Algerian-based Salafist group (SGPC) for preaching and combat.⁶⁴⁷

Furthermore, Nigeria has large number of Muslims, unlike India where Muslims have been living as a minority for centuries and it is therefore important to understand the present Hindu-Muslim conflict with reference to her inter-religious conflict. The significant of Khan's study in India will also shed light on the complex experience of shared life between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria since 1980s. Khan was not always an activist, instead, he has evolved over time into this role in India, partly due to the demands placed on him by the events of the recent communal turmoil and partly due to perhaps his own vision of the Muslims' role in present times. To what extent has Khan's interpretation of Islam as peaceful religion contributed to the normalization of relations between Muslims and other communities?

Khan acknowledges to some extent that while Muslim history has witnessed periods of creativity as well as peaceful interaction with other religious communities with advancements in scientific knowledge, violence and bloodshed have also been part of the Muslim past.

Khan was a product of Jama'at Islam⁶⁴⁸ and later speaks in opposition to the Jama'at's view of Islam. He claimed that Jama'at and its founder Maududi had misperceived Islam, putting forth a crooked interpretation that has eventually led Muslims to a destructive

⁶⁴⁷ Agbo A. "The Plot to Stop Jonathan" in Tell May 2, 2011, 48-49

⁶⁴⁸ Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad (Association of Sunnis for the propagation of Islam and for Holy war) Nigerian Boko Haram is part of this group.

course in recent history. This “interpretational error” so to speak, has since been identified by Khan and others as being in need of correction. This then is the mission of Khan’s “new approach” in pursuit of reconciliation for the sake of resolving conflict and tends to overlook existing social forces. He is often accused of ignoring historical facts and presenting a selective or “romantic” view of the past.⁶⁴⁹

Omar, for instance, argues that in Khan’s view, “history, which has been written with an orientation to wars and conflicts with victories and defeats, must be put aside; while the unwritten history of peaceful development should be highlighted instead.”⁶⁵⁰ Omar further noted that for Khan, “Islam was brought to and implemented in various communities and societies of the world, and remained as a dominant ideology of the world for centuries because there was a vacuum in the spiritual lives of these people. In this, he often tends to ignore the political, social and economic factors that were seminal for ripening the conditions for Islamic armies’ expansionist endeavors.”⁶⁵¹ Khan relies heavily on the two basic canonical sources of the Islamic tradition, the Quran and the hadith, but at the same time projected a modern outlook in his work. Khan deals with issues of nation building and religious harmony focused on Hindu-Muslim relations. His theology through his works and understanding of Western civilization is a strong step in improving the destiny of Muslim society. While this is a constructive approach for moral literature, it is uncritical and often ignores historical evidence that seems to go against desired results.

⁶⁴⁹ From the particular orientation Khan displays, he may be viewed as engaging in “romantic anti-rationalism” (Gibb’s term), on the one hand, and apologetic discourse on the other. Hamilton A. R. Gibb. *Modern Trends in Islam* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), 110.

⁶⁵⁰ Omar, “Rethinking Islam,” 5.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

4.2.6. Negotiating a Functioning Dialogue in Nigeria

Nigeria is marred by constant religious disturbances between Muslims and Christians in their bid to gain control of the political, economic, social and religious situations of the nation, in spite of the constitution's definition of the country as a non-religious state.⁶⁵² Today the violence caused by differences in religious beliefs is threatening the peace and stability of the country.

The call for tolerance and inter-religious dialogue meetings has not been enough.

A recurring question is: why did dialogue fail to achieve unity and peace among Christians and Muslims in spite of the effort exerted by the federal government in sponsoring these meetings? The foregoing questions are pertinent because of the complex nature of the emergent global context that has closed conceptualization of ideas.

However, after much reflection to the above issues, we have realized that we have never had real dialogue but only constant negotiations and that is why "we cannot expect to have the results that dialogue can bring to society."⁶⁵³ These dialogue meetings lack, more profoundly, that tolerance based on "love of God and love of neighbor" that should be a shared quality in Nigerian life. In this section therefore, there is the need to x-ray how religious command for love of God and neighbor can be the basis of a Christian-Muslim dialogue in Nigeria. It is within this principle command of love as enumerated in the Papal Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* by Benedict XVI precinct of thought that we hope

⁶⁵² Constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria, part 2, art. 10). It happens that this part of the Constitution was thrown over board when some states in the northern region adopted Islamic Sharia law in October 1999. By implication this has changed the republican status of the nation to the Islamic religious state by imposing Sharia law on both Muslims and Christians who are citizens of those states, and on the non-Nigerians who were residents there.

⁶⁵³ B. O. Igboin, "Appraising Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Towards a Re-awakening of the Prophetic Voice" (presentation, Annual Convention of the Conference on Cape Town, South Africa, February 12-15, 2012).

to discuss dialogue since it is not done in a vacuum. Dialogue must have an agenda for discourse.

Pope Benedict XVI advocated the practical sense of love in *Deus Caritas Est* as a “common word” to be used and applied by Christians and Muslims in developing a theology of love in their relationship especially in their various segments of religious, political, moral and social life. This is because there is the view that the prevailing crisis in Nigeria might well be connected with deviations in the application of the fundamental teachings of these religions.

4.2.6.1. Christian Understanding of Love

Throughout history, philosophy and religion have done the most speculation on the phenomenon of love. In the first section of *Deus Caritas Est*, Benedict XVI notes the difficulty that arises in the explication of love. This diversity of uses and meanings combined with the complexity of the feelings involved makes love unusually difficult to consistently define, even compared to other emotional states. The Pope gears his effort in this section to restore a proper understanding of love by summing up the different forms of love as: *Eros*, *Agape* and *Philia*.

Eros is the Greek word used to refer to a need centered on love or desire based on attraction and fulfillment. Eros concerns our power of passionate emotion. This love reflects the desire, the longing for union with another that enflames the human heart.

Pope Benedict XVI asserts that:

Eros and agape can never be completely separated...Even if eros is at first mainly covetous and ascending, a fascination for the great promises of happiness, in drawing near to the other, it is less and less concerned with itself, increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and wants to be there for the other. The element of agape thus

enters into this love, for otherwise eros is impoverished and even loses its own nature.”⁶⁵⁴

The Holy Father notes the delicate function of eros from the point of creation, how it directs man towards marriage, to a bond that is unique and definitive; thus and only thus does it fulfill its deepest purpose.

Agape focuses on our solicitous concern for another’s good. This love enacts a caring that is not merely a sentiment and is never finished and complete. In this charitable sense, “love causes us to see people not as ‘others’ separate from or opposed to us, but as part of a “we” that comprises all humanity.”⁶⁵⁵ It is, therefore, a love that supposes human freedom and implies a call to dialogue.⁶⁵⁶ As a result his holiness affirms that charity is necessary in every society and for the Church it can never be simply a mere social assistance, but it is always and everywhere an indispensable expression and a responsible task for the faithful.

Pope Benedict XVI described *Philia* as the “love of friendship which combines eros and agape into a union of heart.”⁶⁵⁷ In this life friendship must be based on truth, an agreement of minds. Friendship demands some minimal awareness of the truth that is the other person and that can only be achieved by “frankness” where friends reveal themselves to each other as best as they can. This love for the other person, his holiness identifies as the love of neighbor. This teaching on love of neighbor can be seen in the Islamic teaching as well.

4.2.6.2. Islamic Understanding of Love

⁶⁵⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est* (Nigeria: Pauline Publications), Africa, no 7.

⁶⁵⁵ Melina, L and C. A Anderson, *The Way of Love: Reflection on Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical Deus Caritas Est* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2006), 4.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*,3. (C.f. John : 15, 14-15) describes the relationship between Christ and his disciples

The Muslim word for affection (*mahabba*) is (ardent love in Arabic language). This word is derived from *hubb* meaning a small seed like mustard that is planted; later it blossoms and bears fruit. Similarly, when love is embedded in the heart, it also does not suffer any change by absence or presence, pain or pleasure, separation or union. It is purely an unconditional love. For Islam, believers should place God first in their hearts, in the sense that no other love may override one's love of God; God should be the highest and foremost object of love. According to the Quran:

if your father or your sons or your brethren, or your wives, or your tribe, or the wealth you have acquired, or the merchandise for which you fear that there will be no sale, or dwellings you desire are dearer to you than Allah and his Messenger and striving in His way: then wait till Allah brings His command to pass. Allah guides not wrongdoing folk. (Sura, 9:24)

This verse highlights that the love of God should be above whatever else one should dream of in life. A believer therefore, becomes one whose love for God is high above all things. Thus, to love God is to love our neighbor. Based on this argument, there is the need for the two traditional religions to have an Islamo-Christian theology of love.⁶⁵⁸ It is “a theology that considers the phenomenological primacy of love of neighbor since the neighbor is the first beloved to be consciously perceived and at the same time, a dynamic primacy of love of God that sustains all love of charity....”⁶⁵⁹

4.2.7. Application of Islamo-Christian Theology

Dialogue is the singular way out of the current situation of religious and socio-political crisis in both Nigeria and the world as a whole. The new vision of the world is to

⁶⁵⁸ An Islamo-Christian theology of love is a combination of the Christian teaching in Mt 25:31-46 and the Islamic teaching in Sura 76:8-9 and hadith cited by al-Hilli.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

respect freedom of religion and the duty of religion therefore, is to guide that freedom with sense of responsibility. Thus all religions have the inherent duty therefore, to unite, transform and direct people to God. In view of that, this new Islamo-Christian theology of love should be:

- (1) Integrated into the catechetical and moral instructions of the Nigerian children before the advance to adult hood through the method of catechetical instruction for Christians or the way of Allah in the madrasa for Muslims. This processes could help to curb the already inherited hatred for the ‘other religion’ and help to set a fundamental process of forgiveness and reconciliation early enough between the two communities.
- (2) The state must free itself from the stronghold of either Christianity or Islam. All religions and their adherents should be treated equally. The state should not be seen identifying with one religious group over the other or accepting one religion as a state religion. The secularity of the state must be respected.
- (3) In Nigeria, there should be consistent and ongoing inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue to promote peaceful co-existence and the need to keep in check religious extremism and fanaticism. Since religion is used as a smokescreen, it becomes imperative to have an engaging interreligious dialogue that comes from the heart and not dialogue of written word from the mind.
- (4) Government should be hands off in religious matters and allow the clergy of both religions to do their jobs The situation where public funds are used to enact religious laws and establish religious courts, schools and pay religious leaders is not good for healthy and peaceful co-existence.

- (5) Pope Benedict XVI advises that charity should not be used to proselytize; therefore, standards should be set for preaching on religion. In this way religious extremists of both religions will be controlled against radical theology.
- (6) Interfaith mediation centers should be established at all levels of the government and religious institutions while media houses and gentlemen of the press, on the other hand should always be fair in their reports especially when the matter involves crises of religious and ethnic nature.

Although hopeful of fruitful results, the failure of interreligious dialogue in Nigeria has to be determined. The absence of thorough and competent intra religious dialogue is important. For example there are words of particular religious books that need to be taken spiritually rather than literally. Christians or Muslims should not take up arms against the so- called infidels. These passages cannot be taken literally any more without offending God Himself. When this word is fed on at the intra religious level, it can reflect towards a positive dialogue at the interreligious level. After all, Muslims take great pride in citing a hadith that says “seek knowledge even unto China”⁶⁶⁰ that points to the importance of seeking knowledge even if meant travelling as far away as China, a place perceived at the sixth century Arabia to be farther on earth. This is why the Boko Haram sects should realize that rejection of Western education is tantamount to the rejection of the hadith itself.

In summary with the above listed points, the pivotal message of *Deus Caritas Est* (God is love), can thus be the foundation of our living in harmony across our borders.

This is the basis for effective dialogue.

⁶⁶⁰ Dorothy Perkins, Encyclopedia of China (The Essential Reference to China, its History and Culture), 335

4.2.8. Theological Reflections

Today, despite appearances, conversations are taking place within Islam. This is in response to the modern challenges of living in a pluralistic world. From Nigeria to India for instance, various perceptions, tendencies and ideologies within Islam exist, but different intellectual conversations and debates do take place regarding Islamic views of religion concerning people of other faiths, Sharia law, the state and political order. Differing views and visions within the Islamic community, from “moderate” Islam to “extremist” versions carry within them the conviction that the religious other must be considered.

Khan has been presented as a significant figure who offers an interpretation of Islam relevant to the current situation. His discussions concerning Islam, politics, pluralism, interreligious relations and peace, deserve serious consideration for its possible contribution towards reconciling the Muslim life of faith with the challenge of Nigeria’s secular and multi-religious character. This includes a framework that can inspire more positive relations between Muslims and Christians. Khan’s thinking about the essence of Islam as spiritual development and the challenge of re-orientating Muslim life on the Quran and the tradition of the prophet has been largely informed by the need to render Islam anew in the modern context. He draws a distinction between essential elements and secondary dimensions of Islam. These are important in identifying and repositioning issues of submission, worship, witness, and praxis within the material realm. The goal of this intellectual exercise is to re-enter every aspect of Islamic life and activity around the spiritual/mystical dimensions of the faith and to make Islam dynamically alive.

Khan's vision of "re-application" suggests that Muslim communities need not maintain undue dependence on previous religious teachings, but should seek to present and live Islam in terms that effectively respond to modern challenges. Once Islam is newly discovered through proper re-application, then it can take on new meaning as a witness of faith and address the ethical challenges of justice, solidarity, peace, non-violent invitation (*da'wa*) to what is good.

Islamic traditionalism endorses a perspective of a Muslim vision of God, history, revelation, and "otherness" through a fixed Muslim self-image. Khan's schema seeks to develop a vision of Islam that engages seriously the challenges posed by modernity. Likewise, this proposal does not align with the fundamentalist thesis whose representatives Khan prefers to call "Islamic extremists."⁶⁶¹ Islamic fundamentalism fosters the strength of Islam to dominate society through a control of power and view this control as part of their spiritual quest. As an argument against diversity, a fundamentalism interpretation pits Islam with other religions, cultures and ideologies. Meanwhile, Khan understanding seeks to include and engage "the other" and the world in fruitful discourse.

This sense of openness and respect for differences, counter the prevailing fundamentalist ideal of formation and dominance of Islam within the secular nation-state. Khan's vision of "re-application" may prove useful to Muslims in Indian and elsewhere who seek to reconcile Islamic life with contemporary challenges. This way of being faithful to an Islamic way of life and ensuring authentic inter-cultural relations with other (religious) groups is to be fully Muslim, and at the same time, fully Indian or Nigeria, as

⁶⁶¹ Khān, *Islam Rediscovered*, 132.

bringing balance between the two loyalties is the goal. In brief, the essential points of such a “re-application” strategy are: (1) the centrality of the spiritual dimension of a Muslim life of faith; (2) a commitment to the rights and religious freedoms of all persons; (3) a commitment to non-violence as a means of spreading Islam; (4) a duty towards dialogue and cooperation with other religions and cultures, and (5) the separation of religion and state.⁶⁶²

This vision of Islam has its own limitations however. Khan’s agenda rightly affirm the imperative of the practice of *ijtihad* or independent judgment for Islam and Muslims’ life of faith in order to engage constructively with others. This entails multiple autonomous discernments in Islamic practice, with no single interpretation deemed normative, not even Khan’s or those who set the agenda. Hence, in the absence of central regulatory authority in Islam, Khan’s scheme may not yield a normative vision, given the various visions of differing parties. Of course, this is true of the promotion of Islamism in Nigeria. The twelve Northern states that introduced penal law, which sidelined the nation’s legal system, have opted for the practical consistency that a fundamentalist Islamic vision offers. So critics may argue that Khan’s vision does not grapple seriously with the question of how to negotiate and decide between different interpretations with their various claims. Yet this very problem is beyond his vision. Here Khan does not provide a solution, but rather trusts in the process of dialogue to determine the means of negotiation and execution.

The distinction that Khan draws between what is essential to Islam, that which presumably cannot be altered, and what is secondary, and thus, conditional and

⁶⁶² Cf. Troll, “A Significant Voice of Contemporary Islam,” 20.

changeable, serves well to develop his vision of spiritual approaches of Islam. While he rightly allows the Islamic sources to determine his agenda, it is conceivable that most Muslims may find the introduction of such distinctions into their comprehensive vision of faith difficult to accept. Khan's hermeneutical procedure is certainly optimistic.

His vision seems to ignore the important historical dimensions of the partitioning of India and its violent and divisive aftermath, which informs the political agenda of Indian Muslims, who still view themselves as victims of this event and subject to the will of a Hindu majority. For instance, in 2002, a horrific violent conflict involving Hindus and Muslims of Gujarat, India, resulted in the loss of Muslim lives and the destructions of mosques. The carnage described as a "state-sponsored genocide" is said to be only one event in the series of historical exclusions and, ethnic cleansings, to which Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and other vulnerable groups in this area are subjected.⁶⁶³

Ironically, this is the situation non-Muslims encounter in a Muslim-dominated Northern Nigeria. The reason for highlighting this case is to suggest that Khan does not take social conditions that can cause religious crisis or are sometimes used as excuse for promoting politicized Islam. Subsequently, one may look beyond Khan in order to confront deeply the challenges posed to the spiritual and ethical integrity of Islam by the failure of democratic and continuing inequalities that can motivate the pursuit of a fundamentalist agenda. Moreover, in his vision of Islam and the other religions, interreligious dialogue may face the danger of being treated as condescending measure on the part of Muslims. In positioning Islam as a perfect religion typical of the medieval

⁶⁶³ Cedrick Prakash, "From Untruth, Lead Us to Truth," *New Theology Review* (November 2006), 20-21.

views of Al-Hashimi and Ibn Taymiyya--there may be little or no possibility of Muslims being changed by encounters with others.

Despite these limitations, Khan's insights can serve as stimulus both for rethinking the political and militant abuses of Islamic groups, and for fostering interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The starting point of Khan's vision is his own context in which Indian Muslims are a minority group. However, his vision is not exclusive to this group for he offers a vision of Islamic practice for contemporary challenges of Muslim life of faith in a more globalized context. Moreover, Nigeria and India are both countries marked by religious and cultural pluralism, with a legacy of inter-community conflicts and violence. As such Khan's theological vision sets out guiding principles with which Nigerian Muslims can fashion an effective settlement between their faith, other religious groups, and the democratic secular state. The fact that some fanatical groups are often quick to resort to violence against non-Muslims and fellow Muslims in itself calls for an Islamic self examination. The need therefore becomes a serious dedication to the project of adapting Islamic principles to the specific context of Nigeria.

The option placed before the Muslim theologians is to investigate and evaluate the validity of Khan's "re-application" proposal, Against the criteria of the Quran and Sunna they must not merely engage in *taqlid*, or blindly follow the teachings of earlier generations or engage in traditional beliefs and practices. It is quite conceivable that Muslims dedicated to a more tolerant Islam could deploy a contextual "re-application" approach as a way of bridging their Muslim and Nigerian identities. These Muslims will be prepared to deal with the religious and political questions that confront living

alongside other believers in positive and fruitful relationships, and thus, ground Islam in the local culture. The major challenge for their Christian partners will be developing a new understanding of other religious faiths, engaging in a process of mutual discovery between Christians and Muslims, and conveying Christ's boundless love to all persons. Attempts must be made to show that what is at stake is not to establish the superiority of one's faith tradition, nor to control the polity. Both Muslims and Christians have a shared responsibility to cultivate a relationship of authentic respect and cooperation and prevent politicians from positioning their communities against one another.

CHAPTER FIVE: MUSLIM PERCEPTION OF CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS AND RECIPE FOR THEIR IMPROVED RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church has indeed given hope to Christians and Muslims in Nigeria based on the progress she has made in taking the lead to promote positive Christians-Muslims relations through dialogue and co-operation.⁶⁶⁴ Islam is a part of a world about which Vatican II calls for a new vision and mission. “The Sacred Council now pleads with all to go beyond the past and engage in a sincere effort at mutual understanding for the benefit of all...”⁶⁶⁵

This initiative is the crystallization of increasing changes in perceptions of Islam and Muslims, particularly on the part of the Catholic Church. But this prompts the more practical question: Does, the Church’s initiative constitute an abstract call or have Muslims been involved in the process? How do the different Muslims view Christian-Muslim relations? How much do the Nigerian Muslims’ views of Christian-Muslim relations reflect the wider Muslim perception? Developing mutual exchange between members of the two traditions has not always been easy due to the specific histories of various traditions in Nigeria. These challenges inform the possibility of Christian-Muslim dialogue and co-operation on the ground today.

⁶⁶⁴ Recall here the Vatican initiatives that foster Christian-Muslim relations. These include the impact of NA (1965); the establishment of PCID to oversee dialogue; the new Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims (1974); Annual good will messages to Muslims at the end of Ramadan fast since 1967; the promotion of dialogue through academic discourses; encouragement of local participation in dialogue; and successive popes’ meetings with Muslim representatives during papal visits to countries. The detail is confirmed by the Catholic leader of the United States church’s dialogue with Islam in Alexander Brunett, “What dialogue means for Catholics and Muslims,” *Origins* 30, no. 41 (2001): 660-661.

⁶⁶⁵ John Renard, *Responses to 101 Questions on Islam* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 152.

This chapter sets out to examine the ways in which Muslims receive and understand Christian-Muslim relations since Vatican II. It is categorized into two sections. The first part attempts to explore major interpretations of Islam and specific themes that cast light on the broader patterns of ideas and attitudes of Muslim groups in their relations with Christians. Jumping off this is the survey, I reflect on Muslim contributions to the promotion of Christian-Muslim relations for co-existence in Nigeria. The second part of the study thus provides a recipe for improved Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria, suggesting certain ways and means of resolving the crisis in this particular context.

Though, Islam has no official voice or ordained clergy in Nigeria as such the visible marks of a Muslim response are carried through collective and individual perspectives. This contemporary response sheds light on how Nigerian Muslims view Christian-Muslim relations. Although the different tendencies in Islam and their ideas are central to understanding what Muslims are thinking about Christian-Muslim relations, their variant visions are united by certain fundamentals of faith. Hence, we begin by studying major branches of Islam in Nigeria.

5.1. THE FACES OF ISLAM IN NIGERIA

Contemporary Islam has many faces varying from cultures, languages, races, beliefs and practices and should not be viewed as a monolithic construction. Reference to its believers by the generic term "Muslims", is meaningful when it takes note of this qualification. However, from Islamic sources, there are three categories of Islam in Nigeria: the *Sunni*, the *Shi'ite* and the *kharijite*. Today, Islam has a larger number of

Sunnis that identify with important features of traditional Islamic heritage namely; the significance of the four caliphs, primacy of the Quran, Sunna, and the traditional law.⁶⁶⁶

The Nigerian Muslim communities are Sunni of the *Maliki* tradition dominated by the rival *Qadiriya* and *Tijaniya* Sufi orders. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the brotherhoods had faced denunciation as degenerate from the puritans. The second stream is the shi'a that belongs to the group that rallied around the fourth caliph, Ali, after the assassination of the third caliph, 'Uthman, believing him to be the *imam* designate at Ghadir Khum near Mecca.⁶⁶⁷ About 8.75 percent of the Muslim world constitutes the shi'a. Their central feature is to stress on the relative authority of the *imam*, in opposition to a rigid grip on the Quran—a kind of 'scriptural fundamentalism'⁶⁶⁸ Shi'a have membership in Nigeria known as the Nigerian Muslim brothers. It is a political activist reform movement ideologically and perhaps operationally linked to Iranian revolutionary Shi'ism. Its main

⁶⁶⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2002), 67–70. It is suggested in this consideration that apart from their cautious assent to the consensus counsel (*Ijima*) of the community, *Sunnism* is divided along the lines of their four schools of law. During the eighth and ninth centuries, the learned jurists codified the schools of jurisprudence (*fiqh*). It is known that some of these schools were lost, and four are extant in the past thousand years; and thus became the nucleus of traditional *Sunnism*; the codifications of Hanafi (d. 768), Maliki (d. 795), Shafi (d. 820), and Hanbali (d. 855)

⁶⁶⁷ The supporters of caliph 'Ali argue that the prophet's statement; "Ali is my door," expresses his choice of 'Ali as leader of the Muslims. But the Sunnis do not see it that way. They rather interpret the prophet's statement as a gesture of esteem for 'Ali, and not a handing on or preference of this Prophet's companion as his successor or leader of Muslims. See Cyril Glasse, *The concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (London; Stacy International, 1991), 136.

⁶⁶⁸ The word "Shi'ism" traces the Arabic terminology, shi'ia, meaning party. Hence it is used as *shi'at* 'Ali to refer to the partisans of 'Ali, the first cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad. Joseph Kenny has offered useful information on the development of this party from the Umayyad period to their unique characterization in the 'Abbasid period. See Joseph Kenny, *Theological themes common to Islam and Christianity* (Lagos: Dominican Publications, 12977), 1. In their divisions, there is strong unity about the belief in the position of *imams* in their genealogical tree. *Imam*, in this understanding of the Shi'ites, refers to the one who holds the light of Muhammad and has mastery of Islamic law and inner and external knowledge of the Quran and Sunna. For Twelver Shi'ia, the cult of the *imams*, includes veneration of the twelve imams who have led the community, as well as, the expectation of the return of the hidden *imams*. Further information can be found in Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, 60-70.

idea has been that Muslims should effect a change to the country's secular status with total Islamic rule.

The third Muslim group is a break-away from caliph 'Ali party, in protest of 'Ali's concession that his dispute with the dissident *Mu'awiyah* in Syria be arbitrated. This group is named the Kharijites, who form only about 0.25 percent of Muslims in Nigeria. It emphasizes great stress on the authority of the Quran, insisting that the leadership of the *umma* rests, neither on 'Ali nor *Mu'awiyah* but rather on the most devoted Muslim.⁶⁶⁹ As groups differed with each other on many matters of belief and practices in Islamic history, many divisions continues to break further. With their common views of fundamentals of faith, the variant currents in Islam involve a diversity of perception, disposition and responses to issues, including religious otherness. With regard to Christian-Muslim relations, these various expressions affect the chances of encounter and dialogue in more or less degrees depending on how each interprets the Islamic sources. It is within this larger framework of the various branches of Islam that I explore the Muslim perceptions of Christian-Muslim relations.

5.1.1. The Contemporary context of Muslim perspective of Christian-Muslim Relations

The force of the social transformation, largely through colonization and trade, initiated from the mid of the 19th century by the western world has dealt a great blow to the once comprehensive Islamic system in the most of the Islamic world.⁶⁷⁰ The existing

⁶⁶⁹ The origin of the Kharijites goes back to the protest over any negotiation between 'Ali and his opponents. See Borrmans, Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims, 21.

⁶⁷⁰ This view recognizes that, although the massive changes rose to prominence in the 19th century, their origin can be traced to the weight of Western invasion of the Muslim world from the 17th century. The colonial encounter marked the attempted integration of the Muslim world into Europe through colonization

order witnessed the opening of doors and windows to liberal ideas such as scientific rationality, textual criticism, secularity, liberty, and equality that threatened to keep Islam at the margins. The obvious truth is that the Islamic world never remained the same since then. The challenge provoked varied responses from the three traditions of interpreting Islam, namely Traditionalism, Fundamentalism and Modernism (liberalism).

Islamic traditionalists represent both a significant resistance to modernization and a legitimization of classical Islam. They are the defenders of traditional beliefs and ideas of Islam. The class of the *'ulama'* sees itself as the custodians of the traditional Islamic heritage. It developed as a learned group in Muslim society characterized by a rigorous study of and adherence to the texts of the Quran and Sunni law schools (*taqlid*) and indeed, the heritage of Islamic thought. For many of them, this is the way to preserve Islamic faith and practice. But why stick to the status quo? The traditionalist Muslim vision of Islam and the human society seems to be opposed to change because it sees the classical orthopraxis (preserved in the *Sharia* and *Tariqa*) as the orthodox way. But, as Akbar notes, there might be intermittent need for internal renewal of the richness of the tradition through Sufism.⁶⁷¹ Nevertheless, the traditionalist scheme considers the previous presentation of Islamic belief and thought as unaffected by the changing conditions.

Islam would not need changes for its principles are abiding. Apparently, this is why Nasr

and culture transfer, trade, mission, and disbanding of the remaining Islamic empires, like the Ottoman Turks.

⁶⁷¹ Sufism is the mysticism of Sunni Islam. It is described by Akbar Ahmed as “the endearing and enduring side of Islam”; See Akbar S. Ahmed, *Discovering Islam*, 91. This description evokes immediately an understanding of Sufism as the spiritual power-house of Islam. This is in keeping with its foundational impulse, which saw it develop as a reaction to the excessive exteriorization of Muslim society of the Umayyad rule. Sufism doesn't always agree with the establishment because they pursue personal, experiential faith, than seeking to dominate the political space. They seek for God in their interior by their love of esotericism. This is perhaps why Sufis entertain some tolerance, which allows for plurality.

thinks that “the *modus vivendi* (way of life) of traditional Muslims was not reaction, but continuation of the traditional Islamic modes of life and thought.”⁶⁷²

Consequently, those among the ‘*ulama*’ who are traditionalist tend to abhor the results of modern rational and critical approaches to texts, as well as the scientific methods of social sciences and psychology of religion. They are often suspicious of modernists, and sometimes radical fundamentalists, for what they would consider drifts from the parameters of traditional Islamic life and thought.

5.1.1.1. The Traditionalist’ Understanding of Religion

The traditional vision among some Muslims is that the whole history of divine-human encounter has to be understood within the original Divine plan of guidance as revealed to Muhammad. Religion therefore, means submission to the Divine decrees. According to Emilio Platti, “God’s Divine decree is man’s destiny to salvation; God’s law is man’s path to salvation.”⁶⁷³ The implication of this vision is famous. It is not that Muslims do not recognize God’s revelation of his will to humankind before the emergence of Islam, but rather that Islam is the ultimate intervention of God to set right his original decrees for mankind against other corrupted versions. Hence, Islam is not just the only true religion (*din*) of Allah, but the religion for all. Consequently, the habit of narrowing the horizons of Islam against modern intellectual development is carried further in the insistence that religion is known and not interpreted. The Divine decree for salvation is fixed for all times. Therefore, defenders of this position argue that religion

⁶⁷² Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, 105.

⁶⁷³ Emilio Platti, “Rethinking the Quran in the context of Contemporary Islam,” *Philippiniana Sacra* 60, no. 119 (2005), 358

functions to communicate God's decree hence its relevance to changing conditions is not necessary.

This is why Islamic traditionalism is critical of the critical approach adopted by Christians to their scriptural texts. Towards other religions, the Muslim traditionalist vision holds out an elitist approach, by creating a dichotomy between Muslim elites and ordinary believers. For instance, religious diversity and dialogue is encouraged only among Muslim intellectuals while simple believers must be protected from interreligious meeting or dialogue. Netton, affirms that traditionalists hold a less-positive attitude to interreligious dialogue and concerns. He further writes that the Muslim traditionalists "believes that ordinary religious people must not engage with such (pluralism) confusing ideas; they should rather remain existentially intact, observing their tradition fully."⁶⁷⁴

For Nasr, on the other hand, since engaging the religious other would require familiarity with esoteric dimensions of religions, causes us to raise some questions. Do Nasr; and the traditionalists, view dialogue with non-Muslims as a threat to Islamic tradition? The value of questions similar to these in respect of the concern of this chapter is that, they sharpen the dimensions which dialogue with the traditionalist approach should take. Dialogue must be able to prove to Muslim traditionalists that Christian-Muslim relations are not a secularist programme. Our survey so far demonstrates that contemporary Islamic traditionalism is passionate to stop Islam from re-explanations. As such, it maintains the so-called historical idea of the "closing of the door of *ijtihad*" (independent thought) legitimized by early modern century Sunni Islam that is

⁶⁷⁴ Adnan Aslan, "Religious Pluralism in Christian and Islamic Philosophy: The Thought of John Hick and Seyyed Hossein Nasr." (London: Curzon, 1998), 116. It must be clear enough that Nasr believes in religious diversity. But it appears that, faithful to the traditionalist anxiety, he has a concern for relativisation of the truths of Islam. This necessitated his restraint to involving simple Muslims to interreligious dialogue.

uncomfortable with reforms. Probably, it is out of this same anxiety that they made their *madrasahs* centers of pure faith in oppositions to modern reforms especially to Western/Christian infiltrations.

5.1.1.2. The Traditional vision of Society

The traditional vision of religion and society proposes that the society must be organized according to the defined Islamic way of life, which includes union of religion and state. According to Arkoun, “the Islamic history is punctuated with this normative religio-political context; in it the Sharia is given universal significance as an effective political tool.”⁶⁷⁵ The Quran therefore, had resolved all questions; the *Sharia* is a “blueprint” for society.⁶⁷⁶ But this position has some problems also.

While the Muslims’ life of faith and the demand to see Islam as a way of life go together, it is not clear how the political vision of religion and politics adequately fits into God’s command for Muslims in a pluralistic society. This is because non-separation of religion and politics and the establishment of Islam as the dominant political system or enthroning the rule of Islam are only possible in a mono-religious society-in this case, where Islam is the only religion. The traditionalist vision of religion and society does not attempt to resolve this. Its emphasis is that the Quranic injunction on Muslims to struggle to establish the rule of Islam is absolute. This socio-political perspective seems to appeal unquestionably to the context of the earliest Muslim community in Medina. Muhammad

⁶⁷⁵ Mohammed Arkoun, “Religion and Society: The Example of Islam,” 160

⁶⁷⁶ Christian W, Troll, “Islamic Thought in Modern India,” *Islamochristiana* 13 (1987): 91. One notices that the conservative spirit of early modern period of Islam was not limited to any particular cultural expression, but that the transformation of thought touched virtually all parts of the Muslim world, from the Mediterranean to Asia, and to Africa.

notes in his new role as a prophet and statesman constructed a society that operated on the basis of his particular prescriptions of God's decree for various aspects of life.⁶⁷⁷ To live according to those detailed Divine injunction means to follow the path to salvation. The same understanding of society has underpinned traditionalist Muslims' idea of performative acts of faith across the centuries. It is often seen as the basis for the peace and prosperity of Islam, such that certain significant successes have been interpreted as endorsements of this belief.

5.1.1.3. The Traditional vision of Human Rights

When the United Nations General Assembly approved the Universal Declaration of Human Right in 1948,⁶⁷⁸ Robert Traer remarked that the government of Saudi Arabia abstained on the grounds that the declaration did not acknowledge rights to be the gift of God and violated the Quran by asserting a right to change one's religion.⁶⁷⁹ In 1987 a Draft Charter on Human and People's Rights in the Arab World received the unanimous support of the 1,500 members of the Arab Union of lawyers. In principle, the Islamic Charter of rights supports the UN universal Declaration of Human Rights, but justifies and defines these rights in terms of Islamic law and Quran.

⁶⁷⁷Emilio Platti, "Rethinking the Quran"; 359. Platti recalls that such regulations extend from personal and collective worship (prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, etc) through personal matters, to criminal matters, and much more.

⁶⁷⁸ The horror, gross abuses of human rights and awful destructiveness of World War II, gave rise to the United Nations Charter on Human Rights in 1948. The objective was to protect human rights and prevent a repeat experience of World War II. The United Nations will henceforth be referred to as UN.

⁶⁷⁹ Robert Traer, *Muslim and Human Rights*, n.d., http://www.geocities.com/r_traer/Religion/Islamic/muslims.fhr.htm. Accessed 10/10/2011.

This position from Gurewitsch's⁶⁸⁰ reports was contradicted however by Muhammad Khan, the Muslim foreign minister of Pakistan, who in defense of his country's support for the UN Declaration, held that the Quran permits both belief and disbelief. For Robert Traer, this disagreement proves there is no unified response towards what is permitted in Islamic law, or the understanding about human rights. The simple fact is that for the majority of Muslims religious faith defines their identity and rights. What these rights are depend heavily on their traditionalist reference. The traditionalist's vision of human rights is directly related to its view of religion and society. It firmly defends the classical Islamic legal culture which teaches that only God has rights; human beings have duties toward God.⁶⁸¹ As such within this framework, human rights are determined religiously. Muslims find themselves caught between this concepts of medieval legalism, which in principle, obliges the Universalist argument of human rights.

Perhaps, the highest reference for the contemporary traditional view of rights is the standard for human rights given for the Muslims (although they have "universal" as their reference) in the 1981 and 1990 Declarations.⁶⁸² These provide alternatives to the UN charter of human rights considered as irreligious and excluding Islamic culture.⁶⁸³

Challenge for Christianity, ed. Hans Kung and Jurgen Moltmann, Concilium 1994/3 (London and Maryknoll, NY; SCM and ⁶⁸⁰ See David Gurewitsch, Eleanor Roosevelt: *Her Day* (New York: Interchange Foundation, 1973), 25, as cited in Robert Traer, *Faith in Human Rights: Support in religious Traditions for a Global Struggle* (Washington, D.C; Georgetown University Press, 1991), 111.

⁶⁸¹ Confer the preamble to Islamic Council of Britain, "Universal Islamic declaration of Human rights, "in *Islam: A Orbis*, 1994), 41.

⁶⁸² The Universal Islamic Declaration of Human rights (September 1981) was compiled by eminent Muslim scholars, jurists and representatives of Islamic movements, under the authority of Islamic Council for Europe. So, the extent to which this document binds all Muslims is another matter, since it is promulgated by an umbrella organization whose competence may not go beyond issues that affect Muslims in Europe. The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights was produced in August 1990, by a Conference of Foreign Ministers from member-countries of the Organizations of Islamic Conference (OIC).

⁶⁸³ Muslims often cite a number of reasons for opposing the UN charter of human rights: they are European and Christian-based: secular in orientation; the West plays a double-standard in human rights; and that Islam is *Sharia*- based.

Taking the 1981 Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights (UIDHR),⁶⁸⁴ all of its twenty three articles on individual rights are based on the Quran and Sunna as their source and are subjected to the framework of *Sharia*. The intention it shows is that human rights can only be conceived within the framework of Islamic sacred laws. These elements of the traditionalist notion of rights are asserted in the preamble to the Declaration that is founded on an exclusive Islamic theological framework:

Whereas Allah (God) has given mankind through His revelations in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of His Blessed Prophet Muhammad an abiding legal and moral framework within which to establish and regulate human institutions and relationships; whereas the human rights decreed by the Divine law aim at conferring dignity and honor on mankind and are designed to eliminate oppression and injustice; whereas by virtue of their Divine source and sanction these rights can neither be curtailed, abrogated or disregarded by authorities, assemblies or other institutions, nor can they be surrendered or alienated...⁶⁸⁵

This outline indicates the origin of rights namely God; the purpose of these rights, to honor the dignity of human person and to secure peoples' well-being and also the criteria for legitimizing rights in Islam. By connecting human rights and Islamic faith, it is suggested that human rights must be *Sharia* based. Hence, both the UIDHR (1981) and the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights (1990), subject all rights to the prescriptions of the *Sharia*. The UIDHR recognizes individual liberal, political, economic, social and religious rights only within the boundaries of the *Sharia*. Apart from its exclusive point of reference, this body of religion based human rights prescriptions is not going to accord well with the UN-adopted international standard of rights with respect to religion and gender.

⁶⁸⁴ This appears in Arabic, English and French texts with significant differences. The Arabic text, more than its English and French versions, supports all the twenty three articles with quotations from the Quran and the Hadith. The English text is referred to as UIDHR.

⁶⁸⁵ Islamic Council of Britain, "Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Right," 140-141.

John L. Esposito clearly notes that the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights (CDHR) in Islam establishes different dispositions from the international standard and clearly omits the central point of the rights to “freedom of religion” among others.⁶⁸⁶ According to him, “Principles of the freedom of religion notably the right to convert from Islam to another faith-and the full equality of persons regardless of sex or religion seemed to pose particular problems.⁶⁸⁷ In his own assessment of the UIDHR (1990), Heiner Bielefeldt, identifies similar points. He identifies the exclusive Islamic framework (the Quran, Hadith and *Sharia*) upon which a human right is so dependent and therefore questions UIDHR’s status as “universal” in terms of applying to everyone across the world.⁶⁸⁸ Bielefeldt further suggests that the UIDHR is at variance with the UN standard for human rights in three important points notably “cruel corporal punishment” like amputation, “discrimination against women” in family law and “limitations on freedom of religion” including conversion. In order to answer the above facts in a concise statement, reference will be made to the Muslim ‘traditional scheme’ which seems to argue that Islam is a finished product and as such requires no influences from without. This tradition insists that the classical heritage of Islamic thought is needed at all times. Its defenders espouse constant loyalty to the traditional Islamic vision of God rather than question them.

Sometimes, in maintaining conservative Islamic orthodoxy, the traditionalist position refuses to engage in modern discourse. Taking human rights as an example,

⁶⁸⁶ John L. Esposito, the Oxford Dictionary of Islam (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 119.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid. Esposito refers to specifically Article 18 of the CDHR.

⁶⁸⁸ Heiner Bielefeldt, The 1981 “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”: A Christian Reaction,” in Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann, *Islam: A Challenge for Christianity* (London; Maryknoll, N.Y.: SCM Press ; Orbis Books, 1994), 89.

conservative orthodox Muslims insist on boundaries between the international criterion on rights and Islamic vision of human rights, even though the majority of Muslims have drawn attention to the notion that Islam and human rights need not be incompatible.⁶⁸⁹ Yet the traditional scheme for all its conservative approach to religious phenomena does not itself espouse interreligious hostility. The significance of paying attention to the Islamic traditionalist' vision lies in understanding the framework that conditions the attitudes of conservatives to Christian-Muslim relations. The traditional beliefs and practices of Islam as interpreted within the classical framework are believed to remain the character of true piety, and they are untouched by changing conditions.

Tarek Mitri berates the character of Christian-Muslim dialogue in asserting that “many more Christians prefer to choose as Muslim dialogue partners those who are inclined to distance themselves from the traditional Islamic understanding of religion, society and state.”⁶⁹⁰ Tarek Mitri, may be right in his evaluation probably because some traditionally minded Muslims close their doors to dialogue and insist on excluding ordinary Muslims in order to safeguard their faith. The next exposition will elucidate the exploration of the Islamic fundamentalist vision on Christian-Muslim relations.

5.1.1.4. The Fundamentalist Tradition

The term “fundamentalism” is a general terminology to describe the tendency to insist on strict maintenance of the traditional orthodox religious beliefs.⁶⁹¹ Religious

⁶⁸⁹ Ann Elizabeth Mayer, “Islamic law and Human Rights: Conundrums and Equivocations,” in Carrie Gustafson and Peter H Juviler, eds., *Religion and Human Rights: Competing Claims?* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 178.

⁶⁹⁰ Tarek Mitri, “Reflections on Mutual Perceptions and Dialogue,” in *Muslim-Christian Perception of Dialogue Today: Experiences and Expectations*, ed. Jacques Waardenburg (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 78-79.

⁶⁹¹ Its origin as a Christian term, is traced to the 1910 publication of a series of twelve articles, entitled, *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, contributed by a number of theologians and ministers. For details, confer Jacques Janssen, Jan van der lans and Mark Dechesne, “Fundamentalism. The possibilities and

fundamentalism is recognized with the tendency to make one's religion absolute and insistently defending one's representation of reality in a religiously militant way.

Although religious fundamentalism is not monolithic, its various manifestations share similar features notably the passion for faith identity etc.

The driving force of religious fundamentalism is the passion to preserve one's citadel of faith. This concern is manifested in world religions in varying degrees especially in the conscious effort to eliminate reinterpretation of basic sources of faith.⁶⁹² John Donoghue called these "mistranslations of God" because fundamentalists emphasize God in "their own values."⁶⁹³ In this study Islamic fundamentalism is not used in terms of defense of the fundamental character of Islam, bearing in mind that all Muslims hold on to the fundamentals of faith but in terms of extreme reactions in fostering the revival movements, filled with the passion to return to the old Islamic way of life. However, we cannot go further with these movements as it would take us beyond our scope but rather we have to turn to the character of contemporary Islamic fundamentalism against the background of its attitude to religion and society by examination of its case.

5.1.1.4.1. The Nature of Islamic Fundamentalist Opposition

Islamic fundamentalist target their enemies from 'within' and 'outside' for not paying sufficient attention to the pure original principles of Islam. The target 'within' are Westernized Muslims and some traditionalists who are viewed as threat to the historical understanding of Islam. Reza Aslan, in his recent book, *No God but God*, has pointed out

limitations of a Social-Psychological Approach," in *Religious identity and the Invention of tradition*, ed. Jan W. van Henten and Anton Houtepen (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2001), 302.

⁶⁹² For a brief description of Islamic fundamentalism, see Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 88.

⁶⁹³ J Donohue, "Mistranslations of God: Fundamentalism in the Twenty-First Century," *ISLAM AND CHRISTIAN MUSLIM RELATIONS* 15, no. 4 (2004): 440.

that the Islamic militant, Osama bin Laden emerges out of Wahhabism, hates most Islamic followers whom he regards as tepid betrayers of the faith.⁶⁹⁴

Muslim fundamentalists understand the enemy ‘outside’ as modern Western values. The West is attacked for establishing the present secular world order which is considered to bring about ruin of faith.⁶⁹⁵ Many Muslims abhor the West’s cultural, economic and technological domination of the world, and feel discriminated by it. Thus, fundamentalist movements tend to struggle against the pushing of Islamic civilization to the margins by the West’s imposition of a secular way of life. They struggle then to win the world over to Islam with a belief that the existing decadent world condition is experiencing its decline and Islam alone can save it. As such, most expressions of the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism today tend to be driven by the aim to establish an Islamic order.⁶⁹⁶

Islamic fundamentalists insist that the ideas of the West are not needed to solve the existential problems of the Muslim societies. Convinced that Islam has the solution for the need of Muslims and the world, contemporary fundamentalists would argue universally for the values of Islam. Bassam Tibi, an avowed liberal Muslim, suggests that Muslim fundamentalists take on “Western universalism” in a competition for the

⁶⁹⁴ Reza Aslan, *No God but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (New York: Random House, 2005), 247–248. In this way, Osama bin Laden justifies his war against the Saudi royal family on the grounds of apostasy.

⁶⁹⁵ Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 6–15, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=9407>.

⁶⁹⁶ An Islamic order is defined by UIDHR as “one in which all human beings shall be equal and none shall enjoy a privilege or suffer a disadvantage or discrimination by reason of race, colour, sex, origin, or language.” Then follows other values. See Islamic Council of Britain, “Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights,” 141.

world.⁶⁹⁷ For instance, Muslims fundamentalist would probably insist that Muslims cannot live as a minority in any society for it is destined to be top on the least. Further, they justify their struggle for a universal application of the Islamic law (Sharia) as integral part of the task of Islam. This is a true character of the fundamentalist groups in Nigeria to enforce full implementation of sharia law as a way of re-establishing their Muslim identity. This fundamentalist assertion often results in violent conflicts with Christians. On account of this violent image, many non-Muslims tend to equate Islam with radical fundamentalism. The distinction has to recognize that fundamentalism is a phenomenon and is not limited to the Muslim world⁶⁹⁸ for fundamentalism and extreme tendencies do exist in other traditions.

5.1.1.4.2. Muslim Fundamentalists' understanding of Religion

The traditional belief that God revealed his original religion for humankind in Islam as mediated by the Quran and tradition of the Prophet Muhammad is intensified by the Muslims. The true religion is the one that has stayed true to pure oneness of God (*tahwid*), and only Islam can justify a claim to purity. Hence, they give the impression that “the original design of Mecca and Medina”⁶⁹⁹ consolidated in the great (9th and 10th) centuries of Islamic civilizations is the sole guide to religion. To the fundamentalist

⁶⁹⁷ Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism Political Islam and the New World Disorder*, 15. The thesis Tibi defends here is that Islam is similar to Western civilization in terms of its universal claims and presence. Therefore, it poses the greatest challenge to the West in contrast to other religions that are limited to national and regional boundaries. This seems quite plausible, but the surprising thing is the lingering presumption to equate the West with Christianity. There is no distinction between the two; neither by our author, or by the fundamentalists thesis.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., 14. This distinction is crucial to Tibi's thesis. Fundamentalism is not inherent within Islamic belief and practices. Muslim fundamentalists share the basic characteristics that can readily qualify fundamentalists in other religions.

⁶⁹⁹ Maurice Borrmans, Catholic Church, and Pontificium Consilium pro Dialogo inter Religiones, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 25.

Muslims the Quran and Sunna have absolute value. To use the ideas of Emilio Platti, Muslim fundamentalists tend to entertain a literal appreciation of the Quran “as a Divine text to be taken as such with clear prescriptions and rules to be obeyed.”⁷⁰⁰ There is clearly no question of renewal of Islam they will insist; it is a matter of returning to the original sources and structures of Islam. The underlying argument is that the interpretation of the sacred Quran and the entire tradition by representatives of Muslim communities has to remain absolutely faithful to the classical formulations.⁷⁰¹

5.1.1.4.3. Relationship between Religion and State

At most times, to the neglect of an existing diversity of identities some Muslim fundamentalists aspire to establish an Islamic state in societies inhabited by any Muslim population.. Ahmad Shalaby, an Islamist apologist, has argued that Islam’s disagreement with the Western idea of democracy is a matter of necessity by its nature. Some of Islamic laws are fixed, and are not subject to majority will.⁷⁰²

In their view, Islam and the state are one and the same and hence, the society is synonymous with Islam. The fusion of Islam and civil governance is important for guaranteeing the execution of religious laws to control the society. This is why the ideology of political Islam pursues a theocratic order. While some would demand for a revival of the Medinan model of Islamic organization of life (Islamization of the state), others would accept a dominant condition for Islam in the society. Whichever the case,

⁷⁰⁰ Platti, “Rethinking the Quran”; 367.

⁷⁰¹ For an overview of the general features of Muslim fundamentalism, see James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 1. Herman L. Beck, “The Borderline between Muslim Fundamentalism and Muslim Modernism: An Indonesian Example,” in *Religious identity and the Invention of tradition*, ed. Jan W. Van Henten and Anton Houtepen (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2001), 286, 288.

⁷⁰² Aḥmad Shalabī, *Islam; Belief, Legislation, Morals*, (Cairo: The Renaissance Bookshop, 1970), 395–396. As cited in Fluehr-Lobban, ed, *Against Islamic Extremism*, 12. Shalaby, however, does not believe that the West is practicing true democracy.

each of these aspires for an integral application of Sharia law. Most fundamentalists believe that society is in moral decadence and only the ideals of Islam can rescue it. These so called ideal institutions eliminated by historical contingencies are believed in the fundamentalist ideology, to still exist, and can be totally realized.⁷⁰³ If Muslim fundamentalists believed that Islamic faith and its dominance may be under threat if it opens itself up to recognizing and honoring plurality, then to reject religious difference may even position Muslim fundamentalism as radically inconsistent with its own text--a revival of the roots.

This is because there can be little doubt that even the Medina tradition itself suggests that Islam is not designed to be a monolithic religion, but to exist alongside other religions. In view of that a theocratic vision of the relationship between Islam and the Nigerian state as-indifferent to other religious views continues to be upheld, and efforts to sustain a plural based constitutional framework attract the fury of radical Muslim fundamentalist groups.

In contrast, some other Muslims argue that there is no concept of Muslim state in Islam. They maintain that the concern of early Muslims was a ruler that gives a symbol of unity to the people and that a Muslim state has remained an abstract ideal. Many contemporary Muslim scholars seek to develop the implicit recognition of religious diversity from their tradition. Mahmoud Ayoub has done a lot in this respect, as he writes: “The ideal relation envisioned by the Quran between Muslims and Christians is

⁷⁰³ However, this vision does not seem to be complemented with the wisdom to understand the issues behind the political failure of medieval dynasties. It fails to realize an Islamic history that, as soon as Islam became amalgamated with politics and empire, its course was changed by political manipulation, giving rise to the need for revivalist movements insistent on sanitizing religion of political mess. This kind of rethinking is crucial for the validity of the Islamists’ option.

not only one of accommodation and co-existence but of amity and respect.”⁷⁰⁴ The point he frequently makes in this regard is that the Quran consents to plurality of religions (Citing Q.2:62: 5:69), and envisages, not only confrontation towards other religions but also good relations far more than some Muslims and Christians have been willing to admit.⁷⁰⁵

Hasan Askari, rejects the idea of the Islamic state because he believes that the valid assertion that Islam brings together all facets of life, a perspective shared with most religions, does not approve the necessity of forming a theocratic state.⁷⁰⁶ He concludes that the Islamists arguments have been found to be weak, and the idea of Islamic State is contradictory in terms.”⁷⁰⁷ In the same vein, Muhammad Al-Ashmawy, reminds Muslims that “the early Islam fizzled away when the first four rightly guided caliphs died; that the faith reconstructed after them around the Sharia, and rigidly interpreted by the *ulama* through the centuries is both different from the pristine model and is out of touch with the dynamism the changing times requires.”⁷⁰⁸

5.1.1.4.4. Modernists’ Approach to Islamic Sources

Some modern thinkers engage in critical approach to the Islamic sources, with the conviction that it is the way that can allow Islam to respond to changes and situations. They criticize both the defenders of the old-styled conservatism and fundamentalism for

⁷⁰⁴ Mahmoud Ayoub and Irfan A Omar, *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007), 20.

⁷⁰⁵ Ayoub, “Nearest in Amity: Christians in the Quran and Contemporary Exegetical Tradition,” in *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue* by Mahmoud Ayoub, ed. Iran. This article was originally published in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8, no 2 (1997): 145-146, and reprinted in this cited text.

⁷⁰⁶ For an overview of the arguments against theocracy, see Hasan Askari, “Religion and State,” in *Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths*, ed. Dan Cohn-Sherbrook (London: Macmillan, 1991), 197.

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 179-182.

⁷⁰⁸ Muḥammad Sa‘īd ‘Ashmāwī and Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, *Against Islamic Extremism: The Writings of Muhammad Sa‘id Al-‘Ashmawy* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 13–14.

their unwillingness to dialogue with modernity thereby denying Muslim societies of modern benefits.

In recent years Muslim thinker's view of modernizing Islam has increased. The spiritual approaches to Islam constitute a unique character within this modern outlook. The framework this dissertation has adopted is defended by Indian Muslim thinker Wahiduddin Khan (1925). His spiritual approach is defensible in that it seeks to rediscover and re-explain the orthodox teachings of Islam in modern language. Khan's spiritual approaches firmly express that a rediscovered Islam is resourceful not only for providing meaning to today's religious pluralistic world but also for meeting the challenges of balancing tradition and modernity. According to Emilio Platti, "it is in this fundamental level of Islam that interreligious relation can have a point of departure, and reinterpretation of faith for today can be freely done."⁷⁰⁹

The modern Muslim thinkers generally use and defend the principle of *ijtihad* as a vital tool for reinterpreting Islamic thought in modern times. Doing so involves the use of hermeneutics, history and critical principles in conceptualizing religions. This exercise is proposed to offer Islam a rational explanation and open discourse to new ideas. This principle of *ijtihad*, as Mar Gregorios observes allows modernist Muslims to take the freedom to question some of the traditional views of Islam, without violating its fundamentals.⁷¹⁰ This is perhaps, the reason some followers of "this trend represent a more open view of the relationship between religion and state, of human rights and of

⁷⁰⁹ Emilio Platti, "Islam: Dialogue or Confrontation?" *Philippiniana sacra* 37, no. 111 (2002)

⁷¹⁰ Gregorios, "Liberalism and fundamentalism in Islam and Christianity." 9.

pluralism.”⁷¹¹ The fact that modernist Muslim thinkers are concerned about addressing such topics suggests a very important paradigm shift in Muslim thinking about the role of religion in reconciling peoples. Our contemporary plural context is increasingly more challenging and likely to value a faith that can be applied to new life situations.

Attempts made by some Muslim traditionalists and revivalists to promote a closed religiosity seems to be part of the crisis in which the Muslim community has found itself. Like other religions, Islam has to be valued in today by its willingness to engage other traditions in a fruitful dialogue. This could be the reason for which the guidelines of the Pontifical Council of Inter-religious Dialogue (PCID) affirm the modernists as having the kind of human dispositions that offer more possibilities for dialogue and co-operation with Christians.⁷¹² It may be because the modern perspective tends to concede real values to human religiosity, arguably absent in other tendencies. This is why the crisis many have about Islam today may not be as misplaced as sometimes it is. Islam and modernity cannot agree in what is often concluded by the people.

To many, this claim is without rigorous proof. Some see the current issues not in terms of incompatibility between Islam and modernity but as creative response made by Muslims to the challenge of adapting Islam to the modern world. Thus, the debate going on among the different Muslim tendencies is understood as being concerned with the mode of adaptation. This perspective is represented by Emilio Platti and John L Esposito. For Platti “it is principally about creating a new momentum for rediscovering the Islamic challenge.”⁷¹³ While John Esposito insists that “the compatibility of Islam and modernity itself is not the issue....The

⁷¹¹ Muhammad Talbi, “Unavoidable Dialogue in a pluralist World: A Personal Account,” *Encounters* 1 (1995): 55-69. This is not to approve Talbi’s thesis, but to indicate the important difference between his modernist thinking and fundamentalist or traditional position.

⁷¹² Borrmans, Catholic Church, and Pontificium Consilium pro Dialogo inter Religiones, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, 24.

⁷¹³ Platti, “Islam; Dialogue or Confrontation?” 495-496.

debate is on the direction, method, and degree of change required.”⁷¹⁴ What can be affirmed in this context is the Islamic liberalists’ activity that seeks to keep Islam alive. Examining the modern Muslim intellectuals on the religion and political questions that features in the Christian-Muslim discourses comes next.

5.1.1.4.4.1. General Perspectives concerning Christianity and Christians

To explore more on the Muslim perspective concerning Christianity and Christians it is necessary to examine the following questions. What are the modernists’ Muslim thoughts on other religions, in general and Christianity in particular? How do the modernist thinkers see Christian-Muslim relations? Could it be that Muhammad Arkoun was correct in emphasizing upon “the exchange of artificial expressions of tolerance on so many meetings since the inauguration of Vatican II between Christians and Muslims?”⁷¹⁵ Has any progress been made in the way of respectful appreciation of other believers? Answering the above open questions is substantially found in the modernists’ main ideas on religion, society, and the human rights.

5.1.1.4.4.1.1. Modernists’ ideas on Religion/Religions

Prior to Vatican II, most of the Muslims’ view of Christianity and Christians seem to reproduce an un-criticized repetition of the Muslim classical scholarly heritage and are largely apologetic. The religious space remained divided between two enemies, notably the house of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) and the house of war (*dar al-harb*), with the latter inhabited by among others, the Christians. At the moment, some Muslim intellectuals are

⁷¹⁴ John L Esposito, *Islam and Politics* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 216, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=33754>.

⁷¹⁵ Mohammed Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 16.

increasingly making efforts to break down this old model by accepting the new interreligious order urged by *Nostra Aetate*. This new climate promoted by modernist approaches has “tended to be more open to modern transformation of thought, manifesting a less demand for opening the polemical tradition afresh.”⁷¹⁶

Many contemporary liberal minded Muslims view their “religion as a distinctive human experience of transcendent God and seek to understand other traditions from that framework.”⁷¹⁷ Muslim scholars of this type acknowledge the role of history, sociology of knowledge, limitations of human language, hermeneutics and dialogue in the discovery of all religious truth. To investigate the nature of this modernist understanding of religion Mohammad Arkoun is our point of reference in re-examining the Islamic traditions that were formerly accepted. Mohammad Arkoun recognized this process in all the monotheistic scriptures, in the following words:

The revelations collected in the Old and New Testaments and the Quran fit easily within this (dynamic operation) of revelation. They should not be confused with theological systems, exegesis, or legal codes that managers of the sacred establishments have drawn from them at various times.⁷¹⁸

For Arkoun, this model proposes the proper way by which modern rationality sets the religious imaginary and rationally into productive interaction. Even if other modernist thinkers may think otherwise, it seems typical of liberalists to view Christian-Muslim critique of each other’s view of revelation and religion as a portrayal of the inability to go beyond literalism in scriptures, creed and tradition. What is seen in the

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 6-13.

⁷¹⁷ Mohammad Arkoun and Mahmoud Ayoub can be cited in this approach. While Mahmoud Ayoub represents willingness for dialogue and peaceful encounter among religious traditions, Mohammad Arkoun exemplifies an effort to rethink Islam in those elements that have been otherwise taken for granted. Their views concerning religion and interreligious subjects present clearly the above understanding of religion.

⁷¹⁸ Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam*, 34.

modernist approach to religion is an intellectual engagement of Islamic thought and outlook from a larger picture. The above new way of looking at religion rejects religious intolerance and exclusivism. The modernist's perspective of religion therefore persuades one to the necessity of rethinking of Islam's self-definition and work in true harmony with others.

5.1.1.4.4.1.2. Modernist's ideas on the Relationship between Religion /Politics

Islam considers religion incomplete especially when the state is not Islamic and holds the political and religious orders as one. The question that comes to mind is: How do the Muslim liberals see such religious and political conviction? Looking at how Mohammad Arkoun appreciated Islam and politics and how he linked the incarnation of political affirmation into Islam to Muhammad's preaching and activity in Medina, he argued that it was elaborated fully during the course of the centuries. For him, this ultimate fusion was chiefly motivated by the need to legitimize political authority by the Sunni and Shi'a for the execution of the *Sharia*.⁷¹⁹ He argues that the effort to ground the state on religious teachings "is a policy...not a fact."⁷²⁰ In other words, behind the weaving of religion and state in Islam is the underlying interconnected need of legitimizing the application of the *Sharia* and official protection of Islam.

Arkoun elaborated deeper on this point by saying that the unity of political and spiritual authorities in Islam is mainly a historical consequence that has to be

⁷¹⁹ For further information on the evolution of the unity of religion and politics in Islam, see Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions: Uncommon Answers*, 68-70. Thus, the mixing of the two spheres in Islam is a historical development, just as in Christianity did not distinguish the two from its origin. The importance of Arkoun's analysis lies in seeking to persuade an intellectual battle against an idea he believes is not fact an essence of Islamic faith.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*,16.

distinguished from the essence of Islam which is the fundamental challenge to do good and avoid evil. He leaves no one in doubt with his demand for a rethinking of the classical culture under which political Islam developed. From the benefit of hindsight merging religious and political authorities, even in the case of Christianity, has not always been positive. What critics saw was a corrupt and degenerate Christianity. As a result of its courage to re-examine, it seeks to distinguish Church and state and realizes that it keeps religion true to its essence. It is possible that those Muslims, like Mohammad Arkoun, who find no justification for the formation of Muslim states in a pluralistic society and are content with limited application of *Sharia* in the realm of personal matters, may likely be drawn to this model of relation between religion and state. Not all modernist thinkers would share Arkoun's framework. Isma'il al-Faruqi begged to differ with it. Arkou argued that fusing the religious with the political is one of the characteristics of Islamic society. However, he describes this perspective in terms of an expansionist notion of the Islamic state and not as Islam localized within a nation-state.⁷²¹ In spite of the different positions taken by Arkoun and Faruqi both entertain an inclusivist notion of Islamic political vision.

The import of this plea is drawn in the modernist thinking of Mohammad Talbi who convinced that the *umma* has dissolved into the international community. Talbi would opine that, while Muslims remain committed to their identity they need to struggle to face the implication of living in a community of communities. "In our pluralistic

⁷²¹ For detailed information on the Islamic world-order as concerned by al-Faruqi, see ismail R. al-Faruqi, *Islam* (Niles, IL; Argus Communications, 1979), 65-68.

universe we must from this day on work in true harmony with others.⁷²² This view implies that recognizing the other is significant for a dynamic relevance of Islamic faith. Talbi persuades that with the 18th century collapse of the Islamic global legal system it is ennobling for Muslims to engage their religion with the realities of the changing world. These are new challenges of existence that Muslims are currently facing all over the world.

5.1.1.4.4.1.3. Modernist Muslim Intellectuals' views on Human Rights

The spotlight in the contemporary debate on the subject of Islam and Human rights⁷²³ is on modernist Muslim intellectuals. There seems to be a new understanding in relation to Islamic law and human rights amongst this class of Muslims. The new insights seems to rest on three theoretical principles: (1) that humanity is one human community in which Muslims are members; (2) there is a need to make a distinction between Islamic law and Islamic jurisprudence, and (3) there is a need to distinguish between permanent and temporary legislations in the Quran.

Sa'id al-Ashmawi was one of the representative of this vision, as he argues for the right of every one to discuss what should be allowed or not by law in civil life and hence, he makes a distinction between religious and civil actions.⁷²⁴ He shared this form of

⁷²² Mohammad Talbi, "A Community of Communities: The Right to be different and the ways of Harmony," in John Hick and Hasan Askari, *The Experience of Religious Diversity* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Brookfield, Vt., U.S.A.: Gower, 1985), 78.

⁷²³ While the subject of human rights have assumed a popular focus among Muslim discussants today, it has to be noted that human right, both as an expression and as a concept, emerged during the French Revolution (1789), and , therefore, was unknown to the classical Islamic thought during the codification of Islamic law. Subsequently, especially in the wake of the struggle to free people from oppressive regimes, human rights gained an international acceptance and concern. It has remained subject of controversy in Islam, as Muslims have long imbibed the traditional perspectives of human rights. Thus, the modern liberal thinkers appear to be engaged in reconciling their Islamic heritage with the new outlook.

⁷²⁴ 'Ashmāwī and Fluehr-Lobban, *Against Islamic Extremism*, 123–126. Former Chief Justice of the High Court of Cairo, Muhammad Said al-Ashmawy is recognized for his part in the struggle against Islamic extremism. This book provides a preview of his writings.

thinking with those who agree to justify that human rights are not incompatible with Islamic laws. The modernists' approach attempts to challenge the religious concept of the Islamic law elaborated by the jurists.⁷²⁵ Their critical re-examination of the Islamic tradition enables them to relocate the development of the Islamic religious law (*Sharia*) into its historical context, and draw attention to the need to make religion move with time. This is the reason Arkoun can argue that religions although important for understanding the divine origin of human rights do not have the resources to establish the details that contemporary issues of human right require that are found in the civil realm.⁷²⁶

The Sudanese Islamic reformist, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, offers a crucial position in this regard. He defends and at the same time challenges the universality of human rights. One of his main thesis is that "certain standards of human rights are violated because they are not understood to be culturally legitimate."⁷²⁷ He sees this as a concern of Islam and human rights. Thus, he proposes an internal reform of Islamic law as a means to accelerate the cultural legitimacy of international human rights in Islam. Such 'reform from within' take serious cognizance of the role contexts play in the interpretation of legal tradition. With the two different contexts of Muhammad's message in Mecca and Medina in focus, he emphasizes that the universal and eternal quality of Meccan message provides a bridge between the Islamic law and 'universal' human rights.

⁷²⁵ Here, our attention turns to the Islamic notion of the primacy of the rights of God over the rights of human persons in Islam. But, we should never lose sight of the fact that the rights of man do not contradict, but indeed, validates respect for the right of God. The statement recognizes also an awareness of the whole processes of Western relations with the Islamic world, and Muslims opposition to the philosophy of human freedom that inspired definition of human rights.

⁷²⁶ Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam*, 106–113.

⁷²⁷ Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, "Islam, Islamic law and the Dilemma of Cultural legitimacy for Universal Human Rights" in *Asian Perspectives on Human Rights*, ed. Claude Welch and Virginia Leary (Boulder, CD; Westview Press, 1990), 32.

This thinking reinforces in our view the call for a rediscovery of Islam's central challenges represented by the Meccan messages.

5.1.1.4.4.1.4. Theological Reflections: from Indifferent to Dialogue

The specific Muslim views of Christian-Muslim relations have provided us with some insights into the wide range of current Muslim thinking on religious diversity. The conviction accessed seems to suggest that many Muslims are becoming aware that it is by being involved in a search for common understanding and cooperation with other believers, that they can help make their faith better appreciated to turn any prejudice harbored against Islam into acceptance.

The Christian-Muslim relationship in Nigeria has been extensively examined in the first chapter of this study and seems to provide a hopeful challenge to the local experiences of anti-dialogue mindsets. The reality on the ground is that indifference to breaking down the barriers of Christian-Muslim prejudices and misunderstanding are found among the fragmented fundamentalist groups and some traditionally minded Muslims who; reflect this wider less positive outlook.⁷²⁸ The nature of the Muslim relationship with Christians has been positively changing in terms of strategy. They seem to be undermining the routine polemics disputations and debates and have started giving hope in the direction of mutual exploration of respect for each other's faith. Those Muslims with an open-minded tendency carry with them some sense of urgency in

⁷²⁸ This fact has been clearly shown in the foregoing exploration. The study has previously shown the anti-Christian position of Gumi and his puritanical Izala and the struggle of the Al-Zakzaky led Muslim Brothers in Nigeria against Nigeria's secularity, as strains of intolerance that operate in this light, let alone Boko Haram and its resurgence. The former has been indicated as drawing its impetus from Saudi Wahhabism, which is intolerant of other forms of Islam, like Sufism. The latter has been shown to have its ideological connection to the Iranian revolutionary vision of Islam. But, as we have said, their mistake is the failure to realize that Nigeria is not and must not be Saudi Arabia or Iran. Each nation has its unique composition, story, experiences and struggle.

reconciling their faith with modern times. This vision is remarkably visible in the general and particular positions advanced by the Muslim modernist thinkers already examined here and this constitutes their qualitative difference from the approach of Muslim fundamentalists and traditionalist. They want Islam to be accessed through faith commitment by open-minded, moderate Muslims. It is doubtless that these positive responses are important for the hopeful relations of Christians and Muslims in both global and local settings.

While this study does not underestimate the reluctance that characterizes many Muslims' attitude to change, the situation could be described as a step forward onto the right direction of interreligious dialogue. Apart from the positions already seen further support to this claim is elaborated in the "Appendix" to the English translation of the second edition of PCID *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*. It relates that "almost thirty international conferences on Christian-Muslim dialogue have taken place between 1969 and 1988 and more importantly some of those meetings are sponsored by Muslim groups."⁷²⁹ Besides, it is noteworthy that in spite of the hardships this project has encountered there has been much progress.

Since the early eighties to date there have been many cases of increased tension between Muslims and Christians, especially in places where minorities are Christians. Yet within the same periods many Muslims and Christians across the globe have been involved in dialogue and joint-service on behalf of humanity. Both the Roman Catholic

⁷²⁹ Borrmans, Catholic Church, and Pontificium Consilium pro Dialogo inter Religiones, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, 115–121.

Church and the World Council of Churches (WCC)⁷³⁰ take part in dialogue meetings with the Muslims. There are also initiatives to dialogue through conferences at International, Regional and National levels, between representatives of these two communities.

In Africa for instance, the offices of the three sub-regional conferences of Catholic Bishops, West African regional Episcopal Conference (CERAO), the Association of Episcopal Conferences in Anglophone West Africa (AECAWA) and *Conférence Episcopale Regionale du Nord de l'Afrique* (CERNA) have been involved in dialogue with Muslims. They often combine effort with the Pan African Reformation Churches' PROCMURA⁷³¹. The Catholic Bishop's and other Christian strategies have been working with some Muslim representatives to break down barriers of mistrust and conflicts carried on by extremists and manipulators of religion and religious agencies. Examples of dialogue and cooperation going on between Christians and Muslims can be continued as much as instances of less indifference occur. What is appreciated in this survey is that the foundation has been laid and shared vision of the need for interreligious relations has indeed been shown to be the desire of many Christians and Muslims in Nigeria.

5.1.1.4.4.1.5. Muslims response towards improved Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria

The experience of living together peacefully in Nigeria is a major aim of this study. Many Muslims like their Christian counterparts have often felt uneasy about the ongoing conflict between their respective groups. Many Muslims are concerned with

⁷³⁰ Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Chicago, Ill.: New Amsterdam Books, 2000), 177–186. The World council of Churches began to rethink Christian-Muslim relations shortly after Roman Catholicism began its initiative.

⁷³¹ For more details of these moments of encounter, see Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Recognize the Spiritual Bonds Which Unite Us*, 131-132.

ways of transcending this history of constant crisis that has characterized their relationships with Christians. The invitation to interreligious dialogue in general and Christian-Muslim relations in particular, therefore has not been a distant call or remote aim. Yet, there continues to be mistrust of Christians on the part of some Muslims and a skepticism regarding whether a productive relationship with Christians is even possible.

Both an anti-dialogue stance and a sincere openness to Christian-Muslim relations are held by Nigerian Muslims. The latter are optimistic that such project is possible and a contemporary necessity. A substantial proportion of Muslims in Nigeria are captivated by the possibility and this support for better relations is likely to grow as Muslims and Christians work towards a global peace. The aforementioned analysis has shown how the Muslim world is intimately drawn together by the force of its spiritual resources (Quran and Sunna), the traditional status of the Sharia law and the interpretations that are given to these core faith-values by various tendencies. This leads us to conclude that Nigerian Muslims' response to Christian-Muslim relations reflects considerably their wider Muslim position. This optimism picture provides the impetus and a foundation to establish a "recipe" or set of ground rules and prescriptive guidelines for improved Christian-Muslim relations among Nigerians.

5.2. RECIPE FOR IMPROVED CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

5.2.1. Practical Policies to enhance Religion and Politics

The aim for religious and political institutions in all societies to be mutually supportive is a central proposition in current social theory. Both religion and politics are concerned with the attainment of the values of a society, power, prestige, income etc.

Every society is challenged with disruptive tensions in a manner that if left alone in pursuit of the above values would be hard to attain an organized society.

It is my view that societies must have a pattern of control that will reduce coercion and keep the authorities themselves in check against corruption or mismanagement of the society's wealth. Religion not only raises values to the position of ultimate concern but also serves as an evaluative factor in politics. By emphasizing common values religious parties may reduce the tensions that result from the pursuit scarce values. The basic ideas of the state in Nigeria today vary according to the philosophies of Christianity and Islam for they have produced separate and sometimes conflicting values among Nigerians towards the nation and politics. This transference of values from the religious to the political sphere is increasingly affecting Nigerian political culture.

Here it is important to consider, five basic modes⁷³² of state-religion relationship identified in history and a cursory look at them will be of help to encourage a more productive inter-play of religion and politics in Nigeria. Top on the list in the hierarchy of the modes of relationship is first: Eurasian modality. This modality exists where the religion of the people naturally blends with the political machinery issuing from a homogeneous cultural background consolidated by a common language. The dominant religion of the people provides the basis for the acquisition and exercise of power. This was the case with the major tribes in pre-colonial Nigeria with regard to the traditional religion. The second mode of the relationship is the concordat modality. This is a situation where the government of a state adopts one religion out of various existing ones

⁷³² Uche Azubike Clement, *Christian and Islamic ethics and the development of Nigeria* (Nigeria: Applause, 2011), 74.

as a state religion and merely tolerates the others. This one state church enjoys a monopoly of religious authority and benefits. It calls upon political authority to enforce this monopoly and use its institution to enforce the state civil laws. It plays a vital role in the selection and coronation of the monarch and some state officials. Under the Roman Empire, Western Christendom witnessed this type of mode. The third mode of relationship is the separatist model of relationship that stresses strict separation of religion and state affairs. The state does not recognize any religion and no form of worship is allowed in public institution. Religion is strictly the affairs of the individual who so ever feels obliged.

The fourth mode of relationship is known as the jurisdictional model. It is a constitutional or legal arrangement whereby the state aware of the plurality of its tribe language and religion, decides to remain neutral in the affairs of organized religion. The state confers equal recognition to all religions within its territory but does not intervene in their internal organizations and practice, nor patronize any to the detriment of others. Religious bodies can own private estates and institutions and the maintenance of which must be according to the political law of the land. The state protects the religious freedom of citizens and offers them equal rights, irrespective of their religious beliefs. This is the model found in most democracies in the world. The fifth model in the church-state relationship is the Populist model. Here religion possesses a state and its territory becomes a religious estate. Its governmental system is ecclesiastical. The interaction of this state with other nations is based on religious conditions and diplomacy is based on isolationism and pacifism. The Vatican state of Rome is an example of this mode.

The understanding of the relationship between religion and politics is dependent on the understanding of the differing ideas of the state by Islam and Christianity in Nigeria. In such conditions Inyama observes, “that the understanding of the three basic terms: secularism, secularity and theocracy by Islam and Christianity have been the remote controlling issues of state and politics in Nigeria.”⁷³³ Secularism is atheistic in inspiration and aspiration and it advocates absolute separation between social, political and religious issues. Secularism refers to the theory of the separation of civil from ecclesiastical authority. Anti-religious crusaders used this term to become synonymous with a denial of all religious belief and affirmation of a non-religious approach to existence. Hence, secularism has been described as that which seeks the development of the physical and intellectual nature of man to the highest possible point as the immediate duty of life. Its fundamental principle is that in his whole conduct man should be guided exclusively by considerations derived from the present life itself. Whether God exists or the soul is mortal or not, is at best questions that cannot be answered.

Secularity further reverses the negative connotation of Secularism. It implies a legal agreement of separating religion from political functions. It advocates that the political order of the state shall be responsible for the temporal welfare of the citizens while the religious matters should be left to the religious order. Its stand is that the state’s relationship to religion should be characterized by mutual recognition of the respective areas of jurisdiction, impartially, non-interference and cooperation. This is the mode of church-state relationship advocated for by Christians in Nigeria. Theocracy functions as a political arrangement in which God Himself is recognized as head of state. Human

⁷³³ Emma o Inyama, “Religion and Politics in Nigeria,” in *Nigerian Politics*, Ndu, C.A (Owerri [Nigeria]: CRC Publications, 1997), 132.

political office holders are seen as mere servants or vicegerents of God, who should be accountable. Here, there is no dichotomy between the religious and the secular. Religion controls the politics, economy, commerce, and social life of the people. Examples are found in some Islamic states. But this practice of Islam based on the belief that Mohammad was both a ruler and a prophet arrogates to his adherents the divine role of purifying the world which makes that role incompatible with the changing phenomenon not only in Nigeria but the whole world at large. This is because the Islamic belief in the prophet hood of Mohammad is undeniable and the prophet's drive to establish a political family cannot be disputed.

5.2.2. Jurisdictional model for Pluralist and Democratic States

Having gone through the five models of relationship between church and state, it seems that the jurisdictional model is more suitable for the pluralistic and democratic states like Nigeria. But the problem is that the basic ideas of the states in Nigeria today vary according to the different philosophies of Islam and Christianity and that is why it has not worked out so well. This transference of values from the religious to the political sphere is increasingly affecting the Nigerian political culture.

Elaborating further on the above three basic terms (secularism, secularity and theocracy) it is clear that both Islam and Christianity reject secularism. Christians on the one hand advocate for secularity while Muslims, on the one hand, hold unto theocracy. The basic ideas of the state vary according to the philosophy of Islam and Christianity. Equally they have also produced dual values and orientations among Nigerians towards the nation politics. This transference of values from the religious to the political sphere is negatively affecting the political culture of Nigeria.

5.2.3. Separating State and Religion

In an editorial captioned “Separating State and Religion,” the *Punch* newspaper edition of Wednesday, November 24, 2010 argued that the practice of government’s sponsorship of religious activities in defiance of the nation’s 1999 Constitution prohibiting the adoption of a state religion might compromise the country’s secular status and foster sectarian state.⁷³⁴ It states that contrary to section 10 of the 1999 Constitution that forbids the Government of the Federation or a State from adopting any religion as state religion the federal, state and local governments were indulging in the spending of public resources on religious affairs.

According to the newspaper report, the Kebbi state Pilgrims Welfare Agency spent two and half billion in 2010 in sponsoring pilgrims to Mecca. Bauchi state government also committed the sum of fifty million to the sponsorship of the annual convention of the Women’s Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). In 2008, Gombe state government donated hundred million to the building of its mosque and fifty million to the building of a Church. Many other instances of such government patronage exist at all levels of government. The results are instructive. (1) The situation has been created whereby the two prominent religions, Islam and Christianity are in competition for government patronage. This has created room for jealousy, envy, suspicion and outright bickering over what is given and what is not given. For instance, as *Punch* newspaper reported above where Bauchi state government gave hundred million to the building of a Mosque and fifty million to the building of a Church. This shows outright favoritism that can be rightly interpreted to mean that the Bauchi state

⁷³⁴ The Punch Editorial, “Separating State and Religion,” *Punch Newspaper*, 2010.

government is pro-Islam. Its donation to the Church may have been an afterthought taken to ward off accusation of favoritism.

Furthermore, on October 27, 1999, when the Zamfara state government, Ahmed Sani adopted the Sharia as the supreme law of the state in defiance of the constitution⁷³⁵ of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, he did not know that he had stirred the hornet's nest. The constitution was very clear against his action. Sharia law was in practice in Nigeria before Ahmed Sani's action but it was restricted to customary and family jurisdiction. But Sani's declaration took Sharia law above its acceptable parameters to include criminal matters. Sani and his backers knew this well but he decided to defy the constitution. The problem this has created has not ceased till today. Due to the inability of the Nigerian state to defend the constitution of its Federation twelve states from the Northern region have adopted Sharia law.

Reacting to the spate of religious ethnic and political unrest that has recently triggered violence in Nigeria, Philip Emeagwali traced the roots of the crisis to a lack of understanding of the Nigerian constitution. He stated inter alia that; "The Nigerian constitution stipulates that we are Nigerians first and then Muslims (or Christians) second. However, some Northern Nigerian elected officials are insisting that Muslims are to be placed first before Nigerians and therefore, are entitled to live by the Sharia law. The contradiction is that these selected officials were elected through a secular constitution that is the supreme legal document of the land. Each official swore to uphold

⁷³⁵ The Punch Editorial, "National Conference and Nigeria's Future," *Punch Newspaper*, March 17, 2014, <http://www.punchng.com/editorial/national-conference-and-nigerias-future/>.

the constitution but after being elected, the same officials that promised obedience will turn round overthrowing the constitution⁷³⁶ in favor of the sharia law.

Government patronage of religions as argued above is unconstitutional. But on the other hand, it has its positive side. John Onaiyekan, on the issue of the relationship between religion and politics, states that in reality both are tied together.⁷³⁷ This is true in the sense that religion can reap from government and vice versa in the collective effort to forge a society based on values. But the problem remains that government patronage is not always sincere, for it is based on sentiments without equity, thus generating an atmosphere of unhealthy rivalry, jealousy and conflict which are veritable fuel for crisis.

5.2.4. Manipulation of Religion by the Political Class

Nigerian religious crisis is a product of high-level manipulation by the political government. According to Onaiyekan, some top level politicians who want to pursue a particular cause hire people to do the fighting for them under the guise of religious crisis. This fact has been corroborated by no less a person than President Good luck Jonathan who “blamed the political class in the continent for instigating both ethnic and religious crisis to back their political interest.⁷³⁸ The President spoke at the three day first African Union (AU) Interfaith Dialogue Forum held in Abuja in June 2010.

Speaking at the same occasion, the Sultan of Sokoto Alhaji Sa’ad Abubakar reportedly blamed politicians for using religion as a cover up to achieve their political

⁷³⁶ Philip Emeagwali, "Sharia Crisis in Nigeria," 2010, <http://emeagwali.com/interviews/sharia/crisis-in-nigeria.html>.

⁷³⁷ John Onaiyekan, “Foreword,” in *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, by Matthew Kukah (Ibadan: Nigerian Snaap, 1993), 4.

⁷³⁸ Ike Abonyi, “Nigeria: Religious Crisis-Jonathan, Sultan Blame Politicians,” *This Day*, June 16, 2010, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201006160065.html>.

aims. “Religious crises” he added, are poorly managed by those in authority.⁷³⁹ The city of Jos for instance which had hitherto been a holiday resort on account of its clement weather and the peace and security of the town has become of recent a place of war and bloodshed. Isa Abdulsalami, a correspondent of the Guardian newspaper, laments that permanent peace may continue to elude not only the city of Jos in the capital state, but also Plateau State in general. He identified government action by the Ibrahim Babangida regime as the remote cause of the Jos crisis.⁷⁴⁰ According to Abdulsalami, “the carving out of Jos North Local Government Council from the old Jos by the Babangida regime has not helped matters. Since then the Hausa/Fulani Muslim settlers has seen it as a council created for them and which they must therefore run alone.

From the above discussions, it is obvious that not all religious crises are purely religious. Some clashes are manipulated by the political class in order to achieve their particular aims. A few questions to ponder are: How has the government responded? Even when reports of panels of enquiry have indicted some people in top government positions, was the government’s response adequate?

5.3 PRACTICAL POLICIES TO ENHANCE RELIGION AND JOINT PEACE RECONCILLIATORY COUNCIL

In today’s world, Nigeria is desperately in need of a culture of peace. According to Arvind Sharma:

Religion teaches love, peace, tolerance, and brotherhood. Mahatma Gandhi taught peace, Hinduism main tenet is nonviolence and the unity of all in God. Islam

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁰ Isa Abdulsalami, “Defiled Jos Cries for Help,” *The Guardian*, May 23, 2014, <http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/features/weekend/162505-terrorists-religion-ethnicity-tear-plateau-state-apart>.

teaches mercy and compassion, as does Buddhism. Jesus taught us to love one another.⁷⁴¹

Having reflected upon the violence and suffering occurring in many parts of the world in general and Nigeria in particular, the question for attention is: How do we inculcate a culture of peace? In attempting to find an answer, defining peace will give us a clue. According to Merriam Webster's collegiate dictionary "peace" means "freedom from public disturbance or disorder, freedom from disagreement, an undisturbed state of mind, an absence of mental conflict, and peace of mind."⁷⁴² From the above definitions, "it has becomes obvious that practicing these attributes will be of benefit to every person and to the world in general."⁷⁴³ Peace is also made possible by "removing the obstacles created by religious doctrines, dogmas, creeds, castes, social status, power, control, passions and lack of empathy for others."⁷⁴⁴ Approximately, 50 percent of the Nigerian populations belong to Islam religion, 40 percent belongs to Christianity while 10 percent embrace African traditional religions.

To secure a brighter future for Nigeria in the face of frequent religious conflicts, the government in conjunction with the religious communities should establish a peace and reconciliation council that will rehabilitate and de-radicalize the religious extremist among us. An attempt towards this is the creation of a National Peace Council Committee with branches at state and local levels that brings together a small diverse group of civil

⁷⁴¹ Christian van Gorder, "The World's Religions after September 11, 4 Vols.," *A Journal of Church and State*. 52, no. 3 (2010): 168.

⁷⁴² *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, "s.v. "Peace", Accessed November 12, 2013, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/peace>.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

and religious individuals of good reputation. This idea has been tried out in Nigeria but it is of minimal achievement due to its structure, According to John Paden:

The idea of National Peace Council, with representatives from Christian and Muslim communities has been established in Abuja by Obasanjo's administration. Yet, the extension of such councils is most critical at the state and local levels where much of the violence transpires. A national council may send a symbolic message of conflict resolution, but it may be remote from the realities on the ground.⁷⁴⁵

The above councils is only limited to the federal capital territory (Abuja), without extension to the state local and rural areas where conflict at times is endemic. Without peace at the local level, prosperity is illusory. Hence, there can be no meaningful progress from such a commission unless it is all embracing and encompasses all three tiers of government. To foster peace and unity in a diverse religious society like Nigeria the government should take the following into consideration.

5.3.1. Eschewing Corruption

One of the Nigeria's most renowned musicians Sunny Okosun by name in 1986, released an album entitled 'Which way Nigeria?' a song which every well-meaning Nigerian regarded as a lamentation for our dear country. His predicaments can be summed up in one word, corruption at all angles. Sule articulated this monster thus:

There is meaninglessness in philosophy, insecurity in polity, chaos in politics, corruption in economy, immorality in society, frustration in art and lack of creativity in literature. There has ensued a free-for-all which in turn, has bred and nurtured in us as a polity, the syndrome of "everybody for himself, God for us all, the devil takes the hindmost", survival of the fittest, relegating our natural responsibility of being our brother's keeper has become the order of the day.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁵ John N Paden, *Faith and Politics in Nigeria: Nigeria as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute Of Peace Press, 2008), 63.

⁷⁴⁶ Sule Yusuf M, "Not in Our Character, Kaduna" (presented at the Lawal Ja'afar Isa, Kaduna, Nigeria, 1995).

Confronted by this ugly circumstance of the country, most Nigerians are left with no option than to continue to lament while hoping for a positive day of retrieval which they may not live to witness while others, skeptical of any possible change for the better has found solution in flight, as Mbefo observed “Nigeria’s national image within and abroad has become a cause of concern for many”.⁷⁴⁷ To salvage this ugly situation and ensure the realization of development plans, the various past governments of this nation have utilized different strategies that were considered capable of turning the table around. The first move towards this direction was taken in 1975 with the promulgation of the corrupt practices decree and the establishment of the corrupt practices investigation bureau and promulgation in the same year of the public complaints commission decree. Then came the second republic of President Shehu Shagari which was overthrown by General Buhari. When the Buhari regime declared war against indiscipline, many lovers of the country admitted it. This war according to them, was to be carried out in stages and was beginning to bring sanity to the nation before it was nipped in the bud by General Babangida in 1985.

The regime of General Babangida can be accused as being the worst as far as the moral status of the nation was concerned. It was during his regime that Nigeria was ranked first among the corrupt nations in the world. His regime witnessed the rise of swindlers of varying types who came to constitute themselves into the class of the rich. It was a time when the spirit of materialism invaded and overshadowed the traditional values. The spiritual values that dominated the life of traditional society seem to be replaced by the quest for material wealth. It was the time that youths began to receive

⁷⁴⁷ Mbefo Luke, *Coping with Nigeria’s Two-Fold Heritage* (Onitsha: Spiritan Publication, 1996), 50.

inordinately high titles that their ancestors had previously merited through years of hard work and resourcefulness. The encouragement given to these fraudsters made many honest citizens doubt our future since fraud has become a way of life. The effect of this regime's practices was the institution of crime, lawlessness, the looting of the government treasury by the government officials, the liquidation of banks, the falsification of contracts and high rate of armed robbery.

The Abacha led government that succeeded General Babangida tried to contain with the activities of the fraudsters by promulgating decree '419' that made the acquisition of improper wealth as a criminal offense. He also promulgated the failed banks decree that brought the loaners of banks to book. But his government had no answer to the looting of the government's treasury and the question of armed robbery. His government surrounded itself with sycophants and praise singers that could not hear the voices of reason. Even with the curtailment of the activities of fraudsters, new waves of crime surfaced such as ritual killing, trafficking on human parts and cultism in the higher institutions of learning. The promulgation of war against indiscipline and corruption (WAIC) and the ruthlessness with which it handled other affairs is a clear sign of the moral weakness of that regime. The series of other transitory governments did not do enough to curb the above listed evils. Consequently, the tension of ascendancy to political positions in the country since then is seen as an opportunity to exploit the national wealth for selfish and group interests. How these anomalies affect the development of Nigeria is a serious concern.

Endemic corruption which dogs all aspects of Nigerian national life⁷⁴⁸ should no doubt be seen as, a factor to be reckoned with the fight to put security in its proper place in the country. It is in recognition of this ignoble practice of corruption that Saidu Dogo, lamented as reported by Noah Ebijie that “if we are determined to fight against insecurity in this country we will do it. But the issue is that because of massive corruption, if you vote billions of Nigerian currency for security, it will go into private pockets. Nobody will give any information.”⁷⁴⁹

Tackling corruption according to Ogundiya, is not “a one-shot endeavor, but a challenging long-term undertaking”⁷⁵⁰ The fight against corruption in Nigeria has to be consistent and sustained since it seems that corruption is part and parcel of the nation. In view of that the Nigerian government needs to “match rhetoric with action in the war against corruption”.⁷⁵¹ As a corollary every Nigerian has a role to play and all relevant institutions must cooperate in the fight against corruption. It is only when every hand is on deck that working together against corruption can be tackled in a holistic and all-embracing manner. Until the monster of corruption is tamed all effort at regional or national development will continue to be futile.

Table 1: Types, causes and consequences of corruption

Types of Corruption	Causes	Forms	Consequences
Political Corruption	Weak electoral commission, law enforcement mechanism.	Inflation of voters, rigging of elections and deprivation of winners from	Civil unrest, bad governance, incompetent rulers and bad

⁷⁴⁸ Simon Anyanwu, *The Church and Nigerian Social Development* (Okigwe: Fishermen Communications, 2005), 25-27.

⁷⁴⁹ Noah Ebijie, “Boko Haram: Northern Christians Talk Tough,” *Daily Sun*, December 14, 2011, 7, <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/IgboWorldForum/conversations/messages/117038>.

⁷⁵⁰ Ogundiya, Ilufoye Sarafe, “Political Corruption in Nigeria: Theoretical Perspective and Some Explanations,” in *Anthropologist 11(4)*, 2009, 281–92.

⁷⁵¹ Victor Egwim and Usman Salisu, “Corruption and Corrupt Practices in Nigeria,” *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, No 3, 14 (2010): 105–11.

	Judiciary and one party dominated state	weaker political parties	international image and electoral violence
Economic Corruption	Weak state, poverty and wide income gap between the rich and the poor	Bribing to win contracts, influenced service delivery, contract cutbacks, inflation of government contracts and non-payment of taxes by highly placed businessmen	Escalating cost of governance, poor or non-implementation of public contracts, poor public service delivery, shut down of public parastatals and loss of public revenue through tax evasion and avoidance.
Bureaucratic Corruption	Lack of national commitment, weak state and complex bureaucratic process	Bribery of public officials and distortion of due process/normal procedure in the public sectors	Bad policies, non-pursuance of policy objectives, policy failures, employment of incompetent hands as public officials and poor service delivery
Judicial Corruption	Poor salary scale, greed and weak law	Free bail, distortion of judgments, acceptance	Corruption persists, private cost of corruption is lowered or reduced to zero, civil unrest, lawlessness takes stage, and decadence of rule of law
Moral Corruption	Non-taxation of property, high level of poverty and wide income distribution	Flamboyant demonstration of individual materialistic possession and exploitation of masses by the few powerful rich in the society	Desperation to acquire wealth armed robbery (419s), civil disorder and eventually revolution for change.

Source: Yaru, 2010:146

5.3.1.1. The Need for Greater Collaboration among Nigeria's Security Outfits

The regimes of insecurity that *Boko Haram* has set in motion are indeed a reality and a thorn in the flesh of the country. They challenge all Nigerians to rise up collectively and individually to all that is capable of legitimately defending the country. Satisfactory commitment and collaboration among the country's security outfits is a veritable challenge if the insecurity unleashed by *Boko Haram* is to be eradicated.

The agencies responsible for security forces in the country include the Nigeria Police force (NPF) the State Security Service (SSS) and Nigeria Security Civil and Defense Corps, (NSCDC). Others are the Nigerian Intelligence Agency (NIA) National Security Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency etc. The above listed group force are capable of challenging the *Boko Haram* terroristic menace but "what is however lacking is enough commitment as well as effective collaboration"⁷⁵²...overlapping in the performance of their duties." According to Christian Ngige, "the deficiency of effective collaboration among the country's security agencies comes in this observation. As a ...chief Executive of a State, I noticed when I was a governor that the SSS and the police hardly collaborate."⁷⁵³

The terroristic actions of *Boko Haram* have challenged the nation's security agencies in a way that has compromised their effectiveness. It is time for Nigeria's security agencies to re-enforce and join hands in fighting this unbearable security malady. However, some measures like "proper intelligence gathering"⁷⁵⁴ have been identified as

⁷⁵² Simon Ebegbulem, "Boko Haram: Nigeria Sitting on a Keg of Gun Powder-Ngige," *Vanguard*, July 22, 2011, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/07/boko-haram-nigeria-sitting-on-a-keg-of-gun-powder-ngige/>.

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁴ Layi Olarenwaju, Boko Haram: Solve security problem from bottom to top, Belgore urges FG in www.Vanguardngr.com/2011/7/

steps in the right direction as has loudly been declared in many quarters. Other recommendations towards enhancing intelligence gathering are, inter alia, installing of close-circuit security cameras at sensitive locations across the nation, and keeping an eye on fundamentalist Islamic scholars whose teachings can cause harm. Some foreign Islamic scholars who visit Nigeria from the Middle East or from other parts of the Islamic fundamentalist world need to be monitored in order to minimize the havoc their teachings and convoluted utterances are capable of causing. This is a ripe time for the Nigerian government and members of *Boko Haram* need to embrace peace in order to save the country from anarchy, chaos and the reign of brutality.

5.4. PEACE PROMOTING DIALOGUE FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: A CHALLENGE TO NIGERIAN MUSLIMS

Contrary to stereotypes of Islam, Muhammad Abu-Nimer,⁷⁵⁵ emphasizes that Islam advocates numerous nonviolent and peace building values and expects follow Muslims to live by those obligations. Some of those values are supported by the Quran and the Hadiths. (1)The duty to pursue justice (Quran 5:8), (2) the necessity of doing good by struggling against oppression and helping those who are in need. (3) All humans are God's creation that have sacred lives and thus are all equal (7:11). (4) Muslims are also instructed to believe that "if anyone slays a person it would be as if he slew the whole people and if anyone saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people" (Quran 5:32). All Muslims are to respect and preserve human life (5:32).

⁷⁵⁵ Abu-Nimer is an associate professor specializing in International peace and conflict resolution at the American University's School of International Service in Washington, DC, and director of the Peace building and Development Institute, which offers unique summer peace building courses for professionals in the field. He is the co-founder and co-editor of the new *Journal of Peace building and Development*. In addition to his accomplishments, he speaks Arabic, Hebrew and English.

Islam therefore, calls for the quest for peace that pursues physical, mental, spiritual, and social harmony (5:64). The importance of tolerance and kindness to other people are also stressed (16:90). Peace building and negotiation are considered to be more effective than aggression and violent confrontation. In fact, the Arabic meaning of the word Islam itself connotes peace. Islam therefore, urges its adherents to live in harmony and peace with fellow humans.

5.4.1. From the Oneness of God the Creator of all

At the heart of Islam stands the reality of God, the absolute and the infinite, the infinitely good and merciful one, the one who is transcendent and immanent, greater than all we can conceive or imagine. The one God known as Allah in Arabic name is the central reality of Islam in all of its facets and attestation to this oneness called (*tawhid*) is the axis around which all that is Islamic revolves. The implication is that Islam is a monotheistic religion. Its absolute monotheism stems from the fact that Allah is beyond the differences of gender and all qualities that distinguish beings from one another in this globe. Allah is the source of all existence and all cosmic and human qualities, as well as the beginning and the end, from whom all things originate and to whom all things return. Testifying to this oneness lies at the heart of the credo of Islam and is expressed in the first of its five pillars, the *shahada* or witness, which proclaims, “There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God (Q. 21:25).

5.4.2. From the Perspective of the creation of Adam and the Whole Universe

In Islam, it is fundamental that Allah created humanity in Adam and made Adam both a servant and a vicegerent in the universe. Allah is beyond gender that is neither

male nor female. However, in the inner teachings of Islam, his essence is often referred to, in feminine form and the divinity is often mentioned as the beloved.

Allah created both the male and the female and the root of both femininity and masculinity are to be found in the divine nature, which transcends the duality between them. The qualities of God, which are reflected throughout creation, are of a feminine as well as a masculine nature. This understanding from the perspective of holistic co-belonging has implications for racism and other forms of discriminations based on color, race, social status, religion and language, etc and informs Islamic reflections on human rights today in the idea that all human beings are master pieces formed by God and are defined by their relation to God. The *hadith al-qudsi*, considered extra-Quranic revelation speaks of God as being a hidden treasure which is a symbol of God's truth, that everything in the universe has its origin in the divine reality and is a manifestation of that reality. Everything in the cosmos, both visible and invisible is a manifestation of the divine names and qualities drawn from the treasury of God. The wisdom of God, permeates the universe and Muslims in fact see the cosmos as God's primordial revelation.

Everything in the universe reflects God's wisdom and glorifies God. It is through his name *al-rahman* (which means the infinitely merciful and compassionate) that the universe has come into being.) All Islamic rites are harmonized with natural phenomenon and in general Muslims view the world of creation as God's first revelation before even the Torah, Psalms of David, New Testament or Quran are revealed. Despite slight differences, the Islamic understanding of (anthropogenesis or the creation of human beings has a lot in common with Judaism and Christianity (Q.15:29).

5.4.3. From the Perspective of Sociology

As a religion, community (*ummah*) is one of the key concepts of Islam. Often this term is exclusively and narrowly interpreted but it is an inclusive term in the wider perspective of Islam. There is no doubt that what Islam meant to establish was not just a set of injunctions for private behavior but to create a community based on justice, in which the pursuit of the divine law was made possible. There is no society without the individual nor can the individual survive without society. The social nature of the human being is part of the wisdom of God's creation and the Quran asserts, "there is no secret conference of three but he is their fourth nor of five but he is their sixth..." (Q. 58:7)

In its inclusive sense, Islam identifies communities according to their religious affiliation. Christians are referred to as the *ummah* or community of Jesus Christ and Jews as the *ummah* of Moses while the Muslims constitute the *ummah* of the prophet Muhammad. Abraham as the father of faith is also referred to as an *ummah*, "obedient unto God" (Q. 16:20) Each of the communities has a set of rites chosen for it by God (Q. 22:34). In the beginning of creation, there is only one *ummah* (community) (Q. 10:19), but with the passage of history different communities came into being and many gradually faded away. The Quran depicts in elaborate terms the rise, and fall of various communities which can also be understood as nations in the Biblical sense. In fact, "every community has a duration and when such duration comes to an end, nothing can advance it" (Q.7:34). No wonder the Quran recognizes the people of the Book. The destruction of communities or nations happened according to the Quran because of moral corruption and straying from the religious norms willed by God for the community in question.

For Islam, a community implies above all, a human collectivity held together by religious bonds that are themselves the foundation for social, juridical, political, economic and ethical links between its members. This is against the exclusivist ideology of some communities” (Q.42:8). It is within the context of a world with many communities that Islam sees in religious terms in which the Islamic understanding of itself as an *ummah* must be situated and understood. A very good example is the co-existence of Prophet Muhammad with the peoples of the Book (*ahl al-kitab*) in the early stages of Islam.

5.4.4. From the Perspective of Eschatology

Muslims believe in life after death, heaven or hell, the day of Judgment and other eschatological realities that are in many cases similar to traditional Christian doctrines. Believe in *ma'ad*, literally means ‘return’ to God in Islam (theologically known as eschatology) is part of the credo of Islam. This idea of life after death is closely related to the realization of divine justice. The notion of justice becomes very crucial here since it is a marker for all humanity. The inclusive understanding of *ummah* in the people of the Book creates room for an eschatological imagination in which all creation no matter religious affiliation, color, race, and language would be re-united with God, the maker of all things.

5.4.5. From the Perspective of Forgiveness or Reconciliation

Forgiveness is very necessary in the world for without it sin begets sin, harm generates harm and there will be no breaking of the sequence. Forgiveness breaks the chain of violence. It represents a decision not to do whatever the instinct or passion urges

us to do. It answers hatred with love and animosity with generosity. Forgiveness means that we are not destined endlessly to replay the grievances of yesterday. It is the refusal to be defined by circumstances. Forgiveness (especially within religion), is our ability to change course, refrain from the narrative of the past and create an unexpected set of possibilities for the future.⁷⁵⁶ According to Q. 45:14), “Tell those who believe to forgive those who do not look forward to the days of Allah, it is for Allah to recompense.” (Q. 45:14). “Every Muslim forgives except a man who has enmity between him and his brother. Leave these two until they have made reconciliation.” (Q. 7:199)

5.5. ROMAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: A CHALLENGE TO NIGERIAN CHRISTIANS

The Christian religion has developed social teachings to help guide public life. The social teaching of the Catholic Church is “offered to those who seek to build a truly human and humane society and promote the real common good.”⁷⁵⁷ It is not only for Catholic or Christians but it is for all nations. The Roman Catholic Church over the past century has developed the most extensive body of teaching and perhaps holds the greatest confidence that its teaching can affect the public through political, business, and other leaders of good will.

From the analysis of some social encyclicals, there is a positive commonality and a strong emphasis on these four principles on the Catholic Social Teaching based on: (1) Dignity of the human person, (2) Common good, (3) Subsidiarity and (4) Solidarity. Consequently to a nation like Nigeria ravaged by the destruction of lives and properties

⁷⁵⁶ Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2003), 179.

⁷⁵⁷ Deacon Keith, Catholic on line: (www.Catholic.org).

with declining respect for human rights, the Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. The belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of Catholic social teaching. “All offenses against life itself such as murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and willful suicide; all violations of the integrity of the human person...and the like are criminal...and militate against the honor of the creator.”⁷⁵⁸ However, the slight difficulty, this study identifies is the peculiarity of the actual practice of Islam in Nigeria vis-à-vis the normative Islamic tradition in history.

Unlike the practice of Islam in other countries like Turkey, many Nigerian Muslim groups like *Boko Haram* as a result of conflict do not give heed to openness, tolerance and co –existence. Thus, sometimes the social principle of human value is not considered. The Encyclicals further expresses that the above principles and values form the moral basis of social life and consequently the basis of peace and justice in the society. The principles ought to function in a reciprocal fashion with the fundamental values of truth, freedom, justice and love.⁷⁵⁹ Thus, in this light, the Congregation for Catholic Education makes them “indispensable for any substantial reforms of economic, political, cultural and technological structures and the necessary changes in institutions.”⁷⁶⁰ In the face of contemporary expressions of violence through

⁷⁵⁸ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), no. 27.

⁷⁵⁹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 26; AAS 58 (1966), 1046-1047. C.f. John XXIII, Encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, AAS 55 (1963), 265-266.

⁷⁶⁰ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guideline for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the formation of Priests*, 43 (Vatican Rome: Polyglot Press, 1988), 44.

globalization, there is the need to appeal to the insight of these principles as corrective measures to the ill-winds of globalization.

5.5.1. The Dignity of Human Person

The fundamental concern of the entire spectrum of the social teaching of the Church is the dignity of the human person endowed with reason. Every human person is sacred because God made humans in his own image and likeness and gives them an eternal destiny. “People do not lose dignity because of their race, sex, nationality, age, disability, poverty or lack of success. People are more important than things, what we are count more important than what we have.”⁷⁶¹

From the epoch-making workers’ Leo XIII (1878-1903) wrote an encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), which dealt with the problems raised by recent social changes or problems of common interest to the Church. Leo XIII challenged the rich to accept responsibility for the common good, and proposed a new system of guilds to organize workers and managers. He wanted workers and managers to cooperate for the common good rather than fight each other in class struggle. *Rerum novarum* affirmed the human person as the sole beneficiary of all economic and social activities. Hence, he emphasized the priority of labor over capital and based his argument on the position that in labor, the human person is fulfilled as a co-creator with God. Including other aspects of social life, Pius XII (1876-1958) agrees with his predecessors on the centrality and priority position of the human person in the Church’s social teaching. According to him, “far from being the object or passive element of social life the human person is rather and must always

⁷⁶¹ David Whitten Smith and Elizabeth Geraldine Burr, *Understanding World Religions: A Road Map for Justice and Peace* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 239.

remain its subject, foundation and goal.”⁷⁶² The pontifical council for justice and peace, in agreement with Pius XII, stresses that the origin of social life is found in the human person. Consequently, the society cannot refuse to recognize its active and responsible subject; every expression of society must be directed towards the human person.

The Church views the human person from a relational responsibility model. The human person here is not a being in isolation but a being in a multiple relationship with himself, the other and with God in whose image and likeness he or she is created.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “being in the image of God, the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something but someone. Further, he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.”⁷⁶³ In view of that “all people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions, as well as to organize and join unions or other associations.”⁷⁶⁴

5.5.2. The concept of the Common Good

In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council articulated the meaning of the common good in its primary and broad sense. Common good expresses, “the sum total of social conditions which allow people either as groups or as individuals to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”⁷⁶⁵ By this understanding, the communitarian character of human existence means that the good of each person is

⁷⁶² Pius XII, Radio Message of 24 December 1944, 5: AAS 37 (1945), 12.

⁷⁶³ Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (New Hope, Ky.: Urbi et Orbi Communications, 1994), 358.

⁷⁶⁴ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *A Catholic Framework for Economic Life*, no. 5.

⁷⁶⁵ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 26: AAS 58 (1966), 1046.

bound up with the good of human community. *Gaudium et spes* makes it clear that humans are created by God not for life in isolation but for the formation of social unity.⁷⁶⁶ Therefore in a global culture driven by excessive individualism, the Catholic tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. This implies that how we organize our society in economics, religion, culture and politics, in law and policy, directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in the community. This dignity in community “implies that People have a fundamental right to “life, food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, education and employment.”⁷⁶⁷ The catholic social teaching upholds that the role of the government and other institutions is to protect human life and the common good of all, nationally and internationally.

Furthermore, John XXIII (1958-1963) in *Mater et Magistra* defines the common good as, “the sum total of conditions of social living whereby persons are enabled more fully and readily to achieve their own perfection.”⁷⁶⁸ In the same vein, the Pontiff in *Pacem in Terris* agreed that in our time “the common good is chiefly guaranteed when personal rights and duties are maintained.”⁷⁶⁹ The theme of participation is prominent in the notion of the common good. Addressing the real problem of contemporary globalization, John Paul II warns about exploitative interdependence. For him, unless directed by a moral concern that all persons share mutually in the benefits that come from

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁶⁷ Smith and Burr, *Understanding World Religions*, 239.

⁷⁶⁸ Catholic Church and Pope (1958-1963 : John XXIII), *Mater et Magistra, an Encyclical Letter*. (Chicago: Discoverers Press, 1962), 65.

⁷⁶⁹ *Pacem in Terris* (Chicago: Argus, 1960), 60.

social advance, this increased interdependence can become a negative force of domination and exploitation.⁷⁷⁰

In relation to equitable distribution of created goods, Pius XI (1927-1939) relates the common goods to social justice as he writes:

The distribution of created goods, which as every discerning person knows is laboring today under the gravest evils due to the huge disparity between the few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered property less, must be effectively called back to and brought into conformity with the norms of the common good that is social justice.⁷⁷¹

It is within this framework, that Catholic Social Teaching locates the roles of the government to the state and to individuals. Therefore the state has a positive moral function to promote human dignity, protect human rights and build the common good. It assists citizens in fulfilling their responsibility to others in society.

Buttressing this Catholic tradition of the universal destination of goods, Paul II (1978-2005) writes that “God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under *the* guidance of justice tempered by charity.⁷⁷² By this wisdom of the Christian tradition, the contemporary globalizing trend of politics, economies, religion and culture is challenged and confronted. The global market economy for instance ought to operate within the dynamics of the dignity of differences based on justice and equity. Such attitude to life is

⁷⁷⁰ Catholic Church and John Paul Pope (1978-2005 : John Paul II), *Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo Rei Socialis of the Supreme Pontiff, John Paul II, to the Bishops, Priests, Religious Families, Sons and Daughters of the Church and All People of Good Will for the Twentieth Anniversary of Populorum Progressio*. (Washington, D.C.: Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, United States Catholic Conference, 1988), 38.

⁷⁷¹ Catholic Church and Pope (1922-1939 : Pius XI), *Quadragesimo Anno, Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius XI on Constructing the Social Order* (New York: The Paulist press, 1939), 197, <http://books.google.com/books?id=svBaAAAAAYAAJ>.

⁷⁷² John Paul, *Encyclical Letter Centesimus Annus of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II: On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*. (Boston, Mass.: St. Paul Books & Media, 1991), 843–845.

opposed to contemporary globalizing forms of individualism, collectivism and pragmatism.

5.5.3 The Concept of Subsidiarity

The principle of subsidiarity was introduced by Pius XI (1922-1939). It involves two characteristics; “(a) what individuals can accomplish by their own initiatives and industry should not be taken from them and given to the community, what lesser and subordinate organizations can accomplish should not be taken over by larger or higher associations. (b) If individuals or lesser organizations need help (financial, technical) to accomplish these tasks, the higher associations should provide that aid (*subsidium*).⁷⁷³ The aid is what gives subsidiarity its name.

In a nutshell this principle has to do with the idea that to address problems of development, people should be able to rule and govern at the lowest level. This implies that, people cannot and should not rely on the Federal government to solve local problems. Subsidiarity “involves division of labor, but in such a way that work challenges the full humanity of worker and allows workers to express themselves in such a way that decision-making is shared as widely and democratically as possible.”⁷⁷⁴ Thus, the principle of subsidiarity with its characteristic implication of participation challenges the contemporary waves of religious globalization in Nigeria. What it entails is that people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of the human society. In the context of this study, political offices and appointments in Nigeria has prerogative of some citizens based on religious affiliation remains a slap on integration

⁷⁷³ Smith and Burr, *Understanding World Religions*, 239.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 241.

and the civil right of participation. It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community. Conversely, it is wrong for a person or group to be excluded unfairly in the society.

According to an American Bishops, “the ultimate injustice is for a person or a group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were non-members of the human race. To treat people this way is effectively to say they simply do not count as human beings.”⁷⁷⁵ The importance of this principle of subsidiarity lies in its implication for the relationship between the universal and the particular, the global and the local. In relation to the state, the principle of subsidiarity stresses that the functions of government should be performed at the lowest level possible as long as they can be performed adequately. If they cannot, then a higher level of government should intervene to provide the needed assistance.

5.5.4. The Principle of Solidarity

The term solidarity in the social teaching of the Church expresses the need to “love your neighbor as yourself” since “we are all related as members of one human family that is only superficially divided by race, sex, nation, ideology, and class. The riches of the earth are intended for all humans. We may or may not be responsible for causing injustice, but we are all responsible to work to end it.”⁷⁷⁶ Solidarity as a term is widely used by the Magisterium⁷⁷⁷ in its social teaching and it presumes that our

⁷⁷⁵ Arch-diocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, *Key Principles of Catholic Social Teaching* (USA), accessed June 30, 2014, <http://www.cctwincities.org/document.doc?id=12>.

⁷⁷⁶ Smith and Burr, *Understanding World Religions*, 240.

⁷⁷⁷ Magisterium refers to the teaching office of the church. “What the principle of solidarity is called nowadays is frequently stated by Pope Leo XI, who uses the term, ‘friendship’ a concept already found in Greek philosophy. Pope Pius XI refers to it with the equally meaningful term ‘social charity’. Solidarity

neighbor, whether now alive or yet to be born is like us, a human being with an eternal destiny, with needs like our own, dependent on the goods of God's creation. So our brothers or sisters should be treated with dignity in community with ourselves, with rights as well as responsibilities that require him or her to be accepted as a participant. Solidarity helps us to see the 'other' not just as some "kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our neighbor...to which all are equally invited by God."⁷⁷⁸

The New catechism of the Catholic Church stresses that the new relationships of interdependence between individuals and peoples brought about via globalization, have to be transformed into relationships tending towards genuine ethical social solidarity. This is a moral requirement inherent within all human relationships. Solidarity therefore, has two complementary aspects that of a social principle and that of moral virtue.⁷⁷⁹ From the message of the Church's Social Teaching on solidarity, one observes a unity of principles. In his world peace day message of January, 1986 Saint John Paul II, presented solidarity and development as two keys to peace in the world. True solidarity rejects any form of exploitation or the misuse of development programs for the benefit of the few.⁷⁸⁰

For him, solidarity must be seen above all in its value as a moral virtue that determines the order of institutions. The "structures of sin"⁷⁸¹ that dominate relationships

is one of the basic principles of the entire social teaching of the Church, Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Libertatis Conscientia*, 73: AAA 79 (1987)586.

⁷⁷⁸John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 39.

⁷⁷⁹ Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church.*, 1942.

⁷⁸⁰ William J. Byron. "The future of Catholic Social Thought," *The catholic University law Review* 42, no.3 (1993): 557, Accessed July 22, 2014, <http://scholarship.law.edu/lawreview/vol42/iss3/4>

⁷⁸¹ Structure of sin refers to unjust laws, customs, situations, and habitual ways of doing things. Slavery is an example of structural sin as it was held in place by laws, but also by custom and habit. Racial segregation is a structural sin. Gender injustice is a structural sin. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* Saint John Paul points out the relationship between personal sin and structural sin: those who cause, intensify, protect, or share in the unjust fruits of-or fail to combat-unjust political, economic, and other structures are guilty of

between individuals and peoples must be broken and transformed into structures of solidarity through creation and appropriate modification of laws, market regulations and juridical systems.⁷⁸² Solidarity then is a virtue directed par excellence to the common good founded on a commitment to the good of one's neighbor with the readiness in the gospel sense, to lose oneself for the sake of the other. Solidarity in this context is a moral virtue and never determined by the exploitative mechanism of global politics and economics. Consequently, the old attitude of colonialism and imperialism should be replaced with the scriptural Pauline metaphor of "one body with many parts."⁷⁸³ This metaphor stresses that when one part of the body is weak, the whole body is weak also. This biblical indictment challenges all forms of contemporary globalizing ethos, which aims at exploiting indigenous cultures, economic and politics. Appreciating and living the message of the Pauline metaphor should therefore be a cause for peace in Nigeria and the entire globe.

Each individual or group has its own uniqueness and distinctive differences while at the same time sharing in the same humanity. If nature has made life with an infinite variety, then all efforts to impose one's culture, religion or civilization over another will end in conflict. In view of that, this study is calling for a culture of peace, a culture of openness, conversation and dialogue. To explore more on the above teaching, it is necessary to address the question: why Catholic social teaching delayed in taking root in Nigeria despite significant presence of Catholics?

personal sin. We may fail to combat these structures because we, or our friends, are benefiting from them, because we are too apathetic to be bothered, or because we are afraid we may get hurt or lose friends if we object.

⁷⁸² Catholic Church and Pope (1978-2005 : John Paul II), *Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo Rei Socialis of the Supreme Pontiff, John Paul II, to the Bishops, Priests, Religious Families, Sons and Daughters of the Church and All People of Good Will for the Twentieth Anniversary of Populorum Progressio.*, 213–217.

⁷⁸³ Corinthians 12: 12-30.

Viewing the picture of Nigeria since her independence the cultural plurality has made it difficult for Nigerians to see themselves as a group of individuals with a common goal. Relationship between the different cultural groups has been characterized by discrimination of treating equal people unequally. Many Nigerians feel estranged in their own country. This feeling has made it almost impossible for the different cultural groups to live in trustful cooperation. This has resulted in the country being thrown into the deep waters of tribalism that has hitherto hampered national integration and progress.

In addition, the religious differences which resulted in the North-South divide that took place in the 19th century equally added salt to these state of affairs. The caliphate established under religious cover at the dawn of independence later turned into a political tool for the unification of the entire north against the south. These have had their consequences on the Nigerian polity. The big question on how to build a Catholic social teaching out of these cultural, religious, social and linguistic diversities becomes a concern. This study identifies slight difficulty in the peculiarity of the actual practice of Islam in Nigeria vis-à-vis the normative Islamic tradition in history. Most Nigerian Muslims groups does not give heed to openness, tolerance and co –existence to other religions. As a consequence, the social principle of human value is not as such considered which made the above principles not to function in a reciprocal fashion with the fundamental values of truth, freedom, justice and love⁷⁸⁴ in Nigeria.

The Catholic Church after Vatican II provided a new understanding of the church's self-understanding, one that is in some way inclusive of other Christians and non-Christian religions and all people of good will. Whether the Nigerian bishops who

⁷⁸⁴ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 26; AAS 58 (1966), 1046-1047. Also confer John XXIII, Encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, AAS 55 (1963), 265-266.

were mostly conservative genuinely approves or disapproves this paradigm shift in terms of style or substance remains uncertain. Vatican II in partnership with the social teachings considered that some centuries old ways of thinking and acting had to be jettisoned if the institution was to remain relevant as the modern time began to swing. But however, what does seem clear is that there has been a problem about the effective transmission of the Catholic faith during this period. The publication of the Catholic catechism of the church was, in part, a response to this crisis. Nonetheless its tenets is limited to be used to evaluate other religions. The new image of the church and Christian life as a pilgrimage is a humble one that allowed for a more open approach to reassessment of past actions, and acknowledgment of mistakes. With these new spirit of inclusion and ecumenism in fellowship with each other despite our different theological understanding have shared in the church's goals of spreading the faith and being Jesus to other human beings, be they Catholics or not. Justice sees human beings "thinly" all worthy of equal treatment on account of their common humanity.

5.5.5. Social teachings with sustainable development in Nigerian Context

In her march towards meaningful development, Nigeria since 1960 on the attainment of independence had committed herself to the building of peaceful and prosperous nation. But it is unfortunate that all her efforts has had to contend with a lot of obstacles which seems to defy all available solutions. The various government programs aimed at achieving any meaningful development have turned to become negative.

In concluding this section, the social teachings have armed both Christians and Muslims to challenge all kinds of contemporary globalization ethos that aims at exploiting indigenous cultures, economic and politics etc. Not only that, adherents are

also called to challenge the larger systematic ills highlighted in the above teachings arising from globalization and mal development that beset the nation. Today it has been officially recognized that inequalities of economic power exist. Nigeria is not an exception. They do not have enough resources to finance the investments required to reach critical thresholds in infrastructure, education, and health let alone resources to invest in small scale manufacturing to improve worker productivity. These investments lay the ground work for getting out of poverty traps and cannot wait for economic growth to generate resources when they are faced with death from preventable causes. Social teaching of the church identified access to adequate human resources as an individual and a collective responsibility

In the face of all these evils, the Christian mission in Nigeria has often accompanied their vocal denunciations with a call to action. With the spirit of openness both adherents of Christianity and Islam will contribute to sustainable development through nurturing of human conscience for the common good. There is an indication that both Christians and Muslims can meet to work together through the medium of dialogue that will foster respect and eschew intolerance. New strategies which were considered positive of turning the table round should be accompanied with ethical perspective especially on the mode of relationship that should exist towards building the disadvantaged groups for self-reliance.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) have established an inter-religious dialogue commission in response to the demands of the social teachings mission. Further organs such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and Muslim FBOs like the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) in many ways have

also contributed to sustainable development both as a group and as individuals. These groups have also spoken against such ills as official corruption, injustices in national appointments and inequality in the distribution of national wealth etc. It is hoped that through nurturing of human conscience both Christians and Muslims can do much to alleviate these degrading human conditions by supporting the implementation of such measures from the local to the national levels.

5.5.6. Breaking down the Dividing Wall of Enmity

In Christian history, its enemies par excellence have been members of other religious traditions and heretics especially those who believed and prayed in a different ways. In our endeavors to overcome enmity we need “at the deepest level to ask God to give us the strength to think about Jesus, who not only gave us the commandment to love our enemies but provides us with crucial information about how to do it....”⁷⁸⁵

Christians are called to apply Jesus commandment in an entirely different direction, to love their enemies. They can always draw inspiration from the life of Jesus who lives only by the truth and always gives us the example of loving. If there is anything clear about the moral teaching of Jesus, it is his prohibition against the use of violence. In his Sermon on the Mount he says the true children of God are the peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). He says any disciple of his must renounce the law of retaliation (“An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.”) by offering no resistance to injury (Matthew 5: 38-39). He even gives the scandalous command that we are to love our enemies and pray for our persecutors (Matthew 5:43-44; Luke 6: 27-29). In the new

⁷⁸⁵ Jim Forest, *Making Friends of Enemies: Reflections on the Teachings of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 56.

social order, which Jesus calls the reign of God, power is to be found in truthfulness, love, and forgiveness, not the sword.

Given Jesus' teaching this study opined that it would seem hurtful for Christians to call any war just. This is what the first followers of Jesus concluded. Among the many changes baptism introduced into a Christian's life was the renunciation of violence, specifically a refusal to engage in war. May a Christian ever respond in violence or ever partake in war? In the early church, the answer in most instances was no. Most early Christians were pacifists. Many refused to fight in wars because killing was judged to be a direct violation of Jesus command to love one's enemies and to overcome evil with good. Christians were called to imitate Christ, and Christ, instead of attacking his persecutors, suffered the violence of the cross. Christians were summoned to do the same. The first Christian communities took to heart Jesus message that it is suffering love that ultimately transforms the world, not war. Killing one's enemies, rather than praying for them, was thought by many to be a violation of the gospel.

Since current events "make us painfully aware of the differences that separate the world's religions, it is more crucial today than ever to appreciate the complex connections they share."⁷⁸⁶ At Vatican II and afterwards, as said above there was a renewed emphasis on "the Church as the people of God in fellowship with each other and all enjoying the unique vocation that shared in the Church's goal of spreading the faith and being Jesus to other human beings, be they Catholic or not".⁷⁸⁷ The image of the Church "as a pilgrim is a humble one that surely allowed the climate to change which is one reason why John Paul

⁷⁸⁶ Willard Gurdon Oxtoby, *World Religions: Eastern Traditions* (Toronto; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 398.

⁷⁸⁷ Christopher M Bellitto, *Church History 101: A Concise Overview* (Liguori, Mo.: Liguori Publications, 2008), 134.

It was so vocal in acknowledging the Church's past errors and in asking God for forgiveness.”⁷⁸⁸

The reality of “religious violence threatens the togetherness we share as a nation, but "all hopes are not lost".⁷⁸⁹ The religious communities have a commitment to strengthen the peace and harmony of the nations and to avoid all that lead to conflict in the name of religion. Such a step is considered so urgent because of the crying need to liberate many Nigerians from the plague of a false religiosity and assist them to deepen their commitment to God.

Concluding Remarks

Nigeria is waging a steady battle against discrimination, tribalism, poverty, violence, unemployment, corruption, moral decadence etc. Her sense of solidarity and shared expectations should be strong enough and capable of withstanding the present ills that still confront us.

Whether we are Muslims or Christians, rich or poor, from North or South, East or West, regardless of our political affiliations, this is a time for every one of us to be a statesman. Have a sense of mission and purpose, with patience and perseverance as we navigate historical turns in our march towards prosperity and self-sufficiency. This is a time for Nigerians to rekindle the spirit of Nigeria, to ensure that every lover of peace in this great nation continues to live in a free, peaceful and secure Nigeria.⁷⁹⁰

It make perfect sense therefore, for the interested partners to come together to discuss issues that stroke tensions and bring about frictions when raised. A way forward

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁹ Renard, *Responses to 101 Questions on Islam*, 152.

⁷⁹⁰ “President Jonathan’s Speech at Nigeria’s 53rd Independence,” *Daily Sun*, October 2013, <http://www.channelstv.com/2013/10/01/full-transcript-president-jonathans-speech-at-nigerias-53rd-independence/>.

toward the control of religious violence in Nigeria will necessarily “involve people of different religious tradition, being able to come together for dialogue.”⁷⁹¹

Nigerian Christians and Muslims are called to address the challenges of how to build a better inclusive, religiously diverse society in order to achieve the goals of reducing tensions and solving conflicts. Neither group has to give up its identity faith or dogma because at that level no compromise is possible. Building a society together is demanding and that is precisely why it is worthwhile and rewarding to do so. Living together in a preexistent sociopolitical system means to accept the given system as it is by remaining open to improvement. This is the way to grow together in building a future Nigeria that is open to humankind.

⁷⁹¹ Nathaniel I Ndiokwere, *The African Church, Today and Tomorrow. Vol. I*, (Onitsha: Effective Key Publishers, 1994), 324.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Much of what the outside world knows about Nigeria's religious space is the so-called "Christian-Muslim conflicts" as so often presented by the media that usually apportioned blames either to the Christians or to the Muslims depending on where the sympathy of the media lies. However, the fact is that most media houses in Nigeria are owned by the government, and information is often distorted and maneuvered in order to favor the ruling party. This study in contrast to such methods of fake evaluation sets out rather to understand the reality on the ground, with the frame of mind that the existing situation is simply part of the Nigerian struggle to negotiate its corporate existence in order to realize the best pattern of co-existence for its unique Christian-Muslim composition.

This research has concentrated on examining the situation of Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria overshadowed by religious crisis and their continuity and discontinuity with the wider global relations between the members of these two communities. However, conflicts are inescapable part of such a journey toward progress. The study has taken up the challenge to search for solutions that may possibly contribute to building up interreligious relations that will foster peace and progress in nationhood. To achieve this purpose, two levels of discussions are developed. The first level critically describes the co-existence of the Christians and Muslims in their commitment to their respective faith convictions, focusing mainly on the key manifestations categorized as 'co-existence of good and conflictual relationships'. The level further shows how non-religious concerns can align with the religious to prevent peace in religious and secular spaces.

The second level looks at how Christians and Muslims view each other by responding to the signs of the times, which express themselves in the roles of religion and pluralism in society. With the discussions on the troubled history of Christian-Muslim relations, the Catholic Church's thinking on Islam and Muslims and the discussion going on among Muslim traditions shows that despite Nigerian peculiarities, the larger world of the respective communities influences them. The research findings are presented in chapters with models dealing with each case.

In the first chapter, this study embarked upon a contextual analysis of the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, discovering that their relations are not about tensions, for there are times when respective followers co-exist in peace with their differences. Conflicts do arise mostly in the predominantly Muslim north of the country and occasionally slide to violent clashes but since the 1980's these wars have become sporadic. For example, since April this year as many as 200 teenage girls were kidnapped from their school in Chibok, northern Nigeria by the Islamic militant terror organization, *Boko Haram*. This kidnapping has attracted global condemnation from world organizations. "The militant Islamist group has been responsible for thousands of deaths since 2009, with at least 2,000 deaths attributed to the group in 2014. The organization has targeted security forces, politicians, Christian minorities, and other Muslims."⁷⁹² What the future holds in store for this militant sect is yet unknown.

The interesting revelation in some of this sudden rise of violence is that many who have political self-interests attempt to feed on the ambivalence of religion, using its

⁷⁹² Catholic News Agency, "Boko Haram Still a Serious Threat to Nigeria, Advocates Warn," accessed October 7, 2014, <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/boko-haram-still-a-serious-threat-to-nigeria-advocates-warn-47977/>.

negative potentials to advance their cause and complicate interreligious relations. The findings suggest that the *sharia* crisis has more to it than is being argued about by both communities. For the Muslims, it is all about their faith-commitment while for the Christians it is part of Islamic affirmation. Christian and Muslim organizations do play a significant role either in promoting peace or inflicting violence. Consequently, Nigerians have learned not to let political instability interfere too much in their daily lives and business activities. The study points out that if Nigerian Christians and Muslims began to create an exclusive Christian or Muslim state then their future interreligious peace and national unity will be at stake. Yet both have resources for peace in their traditions that will benefit all.

In this dissertation, I elaborated on how Muslims and Christians have engaged in a seemingly endless battle for dominance on all fronts, religious, economic and political. Chapter Two examined the historical perspectives of the relationship between Christians and Muslims as represented by some significant voices in the two communities. The data showed that these two communities have in the past treated each other mostly in mutually confrontational ways that cannot easily escape their dark ages. The historical realities of mutual exclusion and confrontation have become ingrained in the attitudes of Nigerian Christians and Muslims despite their use of religion in expressing themselves. The study suggests that for adherents of these religions to share their national life together in a culture of dialogue and peace must embrace new visions that seek to overcome the weight of the past hostilities.

In chapter three, the researcher focused on the Roman Catholic Church's perspective of Christian-Muslim relations in view of discovering whether it offers a

useful model that can contribute to more positive relations between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. This Catholic model emphasizes interreligious dialogue as a means of understanding and enriching one another and the conditions for achieving it as truth and freedom. This chapter further examines the Vatican II declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions that goes beyond Christianity to discuss Catholicism's relationships with other traditions.

Chapter four, elucidates Khan's new insights on Islamic understanding of religion and society and how they could help Nigerian Muslims to rethink their attitudes towards Nigeria's pluralistic society. His chief concern is to re-apply the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet in reconciling the Muslim life of faith with modern times. This reinterpretation of the foundational sources of Islam shaped the responses to modern challenges that Muslims face globally. Such a hermeneutical scheme shaped the discovery of Islam as essentially the worship of God and its invitation of the transcendental values of peace, truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom, etc.

This study observes that the brand of Islam in the southwest of Nigeria is not the same as its counterpart in the northern part. While the former is less politicized and peaceful, the latter is inextricably connected to religion, politics, ethnic and social problems in the mixed areas of the national affairs. Within this context religion is often reduced to its functional forms, which seem to divert emphasis from the essentials of Islam. This accounts for the various killings and violence in the northern Nigeria that violate the tolerated principles of Islam. Khan's vision appears to be part of a campaign that "aims to correct the image of Islam that has been tarnished because of its criminal acts from al Qaida separatists and to exonerate humanity from such crimes that defy natural

instincts and spread hate between people.”⁷⁹³ Khan’s further insights have shown an emphasis on political Islam, refocusing the notion of jihad and its ethical challenge of striving for justice and commitment to respectful and harmonious interreligious co-existence. This study suggests that the best way to prevent *sharia* debacle in Nigeria is to stop the “religionization of politics and politicization of religion.”⁷⁹⁴

Both Christianity and Islam have laid down precepts that can equally enable them live out the tenets of our national ethics as centered on love and justice respectively. What Nigeria needs are sincere Christians and Muslims that understand these principles and who are able to apply them for the common good. This study further, proposes the need for increased inter-religious socialization among Nigerians. The ability of youths to understand the basic tenets of each other’s religion would help to check the continuous fanatical manipulation of religion to cause mayhem. Inter-religious socialization and re-education is a tool for the peaceful co-existence of different religions in Nigerian society.

The fifth chapter offers three proposals toward responding to the problems Christians and Muslims encounter in their relationship. It emphasizes that both should see themselves as one entity with a unity of purpose that could be harnessed into richer benefits. This study sees the Muslims invitation of Christian’s new relationship as welcome idea. Its foundation has been laid and a common future, free from hatred, is gradually being built by these communities. Although many Muslim fundamentalists and traditionalists have expressed loss of confidence in interreligious dialogue and resent

⁷⁹³ Sarah El Deeb, “Islamic State? No, Call It QGIS,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 25, 2014, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/islamic-state-no-call-it-qgis-says-top-islamic-authority-in-egypt-20140825-107yhf.html>.

⁷⁹⁴ Religion is often blamed as the cause of conflicts in Africa, from the Central African Republic to Somalia. But Rev. Johnson Mbillah suggests a more nuanced cause: the religionization of politics and the politicization of religion in Building interfaith peace in Africa by Africafiles (2014).

holding anything in common with Christians nonetheless. In spite of these undermined assertions there are a great numbers of Muslims with liberal minds who work actively for a more inclusive just world.

Though there are areas of fundamental principles, we have to acknowledge, where no amount of logical discourse can bring the two traditions nearer to each other and where therefore the existence of an impasse must be recognized. Issues like the trinity, the divinity of Christ and the crucifixion, so central to Christian beliefs, have no place in Islamic faith. However, irrespective of these religious divides, this current research bodes well for the Nigerian future. The challenge is to craft a valid model through which Muslims and Christians can live alongside one another in mutual respect and peace. “What cannot be achieved in its entirety, must not be abandoned in its entirety.”⁷⁹⁵ God’s time is the best.

To the Catholic Church the study proposes adopting a more proactive Christianity that deals with the challenges of its mission. This model argues that it is by embodying a proactive Christianity that the Catholic Church can give leadership to the Christian witness of authentic interreligious dialogue as the means to promote togetherness. Christians and Muslims are therefore, called to serve together in areas of social justice, defense of human rights, conflict resolution, and safe-guarding religious freedom, monitoring the political use of religion for purposes of power and oppression, working through ecumenical and inter-faith channels and organizations whenever possible, and the adoption of general comments and recommendation suggested by supervisory human

⁷⁹⁵ Watt Montgomery, *Islam and Christianity today: a contribution to dialogue* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1983), x.

treaty. In view of the above grounds for mutual co-existence this dissertation invites all Nigerians to:

Move into a new era where we must eschew all forms of bitterness, crucify all that divides us and focus only on those things that bind us together as one people. Where the shedding of the blood of the innocent must stop...where our dear people are no longer defined by political, tribal, religious and sectional considerations but as united people with a common destiny....⁷⁹⁶

This study finally calls for absolute commitment to the nation's ideals so as to ensure sustainable development pointing out that no nation can develop in an atmosphere of anarchy and disunity. Thus, it is my hope that this exploration of religious violence through the lens of Nigerian religious conflicts will enrich future discussions. Perhaps, it will inspire a few to see this as a challenge to engage in a culture of peace that bears positive fruits for ameliorating this clashes.

⁷⁹⁶ Olisa Metuh, "Jonathan Has Restored Nigeria's Unity-PDP," *Pointblacknews.com*, accessed December 26, 2014, <http://pointblanknews.com/pbn/exclusive/centenary-jonathan-has-restored-nigerias-unity-pdp/>.

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