

9-1-2015

Breaking Barriers that Divide Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and Building a Redemptive Relationship

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

BREAKING BARRIERS THAT DIVIDE CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN
NIGERIA AND BUILDING A REDEMPTIVE RELATIONSHIP

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
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PORTLAND, OREGON

SEPTEMBER 2015

George Fox Evangelical Seminary
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on September 18, 2015
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to start by thanking Dr. David Hutchinson, my primary advisor, for his encouragement, direction, input, changes, suggestions, and critiques as I navigated the contours of this dissertation. There were times in the process I wanted to say “I quit,” but David’s patience and nudging helped me persevere.

I want to thank my colleagues in Cohort N: Alicia Chole, Wes Fleming, Eric Haskins, Matthew Krick, Ken Myers, Carlos "CJ" Richard, Tom Rundel, Patricia Ruse, Aimee Stone, and Shonnie Wellspring; they helped me in this spiritual journey. I am a better person because of the influence of each of you on my life. Your feedback was instrumental in defining boundaries and making the thesis clear and concise.

This dissertation journey could not have been completed without the time and space given to me by my senior pastor, Edward Lee; my mentor, Dr. Nzash Lumeya; and the Mount Olive Missionary Baptist congregants, who have endured my occasional absences. Thank you for your support and prayers. I cannot imagine life without our paths having crossed.

I am indebted to my family, especially to my daughters, Ijeamaka Priscilla Obodoagha and Nneamaka Olivia Obodoagha, and my grandson, Isaiah Tobeckukwu Obodoagha. They must be tired of hearing the constant refrain “Not now” as I dismissed their attempts and requests for my time. You could have complained but you showed what a loving family is meant to be.

I am enormously indebted to my parents for the values they inculcated in me. I want to say a special thanks to my mother, Mrs. Gladys Ijeamaka Obodoagha. You showed me that parenting is a lifetime responsibility. Though you are resting in the

bosom of our Lord, your teachings, love, and wisdom are always with me. I hope I am half the parent you are.

Also, I want to say a specially thanks to my brother, Vincent Okechukwu Obodoagha, and my sister, Ngozi Victoria Olisah, for your encouragement, support, and confidence that I could do anything to which I set my mind.

Finally, a special thanks to Rochelle Deans, my editor, for painstakingly and tirelessly combing through the dissertation.

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ABSTRACT

Although Nigeria is a secular state, religion functions there as an expression of political identity and figures prominently in conflicts over resources, land, and political offices. Increasing clashes between religious groups, predominantly Muslim and Christian, have taken the nation from what used to be peaceful coexistence to violent disharmony. In this atmosphere of fear and hate, Christians are called to be peacemakers, building redemptive relationships with Muslims. This dissertation explores practical ways of forging peaceful Christian-Muslim relations.

The introductory chapter describes the religious conflict in Nigeria, demonstrating how religious, communal, ethnic, and social divisions degenerated into violence as a result of political mismanagement, corrupt leadership, and exploitation that led to extensive poverty and religious radicalism. Chapter 2 presents a Biblical theology of peacemaking that suggests that Christians can restore good relations with Muslims by crossing religious and ethnic barriers, loving and forgiving those who mistreat them, and working to establish a just political system. The early history and impact of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria are outlined in Chapter 3, and the changes in Christian-Muslim relations from 1914 to the present time are discussed in Chapter 4. The roles of politics, economics, and ethnicity in Nigeria's religious conflict are also identified.

In Chapter 5, three models of reconciliation are examined for their relevance to Nigeria: the post-World War II Nuremberg trials, the Good Friday agreement of Northern Ireland, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. Lessons gleaned from these models are used to formulate a proposal for peacemaking in Nigeria, described in Chapter 6. The elements of the proposal are openness to the theological

similarities between Christianity and Islam, forgiveness, amnesty for combatants, introduction of religious study into the educational curriculum, and national economic development. Chapter 7 summarizes the dissertation and adds some closing remarks.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore ways of breaking down the barriers that divide Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and building a redemptive relationship between the two groups. In this quest I: (1) present a Biblical theology of peacemaking and redemptive relationships; (2) show that the ongoing conflict between Christianity and Islam in Nigeria has both historical and modern origins; (3) demonstrate the political, economic, and ethnic influences on Christian-Muslim relations; (4) consider three models that can be used in Nigeria to bring harmony and peace to Christian-Muslim relations; and (5) present proposals that Nigeria could use to arrest its religious conflicts. The dissertation concludes with remarks on barriers that divide Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and suggestions for building a redemptive relationship.

Overview

In many countries around the world, religion serves as a unifying force. Yet in others, religion has been a point of contention and a source of and fuel for conflict and violence, thus a double-edged sword. The clashes among various religious-identity groups have no geographical boundaries. They stretch across the globe from the Arabian Peninsula, prairielands of Siberia, eastern Africa, and the South Pacific, to the United States of America.¹ Nigeria, with her multiple religious and ethnic identity groups, is not immune to this violence and conflict. There are in Nigeria a variety of forces driving the violence and conflict. However, before plunging into the driving force of the religious

¹ Eliza Griswold, *The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line between Christianity and Islam* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 6.

conflict between Christians and Muslims, we will present a Biblical theology of peacemaking and redemptive relationships.

Biblical Theology

Jesus taught his disciples in Matthew 5:44 to love and pray for their enemies. Like the Good Samaritan who rescued and cared for a Jew who had been stripped, robbed, severely beaten, and dumped on the side of the road to die, Christians are instructed to show love and compassion to those with whom they have irresolvable religious differences.² They do not need identical beliefs in order to care for each other; they can help others without sharing their religion. Christians do not have to behave like people with whom they disagree or follow their lifestyle. They can disagree with their actions and not cover their past. But they must not kill, persecute or harm them, for they have been commanded to forgive their tormentors.

In Matthew 18:21-35, Peter inquired of Jesus the limits of the forgiveness he must extend to his detractors. In response, Jesus graphically emphasized that divine forgiveness is intertwined with human forgiveness. Paul encouraged his audience to forgive, stating in Colossians 3:13, “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Granting forgiveness to a person who has inflicted a wound makes sense only in the context of understanding how much the wounded person has been forgiven by God.

² John Edmiston, *Urban Peace-Making: The Good Samaritan and Muslim-Christian Relationships* (Los Angeles: GlobalChristians, 2010), 2, accessed November 26, 2014, <http://www.aibi.ph/urban/samaritan.htm>.

“Blessed are the peacemakers” is an invitation to Christians to plunge into the depths of their hearts and draw healing water.³ Peacemaking is hard work but Christians in Nigeria are being asked to produce a good, peaceful country. Peacemaking in Nigeria involves grappling with the religious conflict in the country and directing it toward the peaceful paths of God.⁴ The Bible tells Christians in Ephesians 4:3, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Similarly, Romans 14:19 instructs “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.” Phrases such as “make every effort” indicate that peacemaking is a strenuous exercise and it is not easy.

Finally, Isaiah 1:17 instructs, “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.” The God of the Old Testament is a God of justice. Deuteronomy 32:4 states that “all his ways are justice.” Furthermore, Deuteronomy 10:18, 24:17, and 27:19 support the notion that God desires just societies in which the poor and burdened are not forgotten, where the same legal standard is applied to rich and poor alike. Obviously, Christ will fix all things and implement perfect justice when He comes back, but until then, Christians in Nigeria are “to express God’s love and justice by showing kindness and mercy to the less fortunate.”⁵

³ Ibid.

⁴ Eugene F. Roop, “Tis a Gift to be Simple: Isaiah 36-37 and Matthew 5:9,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 52, no. 4 (September 1, 2007): 215. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost, accessed July 18, 2014.

⁵ Ibid., 213.

History of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria

Christianity was introduced in the south of Nigeria and advanced north in search of converts; Islam was introduced in the north and advanced south in search of converts in the same communities. These two religions meet at a 200-mile-wide stretch called the Middle Belt. The Middle Belt largely marks the break between Nigerian Christians and Nigerian Muslims.⁶ The two faiths are like two cargo trains on the same track heading in opposite directions; as they carry their religious communities' increasingly adversarial agendas, they are on a collision course.

Since the initial encounter, the two religions have disagreed over many important issues, among them whether the Nigerian foundation should be secular or otherwise in nature, how federal positions are filled by the politically ambitious, whether or not to continue the English legal system, Nigeria's federal structure and the power of the central government, women's place in society and politics, and the number of states and local governments.

Many nation-states existed and flourished in Nigeria before the British arrival and the beginning of colonial rule. Even as Nigeria was formed into a nation, the idea of a complete nation ruled by Europe was not quickly accepted and did not immediately work. It did not help that the British benefitted from the people's identification with their older ethnicities. Colonial rule, rather than recognizing the differences and keep people groups separate from one another, consolidated ethnicities and the politics of division.⁷

⁶ Eliza Griswold, "God's Country," *New America Foundation*, March 2008, 2, accessed April 28, 2015, http://www.newamerica.net/publications/articles/2008/gods_country_6742.

⁷ Michael Crowder, *A Short History of Nigeria* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1966), 21-33.

Moreover, the British administration worried that Christian missionaries' attempts to convert Muslims would counteract its goals of building an empire via a model that had been successful elsewhere in Africa.⁸ As a result, the colonial administration banned Christian missionary efforts in Muslim lands. This colonial policy of preventing the northern advance of Christianity created distrust between the two groups. The effect of this colonial policy in the present day is that both Christianity and Islam are using militias and marketing strategies to compete for converts, promising riches in this life and salvation after death.⁹

Today, clashes between Muslim groups, which are composed of mainly ethnic Hausa and Fulani, and Christian and traditionalist communities happen monthly, and the results are deadly. In Nigeria, political affiliation is largely determined by religion. All sorts of conflicts often take on a religious odor, including conflicts over land, resources, and political offices. Christian ethnic groups in Southern Nigeria become part of these religious conflicts whenever Christians in Northern Nigeria are targeted by Muslim mobs; while revenge killings can target Muslim Northern Nigerians who resides in the South.¹⁰ Thus the ongoing conflict between Christianity and Islam in Nigeria has both historical and modern roots.

⁸ Edmund Patrick Thurman Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979), 65.

⁹ Eliza Griswold, "God's Country," *New America Foundation*, March 2008, 3, accessed April 28, 2015, http://www.newamerica.net/publications/articles/2008/gods_country_6742

¹⁰ Ibid., 1-4.

Political, Economic, and Ethnic Influences on Relations

There are a variety of reasons religion is a powerful element in Nigerian politics. First, political leadership, both military and civilian, has largely failed to make permanent changes in the country.¹¹ Rather, they focused their actions on morality, accountability, and spirituality. It is not that morality, accountability, and spirituality are unimportant to leadership, but many Muslims hold Muammar Gaddafi of Libya and Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran as models to emulate.

The venality of government officials has played a massive role in the religious conflict in Nigeria.¹² Corruption in the public sector is evident in the siphoning of public funds and the accepting of bribes. The exploitation of political power as a gateway to wealth is prevalent from the federal government down to local governments.¹³ By estimates of the Human Rights Watch, anywhere from \$4 billion to \$8 billion in government money was pilfered annually from 1999 to 2007.¹⁴ “The state has all but abdicated its responsibility for the welfare of its people, roughly half of whom live on less than \$1 a day.”¹⁵

Politics is a contact sport everywhere, but in Nigeria, the victors are always the politicians who are able to define the religious identity of their opponents, which gives politics the appearance of religious conflict. In the North, Islam has become the political

¹¹ Ibid., 2.

¹² Eliza Griswold, *The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line between Christianity and Islam* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 64-69.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Chris Albin-Lackey and Eric Guttsschuss, *Corruption on Trial? The Record of Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2011), 10-20.

¹⁵ Eliza Griswold, *The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line between Christianity and Islam* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 69.

base of many politicians. The attempt of Northern politicians to impose Sharia law over a large segment of the country has led to Sharia law becoming a rallying cry for Christians similar to paganism during the early Christian church, the infidel in the middle Ages, and popery in seventeenth-century Protestantism.¹⁶ Ochonu notes, “Christians contest all religious symbols and what they perceive as efforts to use Islam to dominate politics. Nevertheless, Northern politicians have benefited immensely from using symbols of Islam as political tools in order to unite the region against the South and mobilize their different constituencies.”¹⁷

The worldwide economic decline has pushed more and more Nigerians to see religion as an answer to various issues they face and as an alternative to the failed policies of the state.¹⁸ Successive regimes have failed to transform the nation’s economy and politics, and religion has become firmly linked to issues around poverty. When a government fails its citizens, the citizens turn to a different place to protect themselves and their futures; in Nigeria, they have turned to religion.¹⁹ Violence between the two religions results not simply from a clash between them, but from official neglect that has allowed faith to become a centerpiece in the struggle for economic resources.²⁰

¹⁶ K. J. Kesselring “A Cold Pye for the Papistes: Constructing and Containing the Northern Rising of 1569,” *Journal of British Studies* 43, no. 4 (October 2004): 418-19.

¹⁷ Moses Ochonu, “The Roots of Nigeria's Religious and Ethnic Conflict,” *GlobalPost*, March 10, 2014, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/nigeria/140220/nigeria-religious-ethnic-conflict-roots>.

¹⁸ Eliza Griswold, “God’s Country,” *New America Foundation*, March 2008, 3, accessed April 28, 2015, http://www.newamerica.net/publications/articles/2008/gods_country_6742

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Also, the line between ethnicity and religion is very faint, a condition that has generated conflicts and competition. In the East, the Igbo ethnic group is categorized as Christian, but Hausa or Fulani identity in the North is classified as both ethnic and Muslim. Plus, in the North, despite the appearance of Islam as a powerful influence and a basis of unity, countless violent conflicts occur between people of the same ethnic group or city. For example, serious conflict between Christians and Muslims has occurred within the city of Jos. Violence in Jos is ostensibly between religious groups, but the motivating matters are political and economic.²¹ Religious, ethnic, political, and economic splits intersect and bolster one another.

Peace and Reconciliation Models

With religious violence running rampant, it is obvious that Christian-Muslim conflict is a pressing challenge for all religious communities in Nigeria. The conflict is of national importance. In reflecting on this urgent matter, I selected three models for reconciliation that have been used frequently in various hotspots around the globe and can be used in Nigeria to establish harmonious, peaceful Christian-Muslim relations. The models were chosen for their worldwide popularity and their relevance to both religious communities. The models are: (1) the Nuremberg trials, (2) the Good Friday or Belfast agreement, and (3) the Truth and Reconciliation model of South Africa. Also there will be some discussion of some initial lessons for Nigeria and a renewed look at Biblical material relevant to these models.

²¹ “Nigeria: Protect Survivors, Fully Investigate Massacre Reports.” *Human Rights Watch*, January 23, 2010, accessed October 14, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/01/22/nigeria-protect-survivors-fully-investigate-massacre-reports>

Proposals

Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria remain a burning issue and a challenging task for both religious communities. The conflict is demanding in its requirements and urgency. For all Nigerians, the issue necessitates examining relational patterns that make sense for both Christians and Muslims and that are practical in normal life. In reflecting on this pressing issue I make the following proposals to address the challenges to Christian-Muslim conflict in Nigeria. The proposals do not provide an exhaustive analytical guide, but rather suggest a framework for dealing with the religious conflict. The proposals involve both individual and government action to arrest the conflict.

For individual Nigerians, this author proposes that people be open to the theological similarities between Christianity and Islam and that they let bygones be bygones, meaning they offer forgiveness. Three government actions are also proposed: amnesty for the combatants, curricular changes to include religious study, and economic development.

It is this author's belief that both individual and governmental actions are needed to successfully intervene in a problem with such enormity and inflamed passions.

Conclusion

Christians have been commanded and tasked by the Bible with the commission of bringing good news to all people, including those who now are like Samaritans. Jesus taught his fellow Israelites to regard Samaritans as potential allies; he personally crossed geographic, religious, and cultural barriers to develop redemptive relationships with Samaritans. It is through redemptive encounters, crossing barriers, offering love and forgiveness, peacemaking, and developing a just society with Muslims that Christians

have opportunities to speak the truths about the values of the Kingdom of God and acknowledge a common interest in steering culture and policy in the right direction.

The conditions that permit violence in Nigeria have both historical and modern origins. The religious turmoil can be partly blamed on outsiders, especially the British colonial government, and internal politics, ethnic divisions, and competition for resources. Nigeria is potentially a great country, but it is beset with widespread political mismanagement, ethnic division, and poverty, all of which have led to religious radicalism.

Nigerian society has many religions, ethnicities, and languages. It is true that religious heterogeneity and ethnic distinctions create conflict and weaken the course of nation building, but Nigeria cannot be understood without examining religion.²² Unless the government promotes development and improves living standards, religion will continue to be a source of conflict in the country.

But all is not lost. Christians, through redemptive encounters and dialogue with Muslims, have opportunities to speak the truths about the values of the Kingdom of God and acknowledge a common interest in steering culture and policy in the right direction and finding a space for coexistence.

²² Taiye Adamolekun "A Historical Perspective in the Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria since 1914," *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 2, no. 5 (June 2013): 65.

CHAPTER 2:

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:25-37)

Introduction

In this chapter I explore how to build redemptive relationships in religious conflict. I examine biblical passages that encourage a radical position with regard to those defined as enemies. I show that building redemptive relationships between enemies requires loving one’s enemy, forgiving, making peace, and establishing a just political system.

The Conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans

In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus gave one of his most challenging teachings to his followers. In order to understand why Jesus' story of a Samaritan who rescued and cared for a Jew who had been stripped, robbed, severely beaten, and dumped on the side of the road to die was challenging, a brief history of the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans is required.

The enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans is related to the event narrated in 2 Kings 17. After the death of King Solomon, the kingdom of Israel was divided into two kingdoms (1 Kings 12:1 - 14:31). The Northern Kingdom was called Israel and established its capital first at Shechem, a very important site in Jewish history. The capital was later moved to the hilltop city of Samaria.¹ The Southern Kingdom, called Judah, had her capital in Jerusalem.

The narrator of 2 Kings 17:5-6 reports the capture of Israel by Assyrian forces and the ensuing exile of her inhabitants. In 722 BC, Assyria conquered Israel, carried most of its inhabitants into captivity, and dispersed them.² According to Burge, the Assyrian invaders re-populated the land with Gentile colonists who inter-married with the remnants of the Israelites who remained in the land (2 Kings 17:24-41, Ezra 9:1-44, and Neh. 13:23-28).³ The resulting people were called Samaritans.⁴ The foreigners continued to worship their pagan gods, which the remaining Israelites began to worship alongside

¹ William Sanford Lasor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 197-202.

² Ibid., 210-211.

³ Gary M. Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 140-141.

⁴ James D. Purvis, *The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Origin of the Samaritan Sect* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 88-89.

Yahweh. This syncretistic worship of Yahweh with the pagan gods caused the people of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) to shun the Samaritans.⁵

In 586 BC, the Southern Kingdom (Judah) fell to the Babylonians. Its inhabitants, also, were carried off into exile.⁶ But after 70 years, about 43,000 Israelites were permitted to return from exile in Babylonia and Persia to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple there. The inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom, now called the Samaritans, vehemently opposed the return of the exiles and tried to undermine any effort to rebuild the nation; in fact, they actively opposed the reconstruction efforts. For their part, the returnees with their monotheistic mindset hated the variegated marriages and syncretistic worship of their northern brethren. So walls of animosity were built on both sides and feelings of enmity remained hardened for hundreds of years to come. From this point forward, the descendants of the repatriated exiles of the Southern Kingdom, now called Jews, regarded the Samaritans as a despicable people and avoided unnecessary contact with them whenever possible.

It is this historical and cultural context that makes the teachings and lifestyle of Jesus so provocative and revolutionary. But Jesus not only taught his fellow Jews to regard Samaritans as allies; Jesus himself crossed geographic, religious, and cultural barriers to develop redemptive relationships with Samaritans. Jesus demonstrated this by meeting with a Samaritan woman in her own territory (John 4:4-26) and commanding the apostles to take the Gospel into Samaria.

⁵ William Sanford Lasor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 210-211.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 218-220.

There is an analogy between Jewish-Samaritan relations in Jesus' time and Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria. Mutual misunderstanding, mistrust, and enmity predated Nigeria's independence from the British in October 1960. The feelings remain to the present day as animosity continues in the forms of anti-Christian and anti-Muslim rhetoric, terrorism, counter-terrorism, and large-scale military operations.

Loving One's Enemy

In this section, the focus will be on the ministry and mission of Jesus and his commonly called "farewell discourse" (John 13:31 - 17:26). To start with, the farewell address by Jesus is in accordance with a literary form found in the ancient world and within Judaism.⁷ The Bible has lots of examples of great individuals who gave a final farewell address to people who are close to them: for instance, Jacob (Genesis 47:29 - 49:33), Joshua (Joshua 23-24), Samuel (1 Samuel 12), and David (1 Chronicles 28-29).⁸ These farewell addresses, although different in many ways, have some elements in common. Some of the common characteristics of the speeches by these great biblical characters were to let family members and the people dear to them know of their imminent death; to provide comfort in some cases for the sorrow the message creates and to predict future events, including evil or God's care, depending on the circumstance; instruction on codes of conduct by the people left behind; and, on some occasions, the speech ends with a prayer for the people left behind.⁹

⁷ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 598.

⁸ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*. Reading the NT (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 200-202.

⁹ Ibid., 202.

However, in place of giving ethical instructions, Jesus focused on love in His farewell address. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker note, “Jesus’ farewell address is an invitation to the practice of love and friendship.”¹⁰ According to Sharon Ringe, Jesus’ ministry served to focus on God’s love, feeling, affection and concern for fallen humanity.¹¹ Edward Schillebeeckx argues that the ministry and mission of Jesus can only be understood if one focuses on Jesus’ initial disciples, and their belief and confidence in His life, ministry, and message.¹² According to Schillebeeckx, Jesus’ first disciples understood the messianic nature of Jesus as one of restoring humanity’s broken relationship with God.¹³ Schillebeeckx further points out that John’s Gospel depicts God’s relational engagement personified in Jesus.¹⁴ These are key points because the first verse in the Gospel of John declared: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Here in John 1:1, the divinity of Jesus is revealed and Jesus is positioned at the center of God’s creating endeavor of the world. John 1:1 establishes that Jesus’ divinity is embedded in the divine act of God and also shows the liberator character of Jesus. Put in another way, Jesus is the one who puts back together

¹⁰ Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker, *God's Life in Trinity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 35.

¹¹ Sharon H. Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends: Community and Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1980), 67-68.

¹² Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ, the Experience of Jesus as Lord* (New York: Crossroad, 1980), 19.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Liz Carmichael, *Friendship: Interpreting Christian Love* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 164, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost, accessed April 6, 2015.

humanity's broken relationship with God. As a result, Jesus' ministry can be described as an "Invitation to Love."¹⁵

The love of God for Jesus shows not only Jesus' love for His disciples but also God's love for the entire creation.¹⁶ "The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in His hands" (John 3:35). Put in another way, this verse states that Jesus has inherited all that God has because God loves Him. This knowledge of God's love of Jesus makes God's mission through Jesus a mission of love and a lasting leitmotif in the Gospel of John. Jesus' whole ministry as depicted by the Gospel of John can be summarized as divine love that exists amongst God and Jesus. This divine love extended to Jesus' disciples, and this in turn served as the foundation for communal and shared relationships amid the initial disciples of Jesus.¹⁷ Jesus stated, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35). In compliance with Jesus' command, the early disciples shared everything in their quest to build and live in a communal relationship of love (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37). By using divine love as the basis for communal love, the early disciples made love an important element of alleviating conflict in the community and a tangible illustration of true discipleship (1 John 3:11-24, 4:7-21).

Also, God's love for his creation can also be understood as God's care and hospitality. From the above discussions, one can say that divine love is an illustration of

¹⁵ Volf and Welker, 35.

¹⁶ SimonMary Asese Ahiokhai, "Love One Another as I Have Loved You: The Place of Friendship in Interfaith Dialogue," *Journal Of Ecumenical Studies* 48, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 498.

¹⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, "Making Connections: The Material Expression of Friendship in the New Testament," *Interpretation* 58 (April 2004): 158-171.

divine feeling, affection, and concern, which, in turn, illustrate the type of feeling, affection, and concern that is expected to exist amid the disciples of Jesus.¹⁸ Like the Samaritan who rescued and cared for an Israelite who had been stripped, robbed, severely beaten, and dumped on the side of the path to die, there is a command for those who follow Jesus' teachings to demonstrate love, care, mercy, and hospitality to everyone, including people with whom they have an irreconcilable religious difference and those on the margins of society.

John 15:12-17 states:

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

Here again, Jesus commands his followers to love one another as a reflection of His followers' relationship with Him. Jesus' love for His followers reflects the love between God the Father and Jesus the Son, and Jesus the Son instructs His disciples to exhibit the same type of love.¹⁹

Another point worth mentioning here is the redefinition of God's relationship with humanity. Jesus now calls His disciples friends because of the lack of secrecy between Jesus and His followers. Everything that God placed in Jesus' hands, Jesus revealed to His followers, and pecking order does not exist between Jesus and his

¹⁸ Howard-Brook Wes, *Becoming Children of God: John's Gospel and Radical Discipleship* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 336.

¹⁹ Ahiokhai, 499-500.

followers.²⁰ Obviously, this is a deviation from the Israelite understanding of the divine-human relationship where Israel understood their relationship with God as close but unequal. The Israelites understood God as “the creator, provider, sustainer, and protector of His chosen people.”²¹ Therefore, this counter-cultural understanding of God’s relationship with humanity was new and revolutionary.

A further reminder from John 15:12-17, it was Jesus who chose and elevated his disciples to the status of friends and modeled this way of understanding as an example for his disciples to follow in their relationship with God, with one another, and with those who are at the margins of society. That Jesus called Christians his friends does not mean that Christians are to exalt themselves above people who do not believe as they do. It is God in Jesus Christ who chooses Jesus’ disciples to be His friends and commanded them to love one another and themselves just as He has loved. This reveals a new way of interacting with God and a new way of comprehending how God interacts with humanity.

Unfortunately,

Christian leaders in Nigeria fall into the trap of understanding the ministry and identity of Jesus as an ancillary device for validating the importance of their ecclesial agenda. Rather than distort the ministry and identity of Christ in itself, Christians are commanded to love just as God has loved for God in Christ loved unconditionally and engaged the Samaritans and those outside the community of the chosen. Christian leaders in Nigeria bear some of the blame in the ongoing religious anarchy in the country. At best, these leaders’ methods of engaging Muslims can be classified as insensitive.²²

These leaders believe that they have a moral responsibility to convert the Muslims they encounter as if God is unable to engage Muslims. This type of logic appears to consume

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 501.

²² Ibid., 502.

the Christian approach to mission and ministry. Friendship is nothing more than means of converting the Muslim. Counter to the command of Jesus and Scripture, these leaders subscribe to the Augustinian understanding of friendship whereby ecclesial unity is more important and a plea to “fully live out the Christian identity in Christ and in the Christian community.”²³ The end result is that the church becomes a social club of believers in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, who love each other and God. Rather than being friends with the Muslims for the sake of friendship, the motivation becomes the intent to convert the Muslims to Christianity and for the Muslims to participate in the activities of the church. What is forgotten is that anyone can become a friend of God without them necessarily becoming a believer in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.²⁴ Christians are required to love without condition, believing that the God who has directed them to love without condition is the one who chooses who is sanctified and holy, who is not righteous and evil, and who inherits the kingdom and who is destined for damnation.

The ongoing religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria is an urgent issue that requires solutions that are truthful to the Christian way of life and in conjunction does not delegitimize other religions as God’s gifts to humanity. The current religious conflicts that have shaped Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria have become a source of great public outrage to people in both religious camps. The situation is dire and calls for urgent means of articulating ways to restore love and trust between Christians and Muslims and at the same time accept that the root cause of the conflict may have legitimate historical and modern explanations behind them.

²³ Carolinne White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 208.

²⁴ Peter [Robert Camont] Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 398.

Irrespective of the root cause, redemptive encounter has the greatest potential to profit the parties who are involved in the religious conflict. It is true that one's demeanor towards others, even in brief and casual social encounters, will always reveal some degree of one's beliefs and attitudes about the other's belief system, whether negative or positive. However, developing redemptive relationships and lessening tensions among people with diverse religious beliefs requires love to be fundamental.

It is additionally true that some of the violence, especially violence with religious overtones, is not a spontaneous combustion; rather, it emanates from unresolved past grievances fanned in modern times by fundamentalism and radicalism of each religion, thus resulting in deprivation of real spiritual faithfulness. Muslims and Christians live side-by-side, travel on the same roads, go to the same schools, and work in the same offices. Cultivating love rather than hate can lead to unimaginable results:

The legitimacy of one's own religion is not affirmed by the denial of the legitimacy of another religion. At the heart of every religion is the human attempt to respond to God's inexhaustible revelatory encounter with human beings in their given epochal and cultural contexts. Such awareness cannot allow the false attitudes of definitiveness of the knowledge of God's relational encounter with humanity in general because religious pride cannot proceed from God but originates from the human ego that attempts to be a false image of God.²⁵

The Scriptural ban against killing (Exodus 20:13) points out the sacredness of human life, but one of the incongruities in the religious conflict in Nigeria is the destruction of human life as a means of promoting both religious and political agendas. "There can be no justification for the denial of the sacredness of human life even if there is a genuine place for martyrdom. Those who promote the desecration of human life as a religious and political tool are as guilty as if they carried out acts of violence

²⁵Aihiokhai, 492-93.

themselves.”²⁶ In Nigeria, many Christian and Muslim leaders tell their followers that the only act that guarantees salvation is violence against members of other religions. This is not good news for the nation; it promotes violence and murder and only serves to further jeopardize the redemption of some who earnestly desire God’s favor but are misguided in the pursuit of it. What is required in the Nigerian context is emphasis on love and the sacredness of human life. To kill another human being is the utmost form of disrespect of human life.

The starting point of being in a position to develop redemptive relationships is to practice love and friendship with those who do not share a common belief system. At the core of every religious belief is a yearning to appropriately answer to God’s love and care for humanity; our religious differences validate the sovereignty of God, who challenges human knowledge and understanding.²⁷ In the Nigerian context, real acts of love of people with different belief systems do not exist because each religious encounter is aimed at conversion and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Forgiving

Forgiveness is a defining feature of a Christian ethic of response to wrongdoing.²⁸ Very often, getting a real understanding of forgiveness is difficult because the one needing to forgive is deeply involved in the harm and pain of difficult circumstances. On many occasions, circumstances force people to take action to protect against or stop injury, pain, and harm. Victims cannot pass blame on themselves for acting instinctively

²⁶ Ibid., 493.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 34.

to do away with the harm or injustice. In some circumstances, the natural instinct for self-preservation tends to conflict with Christ-like love and forgiveness. In light of the injustice, the Christ-like behavior required of Christians and needed for spiritual formation and growth entails letting go of any claim against the perpetrator and releasing the offender from the requirement to repay the victim (Matthew 6:12-14, 15:14, 18:27, 32, 35; Luke 6:37, 7:42-43).

Forgiveness is a gift that the one offended gives undeservedly to the person who has caused injury (2 Corinthians 2:7-10; Ephesians 4:32). A look at some of the New Testament passages shows that Christ-like forgiveness is showing great love and a commitment to what is in the best interests of another person. Thus, forgiveness involves foregoing one's claim of wrong against another and granting grace to the perpetrator of an injustice.²⁹ Furthermore, forgiveness entails letting go of anger. The epistle of Paul to the Ephesians speaks profoundly about forgiveness. The epistle states in pertinent part, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31-32).³⁰ A plausible interpretation of this Ephesians passage for the Nigerian Christian is to let go of any claim against Muslims, put away any hostile emotions their wrongdoing may have aroused, and extend love and kindness to them.

Forgiveness is not excusing, condoning, justifying, pardoning, forgetting, and reconciling. Forgiveness is not condoning the bombings, the burnings, and the

²⁹ Floyd Scott, "Counseling and Forgiveness," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 45, no. 3 (June 1, 2003): 30-35, ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials, EBSCOhost, accessed December 3, 2012.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

beheadings, or disregarding a harmful action without protesting or expressing disapproval. It is not about overlooking, endorsing, or excusing an offense or accepting the unacceptable. Forgiveness is about releasing the forgiver from destructive emotions and a hurtful past.³¹

Some might think, as Blake Riek expressed in his article, that “forgiveness involves at least two individuals.” Riek contended that understanding forgiveness from the perspective of the transgressor is vital and that a number of factors, including the severity of the transgression, relational closeness, and rumination, influence the likelihood that a transgressor will seek forgiveness.³² The scripture tells us that every person’s transgressions are so severe that they deserved death. Christ gave the unconditional gift of forgiveness and reconciliation (Romans 6:23). The fact is that forgiveness requires only the victim. Forgiveness is not about the offender; it is all about the recipient of the injustice. Christians can forgive Muslims without condoning the abuse. Forgiveness does not mean having to trust the perpetrator; trust can only be earned. Forgiveness undoubtedly poses some challenges because people might think they must go back to the place of innocent trusting in order to forgive. But this line of reasoning is not true. Forgiveness can be extended and trust withheld until it is earned.

Jesus Christ preached forgiveness, and forgiveness is an important part of a Christian’s relationship with God and other people. As a result, forgiveness involves a willful decision to imitate Christ. Christians accept that despite hurtful feelings, the

³¹ Glen Pettigrove, “Forgiveness and Interpretation,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 35, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 429, ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials, EBSCOhost, accessed December 3, 2012.

³² Blake M. Riek, “Transgressions, Guilt, and Forgiveness: A Model of Seeking Forgiveness,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 38, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 246-254, ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials, EBSCOhost, accessed December 3, 2012.

decision to forgive is not primarily driven by emotions, but by a decision to follow Christ. The Bible is full of examples of individuals who chose to let go of the harm and injustice that was inflicted on them. In Genesis 50, Joseph not only forgave his brothers for the wrongs they perpetrated against him when they sold him as a slave, he also reassured them that he would provide for them and would not exact revenge after their father's death. In the gospel of Luke, Jesus asked the Father to forgive those about to put him to death (Luke 23:34). In Acts 7, Stephen not only forgave those who were stoning him to death, but he also offered interceding prayers for his executioners.

In 2 Corinthians 11:24-28, Paul stated:

Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea, and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

Here, the apostle Paul showed clearly and convincingly what Christ-like forgiveness meant by mentioning some of the suffering and danger he went through, including being beaten, stoned, and imprisoned and going hungry. The remarkable thing about Paul's statement is the absence of the mention of any kind of bitterness; bitterness would indicate lack of forgiveness.³³ Also, the book of Hosea takes forgiveness to a radical level. In that book, Hosea repeatedly bought back his wayward wife, Gomer.

Of course, scripture also gives ample examples of individuals who fail to forgive. For example, Jonah was angry at the city of Nineveh for the harm its citizens inflicted on

³³ Floyd Scott, 32.

Israel. Even after he reluctantly agreed to preach repentance to the city, Jonah still yearned for its destruction. In Genesis 34, Simeon and Levi took revenge on the Hivites for raping their sister. According to 2 Samuel 13, Absalom killed Amnon after two years of plotting. In Genesis 5:23-24, Lamech stated, “I have killed a man for wounding me, and a boy for striking me; if Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.” Clearly, these are pictures of unforgiveness from early stages in Judaism’s history.³⁴

The Bible contains not only specific instructions regarding forgiveness, but also examples of both granting and withholding forgiveness and the outcomes of the two choices. To grow spiritually, the Christian must work toward forgiveness. Christians must understand how forgiveness is viewed in scripture, the relationship of God's forgiveness to forgiving others, and the importance of forgiveness in spiritual formation.

Christians are morally obligated to forgive others (see Matthew 18:15-35, Luke 6:37, Ephesians 4:32, and Colossians 3:13).³⁵ Jesus, in his preaching and teaching, instructed his followers to love their enemies (Matthew 5:44) and to “turn the other cheek” in response to an injustice (Matthew 5:39). All of these directives are necessities and core beliefs for Christians who are being formed spiritually in Christ’s image.

Some verses of scripture seem to promote retribution. For example, verses such as “if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise” (Exodus 21:24) appear to make forgiveness unattainable. However, Jesus’ teachings in the New

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Craig L. Blomberg, “On Building and Breaking Barriers: Forgiveness, Salvation and Christian Counseling with Special Reference to Matthew 18:15-35,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 25, no. 2 (June 1, 2006): 137-139. ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials, EBSCOhost, accessed December 3, 2012.

Testament advance a fundamental change in the way Christians are expected to view forgiveness; they reinterpret some of the retributive Old Testament laws (e.g., Matthew 5:38-42). Moreover, God is both perfectly merciful and perfectly just, even when human demands for mercy and justice often seem to conflict. Scripture gives equal emphasis to God's mercy (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:31; Luke 6:36) and God's justice (e.g., Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 9:16).³⁶ These passages leave little doubt that God embodies both qualities. At the very heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is forgiveness. Forgiveness is not merely a doctrine, but a realized experience. In forgiving, people are blessed and able to unburden their souls.

Christians have a duty to play a healing role in the process of peace building in Nigeria. In South Africa, Desmond Tutu, who chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, said, "We here in South Africa are a living example of how forgiveness may unite people."³⁷ Nelson Mandela set the example. Tutu notes "When Nelson Mandela was released after twenty-seven years in jail, he declared that his mission was to the victim and the victimizer."³⁸ Tutu said of him, "Our miracle almost certainly would not have happened without the willingness of people to forgive, exemplified spectacularly in the magnanimity of Nelson Mandela."³⁹

I agree with Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Just as there was no future in South Africa without forgiveness, without forgiveness there really is no future in Nigeria.

³⁶ Paul B. Wolfe, "Hope Enacted: Forgiveness as Ethical Foundation in the New Testament," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 45, no. 3 (June 1, 2003): 18-20, ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials, EBSCOhost, accessed December 3, 2012.

³⁷ K. K. Kuriakose, *Non Violence: The Way of the Cross* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2004), 207-12.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 210.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 211.

Asking people to forgive is not asking them to forget. Forgiveness means abandoning one's right to seek revenge and payback for wrongs committed, and this liberates the victim. Tutu explained, "God wants to show that there is life after conflict and repression—that because of forgiveness, there is a future."⁴⁰

Making Peace

In this section, we will approach the narrative found in John 4:1-42 with the perception of peacemaking and building bridges. The focus will be on the aspects of peacemaking contained in the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. This is because in Nigeria, religious triumphalism, which entails violent uncompromising contention for dominance by Christians and Muslims over the religious and political culture of the country, rules the day. Obviously, neither Christians nor Muslims have a monopoly on truth and this makes peacemaking a valuable undertaking. The nature of peacemaking is inherently about conversation and interaction, so a key part of peacemaking is to engage and unite those outside one's group.

The model of Jesus in His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-42) helps: not the Christian religious tradition supported by a theological framework that has mistakably sabotaged Jesus' teaching, but Jesus speaking peace and living as an example.

As mentioned earlier, there existed a historical animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans. According to Whitacre, the animosity was exacerbated about twenty years before Jesus' ministry because the Samaritans defiled the temple at Jerusalem by

⁴⁰ Ibid.

throwing dead men's bodies in the temple courtyard during Passover.⁴¹ Henceforth, the Jews avoided traveling through the region of Samaria and the thought of drinking water from Samaritan territory, as Jesus wanted to do at the well, was abominable. Also, the Jewish religious class considered the Samaritan women forever unclean because their adherence of the purity laws could not be verified with any degree of specificity and the Samaritan men, by virtue of their association, also were deemed unclean.⁴² "The daughters of the Samaritans are [deemed as] menstruants from their cradle; and the Samaritans convey uncleanness to what lies beneath them in like degree as [he that has a flux conveys uncleanness] to what lies above him, since they have connection with menstruants."⁴³

A gender barrier further complicated Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman because open contact between the sexes in public was discouraged.⁴⁴ "He who talks much with womankind brings evil on himself. He neglects the study of the Law and at the last will inherit Gehenna."⁴⁵ Thus the conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans not only had a geographical angle but ethnic and religious angles as well. But Jesus broke those taboos by taking the route through Samaria.

In John 4:1-42, we see the woman arriving at the well where Jesus had arrived sometime prior. In this scene, Jesus makes the conscious effort to engage the woman in a

⁴¹ Rodney A. Whitacre, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, vol. 4, *John* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 102.

⁴² Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 748.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 446.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

conversation by asking for water. Moloney is of the opinion that Jesus' request in verse 7 ("Will you give me a drink?")⁴⁶ is commanding and is discourteous and abrupt. Moloney further states that Jesus' command evokes a proud retort from the woman.⁴⁷ This author disagrees that the attitude and response of the Samaritan woman was arrogant, rather that Jesus' question elicits her doubt. It must be noted that the woman bears the burden and mindsets of a group who have been cast off by the Jews even though the Samaritans claim to be descendants of Abraham and truly Israelites.⁴⁸ Therefore, the Samaritan woman's response to Jesus, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (v. 9),⁴⁹ rather than being arrogant, refers to a plethora of barriers between the Samaritans and Jews.

Jesus' decision to engage the woman could be an attempt on Jesus' part to deal with those barriers, but it could also be interpreted as a form of insult or it may have a sexual connotation.⁵⁰ Therefore, the woman was within reason to be suspicious. Jews and Samaritans did not associate and Jesus initiating a dialogue with the Samaritan woman also raises a number of gender issues. Jesus being alone with the woman violated many rules of a righteous Jew.⁵¹ The law forbade the two genders to be alone even in a public arena. According to Keener, private cross-gender conversation, especially among

⁴⁶ John 4:7.

⁴⁷ Francis J. Moloney, *Sacra Pagina Series*, vol. 4, *The Gospel of John* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 115-16.

⁴⁸ Gary M. Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 141.

⁴⁹ John 4:9.

⁵⁰ Rose Mukansengimana-Nyirimana and Jonathan A. Draper, "The Peacemaking Role of the Samaritan Woman in John 4:1-24: A Mirror and Challenge to Rwandan Women." *Neotestamentica* 46, no. 2 (2012): 299-318. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost, accessed February 27, 2015.

⁵¹ Andreas J. Köstenburger, *John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 148.

strangers, could lead to an immoral situation and there is an assumption that “if such a man and a woman are alone together for more than twenty minutes they have had intercourse.”⁵² Burge also noted that the genders do not interact in public in any way or form, not even married couples, and unmarried individuals do not come together in public at any time.⁵³ Nevertheless, the goal of Jesus was to teach the Samaritan woman to rise above the ethnic and cultural barriers that divide the communities that she and Jesus represent and to get her ready for the process of reconciliation in her community.⁵⁴

Although the woman was receptive to what Jesus had to say, she was still carrying centuries’ worth of grievances and as a matter of fact, the woman brought up the most contentious issue. Here, in verse 19, the woman states: “I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”⁵⁵ The place of worship was a significant issue of conflict between Jews and Samaritans and the woman by her statements demonstrates that she was on the right side of the religious rift between her people and the Jews. But according to Jesus, religious divisions are meaningless because true worshipers are not in Jerusalem or on Mount Gerizim (v. 21-24).

The dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan brought change and understanding in the woman. The woman was transformed and she became an agent of change in her own community. The woman, energized by the spirit of reconciliation, challenges her

⁵² Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 596-597.

⁵³ Burge, 143.

⁵⁴ Teresa Okure, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe*, vol. 31, *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4:1-42* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988), 92.

⁵⁵ John 4:19.

community to rise above the religious and social barriers that had divided her community and the Jews. At this junction, the woman's main concern was her community's stance of holding onto ancient disagreements and conflicts on the basis of kinship and religious differences. The woman took the message of reconciliation to her community by inviting her community to come and associate with those with whom her community has irreconcilable differences. According to Keener, the woman's invitation to her town's people to come and behold Jesus was a significant step; it was an encouragement to join. This invitation to participate elevates the woman to the same level as the disciples of Jesus who took Jesus' message to the world.⁵⁶

Now, before concluding this discussion, a contrast between the attitude of Jesus' disciples and the Samaritan woman is in order. In verse 8 of the passage, we read about the disciples leaving Jesus alone to go and fetch nourishment in the city and upon the disciples' return, the disciples were shocked to see Jesus conversing alone with a woman and worst of all, the woman was a Samaritan (v.27). The reaction of the disciples shows that they had not risen above the ethnic, gender, and religious divides of their culture.⁵⁷ O'Day also notes that the Samaritan woman made her thoughts known, compared to the disciples, who did not voice their opinion.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Jesus called his disciples' attention to the harvest ahead of them (v. 35-38). The Samaritan's confession of Jesus as Messiah and her subsequent witness were the fruit of this particular harvest and it was a

⁵⁶ Keener, 622.

⁵⁷ Gail R. O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 82.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 74.

direct result of the woman's encounter and dialogue with Jesus.⁵⁹ The woman's encounter, dialogue, and openness in spending time with Jesus transformed the woman and enabled her to transcend the divides between her social group and that of the Jews.

One more important thing that can be said about the woman, she abandoned her purpose of drawing water from the well and plunged into the depths of her heart to draw living water, and that became the driving force and motivation for her to reach her community.

For Christians, the gift of salvation is a gift from God through Jesus Christ. The woman received from Jesus a gift that transformed her view of the social barriers between her community and the Jew. Henceforth, the woman did not view Jesus as a Jew with whom her community had irreconcilable differences; rather, she made peace with Jesus and took the message of peacemaking and reconciliation to her community.⁶⁰ According to Schneiders, the effectiveness of the woman's ministry can be seen by the woman's community's belief in Jesus and Jesus staying with the Samaritans for two days upon their request (v 40).⁶¹

From the passage, one can see that the Samaritan woman had a keen understanding of the issues that separated the community she represented and that which Jesus represented, and the woman did not hesitate to mention those barriers at every

⁵⁹ Ibid., 84.

⁶⁰ Rose Mukansengimana-Nyirimana and Jonathan A. Draper, 311.

⁶¹ Sandra Marie Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 193.

juncture of her discussion with Jesus. But Jesus challenged the woman and presented her with a paradigm shift (“neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem”).⁶²

In the Nigerian context, the act of peacemaking and reconciliation requires Christians to rise above the historical disputes that set Christians and Muslims apart. Peacemaking and reconciliation requires rising above established socio-religious barriers and offering hospitality to other religious groups. The Samaritan woman restored broken relationships and became a bridge-builder and a model of what Christians would be called on to do in Nigeria. The challenge to Christians in Nigeria is to engage Muslims with the intention of developing a redemptive relationship and not their conversion. The face and voice of God presented in Christianity is one that invites all to transformative encounters. Also, another face

is the transcending and yet immanent face of God that can never be summarized or synthesized into a systematic theological proposition. In fact, the clear sign of the end of the usefulness of a religious tradition or a theological school of thought is when that tradition or school begins to attempt to replace the divine with the image of its collective biases. In other words, when we stop encountering the divine as an invitation to new encounters and reflections on our religious traditions, such religious traditions stop being a manifest source of relational encounter with the divine. The divine ends up being replaced by the idol of the collective self.⁶³

Christ’s model of openness and readiness to confront those old traditions against those who are marginalized reminds Christians to adopt a healthier attitude of engagement. Christians are to affirm Jesus’ examples that cherish peace and social harmony (“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”⁶⁴). To murder innocent persons and to shed blood because the individual does not believe like them contradicts the

⁶² Rose Mukansengimana-Nyirimana and Jonathan A. Draper, 312.

⁶³ Ahiokhai, 407.

⁶⁴ Matthew 5:9.

Christian ethos that God is the preserver and sustainer of life and that all life is precious before God.

A Just Political System

Human depravity is indisputable and Christians point to the account in Genesis 3 as the origin of this spiritual malformation. While sin, along with its corrupting effect and its manifestation in various aspects of humanity, may not be in dispute among Christians, there are veritable marketplaces of opinion among Christian theologians on how this spiritual malformation is transmitted or is acquired by humanity. Based on such biblical passages as John 5:42, Romans 7:18-23, Romans 8:7, Ephesians 4:18, 2 Timothy 3:2-4, Titus 1:15, and Hebrews 3:12, Christian reformed theology holds that the fall is totally pervasive.⁶⁵ This corruption penetrated every part, the heart, the core, and faculties of human spiritual and moral lives, which includes the minds and bodies.⁶⁶ Reformed theology further holds that before the fall humans were not able to sin but after the fall humans lost the ability not to sin.⁶⁷ However, Louis Berkhof contends that people often hold the wrong view of the doctrine of total depravity to suggest that every human is as thoroughly corrupt as that human could ever become, and indulges in all forms of evil deeds that ever existed.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ George O. Folarin, "Lk 12:13-21 in the Context of Human Corruption." *Asia Journal of Theology* 24, no. 2 (2010): 312-324. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost, accessed February 27, 2015.

⁶⁶ Peter Crafts Hodgson and Robert Harlen King, eds., *Christian Theology: An Introduction to its Traditions and Tasks*, newly updated ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 204.

⁶⁷ David V N. Bagchi and David Curtis Steinmetz, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 130-49.

⁶⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Edinburgh, UK: The Banner Of Truth Trust, 1959), 246-47.

Conversely, the Catholic Church holds a different opinion from the reformed doctrine of total depravity. According to the Catholic Church, humans kept a free will but that free will was injured after the entrance of sin and corruption.⁶⁹ Based on the teachings of Church fathers such as St. Irenaeus and such biblical verses such as Genesis 3:13, Genesis 4:10, 2 Samuel 12:7-15, Sirach 15:14, Romans 6:17, Romans 8:21, 2 Corinthians 17, and Galatians 5:1, the Catholic Church teaches that human free will came from humans being made in the image of God and “God created man a rational being, conferring on him the dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions. God willed that man should be left in the hand of his own counsel, so that he might of his own accord seek his Creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him.”⁷⁰ Therefore, the Catholic Church views as heresy any doctrine alleging that human free will is gone and ended since the fall.

Whether one belongs to the Catholic Church or the Reformed tradition, what can be said is that humans possess the propensity and inclination to engage in corrupt practice. Since all humans possess this inclination for wrongdoing, and all parts of various governments utilize human agency, it is easy to see how the various branches of government around the world, including religious and nonreligious and Western and non-Western entities, manifest a certain degree of corruption.⁷¹ According to Lipset and Lenz:

Corruption is endemic in all governments, and that it is not peculiar to any continent, region and ethnic group. It cuts across faiths, religious denominations and political systems and affects both young and old, man and woman alike.

⁶⁹ J. Waterworth, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent Celebrated under the Sovereign Pontiffs, Paul III, Julius III, and Pius IV*, Reprint ed. (London: C. Dolman, London, 1848), 46.

⁷⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Article 3* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

⁷¹ George O. Folarin, 313.

Corruption is found in democratic and dictatorial politics; feudal, capitalist and socialist economies. Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist cultures are equally bedeviled by corruption. And corrupt practices did not begin today; the history is as old as the world. Ancient civilizations have traces of widespread illegality and corruption. Thus, corruption has been ubiquitous in complex societies from ancient Egypt, Israel, Rome, and Greece down to the present.⁷²

Additionally, Victor Dike notes:

Recently, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) had to relieve some of its officials of their posts because they had taken bribes. And all the commissioners of the European Union (EU) resigned because they, too, had been found to be corrupt beyond acceptable limits. In the United States, Enron Corporation, an energy giant and WorldCom, a telecommunication company, were charged with fraud. The companies manipulated their balance sheets, profit and loss account and tax liabilities. Enron's accountant, Arthur Andersen, collapsed as he was charged with obstruction of justice in connection with the Enron's probe.⁷³

Although there is no denying that corruption runs the gamut of every human society and that it has been with us since the fall, the degree of corruption is unequal in every society. Corruption is more intensified and prevalent in some societies than others. For this paper, we will exclude corruption in the forms of sexual perversion, substance addiction and abuse, murder, and other society vices, and define corruption in terms of its political and economic implications. Therefore, this paper will adopt the definition of corruption provided by Lipset and Seymour, which is “acquisition and misuse of money, power, and position for private and other illegal benefits.”⁷⁴ Embezzlement, extortion, greed, favoritism, bribery, fraud, and oppression all fall under this definition and have to do with human propensity to do wrong and manifestations of human alienation from God.

⁷² Seymour Martin Lipset and Gabriel Salman Lenz, *Corruption, Culture, and Markets in Culture Matters*, eds. Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 112-13.

⁷³ Victor Dike, “Corruption in Nigeria: A New Paradigm for Effective Control,” *Africa Economic Analysis*, January 23, 2008, accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.africaeconomicanalysis.org/articles/gen/corruptiondikehtm.html>

⁷⁴ Lipset and Lenz, 112.

In Nigeria, the abuse of power and position often manifests itself in one or more forms of the above behavior by governmental officials. But as Jesus showed in Luke 12:13-21, the level of corruption can be checked by self-examination, right practice, and right belief along with adequate safeguards.⁷⁵ According to a report by Transparency International Corruption Index, corruption permeates the Nigerian society and the arms of corruption reach every branch of the government including the executive, police, military, legislature, and judiciary.⁷⁶ The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), an agency designated to fight corruption in the Federal Government of Nigeria, issued a report on September 17, 2006 that twenty-three State Governors were under investigation for corruption-related offenses. The report alleges misuse of funds and illegal attainment of wealth.⁷⁷ An earlier report by the Transparency International Corruption Second Global Forum on Fighting and Safeguarding Integrity regarding combating corruption in Nigeria recommends that Nigerian society

must develop a culture of relative openness, in contrast to the current bureaucratic climate of secrecy. And a merit system (instead of the tribal bias, state of origin and nepotism or favoritism, which has colored the landscape) should be adopted in employment and distribution of national resources, etc. More importantly, the leadership must muster the political will to tackle the problem head-on.⁷⁸

This author does not disagree with the recommendation of the Transparency International Corruption Second Global Forum on Fighting and Safeguarding Integrity for combating corruption, but the problem this author sees with the above medication

⁷⁵ "Luke 12:14," *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible in Power Bible CD*. Version 2.5. Online Publishing Inc., 2000.

⁷⁶ The Transparency International Corruption Index (CPI), 2001, 234-236.

⁷⁷ Senan John Murray, "EFCC Probes 23 Governors," *Nigeria Punch Western Edition*, September 28, 2006.

⁷⁸ Report on Second Global Forum on Fighting and Safeguarding Integrity, The Hague, Netherlands, May 28-31 2001, accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.ipu.org/Splz-e/hague01.htm>.

prescribed for the malady of corruption afflicting Nigeria is that the cure is entirely humanistic. The Transparency International Corruption organization seems to disregard or be oblivious to the spiritual aspect of human lives. This author concurs with Felix Ajakaiye's contention that spirituality is part and parcel of the fight against corruption and other vices in Nigeria.⁷⁹ Ajakaiye further contends that the enlistment of churches and mosques is needed in the battle against corruption.⁸⁰

As noted above, corruption occurs worldwide and manifests itself in various degrees globally; therefore, corruption is not a mainly Nigerian problem. But the inability for Nigeria to effectively resist the blight of corruption has made corruption debilitating and pernicious to the society. Corruption puts limited public resources into private usage, emasculates effective governance, imperils democracy, and wears away the collective moral fabric of the nation.⁸¹ Also, corruption destabilizes the delicate ethnic and religious tranquility and aggravates problems of national integration in numerous ways. For example, attempts to bring corrupt popular politicians to justice often leads their cronies to incite ethnic and religious conflicts, which leads to loss of innocent lives.⁸²

Furthermore, corruption has contributed to the religious conflict between Christians and Muslims and has provoked and fanned the flame of hate among the believers in the two camps.⁸³ “Enraged at the corruption and injustice they see in their

⁷⁹ Felix Ajakaiye, “The Problem of Corruption in Modern Nigeria: An Ethical Analysis and Role of the Church,” *West African Association of Theological Institutions* (April 2006): 2.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1998), 298-303.

own communities, they have embraced a response to poverty that searches for someone to blame and have chosen violence and retaliation as the cure for injustice and poverty.”⁸⁴ Many Muslims in Nigeria see their poverty as being a result of having not served Islamic law with sufficient zeal and faithfulness.⁸⁵ In order to realign themselves to the will of Allah, they commit to the destruction of Western institutions that are opposed to Islam and that defile its holy places.⁸⁶ In taking this course, they set up a cycle of religious reasoning that leads to further destruction, violence, and poverty.⁸⁷

The fight against corruption requires the view that there exists a God to whom all must give account in addition to other approaches devised by humans. The corrupt person may escape the watchful eyes of humans, but certainly not God's judgment.

Conclusion

Jesus taught his fellow Israelites to regard Samaritans as potential allies; he personally crossed geographic, religious, and cultural barriers to develop redemptive relationships with Samaritans. This is attested to by his encounter with the Samaritan woman in her own territory and his instruction to the apostles to take the Gospel into

⁸⁴ Ibid., 299.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 68.

⁸⁶ Mainstream Western culture has become strongly associated with Christian values, and yet Western media companies are pervasive producers and exporters of sexually explicit and pornographic material. Homosexuality is also permitted in Western culture. In contrast, Muslims regard pornography and homosexuality as haram (forbidden) and tend to view these behaviors as illegal and contrary to the will of Allah. These factors reinforce the belief of many Muslims that Christianity is morally loose and a bad influence on society.

⁸⁷ Do not resist one who does evil, but overcome evil with good; do not return evil for evil (Matt. 5:39-41; Rom. 12:17, 19-21; 1 Pet. 3:9; 1 Thess. 5:15). Jesus and the apostles Paul and Peter together commanded non-retaliation. Paul added the additional instruction: overcome evil with good. Living under Roman occupation, many certainly developed a hatred for a system that subjected them to humiliation by stripping them of their lands, their goods, and even their outer garment. The instruction to “overcome evil with good” is intended to disarm enmity in social relationships, even in a system in which injustice abounds. As imitators of Christ, Christians are supposed to confront the enemies of God with his mercies.

Samaria. Similarly, Christians in Nigeria are to regard Muslims as potential allies. It is no longer necessary to travel to Samaria to encounter Samaritans, for many “Samaritans” now live among Christians. The starting point of even being in a position to make peace and develop redemptive relationships is to cross barriers of difference and deal with one’s own prejudices.

In Matthew 5:44, Christians are directed to love and pray for their enemies. Like the Good Samaritan, Christians are to show love, care, mercy, and hospitality to those with whom they have irreconcilable religious differences.⁸⁸ Muslims do not have to convert to Christianity in order for Christians to love them. Christians can bind the Muslims’ wounds without believing in Islam. Christians do not have to behave like Muslims, follow their lifestyle, agree with their actions, or paint over their past atrocities.

In Matthew 18:21-35, Peter asked Jesus how often he was expected to forgive someone. In response, Jesus told the story of the unmerciful servant. Jesus graphically emphasized the importance of forgiveness, describing a king who handed the unmerciful servant over to torturers until he could repay his debts. Jesus concluded the story by saying, “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from his heart.”

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul encouraged his audience to forgive, telling them to “bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (3:13). Granting forgiveness to a person who has inflicted a wound makes sense only in the context of understanding how much God has forgiven. Pope John Paul, in confronting the man who shot him, made this

⁸⁸ Edmiston, 1-4.

very point: “The Christian should seek to be kind with a compassionate and forgiving disposition which is based on the simple but amazing fact that this is the attitude which has been shown to us in God’s forgiveness.”⁸⁹

The beatitude “Blessed are the peacemakers” calls the Christian to plunge into the depths of their hearts and draw healing water.⁹⁰ Peacemaking is hard work but Christians are asked to produce a good world by working at making peace. Peacemaking involves the arduous exercise of grappling a world full of conflicts into conformity with God’s peaceful and blessed paths. The Bible admonishes in Ephesians 4:3, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Similarly, Romans 14:19 instructs “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.” Phrases such as “make every effort” indicate that peacemaking is a strenuous exercise that is not easy.

Finally, Isaiah 1:17 instructs believers to “learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.” The Bible teaches that God is a God of justice. In fact, Deuteronomy 32:4 states that “all his ways are justice.” Furthermore, Deuteronomy 10:18, 24:17, and 27:19 support the notion of a just society in which concern and care are shown to the poor and afflicted and one legal standard is applied to rich and poor alike. Christians in Nigeria are to exhibit God’s love and justice by showing compassion to the downtrodden of the society.

It is through redemptive encounters, crossing barriers, offering love, extending forgiveness, making peace, and developing a just society that Christians have

⁸⁹ Floyd, Scott. “Counseling and Forgiveness.” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 45, no. 3 (June 1, 2003): 33. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost, accessed April 4, 2015.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

opportunities to speak the truths about the values of the Kingdom of God to Muslims and acknowledge a common interest in steering culture and policy in the right direction.

CHAPTER 3:

HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM IN NIGERIA

The aim of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with the history of the introduction and spread of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria and to show how Christianity, which was introduced in the south, advanced north in search of converts and, similarly, Islam, which was introduced in the north, advanced south in search of converts in the same communities. I also show how the seeds of the current conflict have a historical origin. The actions of the colonial government served as the force that hoisted the two religions like two trains onto the same track and also as the engine that drove them in opposite directions toward each other, making collision inevitable.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part covers the history of Christianity in Nigeria and the second part details the introduction of Islam into Nigeria.

Christianity

Christianity entered and spread in Nigeria in three successive phases. This section describes the establishment of Christianity in the country, some of the efforts made to spread the religion, the effect of colonization on Christianity, early conflicts involving the religion, and the effects of Christianity on the nation.

Phase 1: The Portuguese Voyagers

The history of Christianity in Nigeria is, in a sense, the history of the slave trade. Portuguese voyagers brought Christianity to Nigeria. Henry the Navigator of Portugal desired to buy the gold of West Africa directly, without going through the Muslim

kingdoms in Arabia and North Africa.¹ In about the 15th century AD, Henry the Navigator, accompanied by some Roman Catholic missionaries, sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and arrived at Benin and Warri, which were coastal nation-states located in what is today Nigeria. The vision of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European missionaries to establish Christianity in present-day Nigeria failed because most of the kings they encountered were more interested in guns and other weapons of war than in religion.² In addition, some of the coastline kingdoms resisted conversion to Christianity because the voyagers, who were engaged in the slave trade, were more interested in commerce than evangelization.³ They apprehended the natives and made them a tradable commodity; and many of the slaves who were bought and sold ended up in the Americas. Because the Portuguese voyagers were involved in slave trade, and because native belief in traditional religion was strong, planting Christianity in Nigeria was difficult. The seeds failed to germinate and the religion soon died in Nigeria.⁴

Phase 2: Yoruba Wars

However, the Yoruba wars of the early 1800s had the unintended consequence of paving the way for Christianity.⁵ Their indigenous captors sold many of the men and women who were captured during the war as slaves to the Portuguese, who subsequently transported them to the Americas and other parts of the world. These slaves became

¹ Michael Crowder, *A Short History of Nigeria* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1966), 66-67.

² J.F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: the Making of a New Elite*, 2nd ed. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1969), 2-3.

³ Ibid., 4-5.

⁴ Ibid., 2-6.

⁵ The Yorubas are an ethnic group in the southwestern part of Nigeria.

Christians in their new homes.⁶ Freed slaves of West African descent began to arrive and settle in Freetown, Sierra Leone in the late 1800s.⁷ Some of the freed slaves in Sierra Leone were clever entrepreneurs. They travelled from Sierra Leone to Lagos and Badagry. The Yoruba freed slaves were organized. Some settled at Abeokuta, the capital of Ogun State, Nigeria. Many received education from the church missionary society.⁸ The freed slaves practiced their new faith while in Abeokuta. The former slaves, such as Bishop Crowther, also helped to evangelize and spread Christianity and many in Nigeria converted to Christianity as a result.

In 1807, the British parliament passed a law abolishing the slave trade. The British government utilized its marine power to enforce the law. The Royal Navy patrolled the high seas, arresting individuals engaged in the slave trade and confiscating ships that were used in slavery trafficking. The British naval officers established a trial court in Freetown. The purpose of the court was to try the Portuguese who had been arrested for engaging in the slave trade. Slaves found in the captured boats were set free in Freetown and the British sold the confiscated ships to the rich freed slaves.⁹ In 1841, the British government embarked on a campaign to abolish slavery in Africa. As a result of this campaign, many slaves were set free and some of the freed slaves resettled in Freetown in Sierra Leone. The former slaves had left their traditional African religion and converted to Christianity. They introduced their new faith to their kinfolds in Nigeria.

⁶ Ajayi, 19-21.

⁷ Ibid., 25-27.

⁸ Crowder, 143.

⁹ Ibid., 124-133.

Also, the former slaves enabled Christianity to propagate by inviting missionaries to Nigeria to continue the evangelization.¹⁰

Phase 3: Church Missions

Christianity in Nigeria entered a third phase with the formation of various church missions. One of the first missions was the African Mission for the Spread of the Catholic Faith; it helped expand the practice of Catholicism in Nigeria. Father Borghero, an Italian-born priest, began the Roman Catholic mission in Lagos around 1860 from a mission in Porto Novo, Dahomey while on a fact-finding visit down the coast of the Gulf of Benin.¹¹ Father Borghero came to minister to freed slaves from Brazil who had settled in Lagos, the administrative center of the British colonizers and a city with about 30,000 people. The mission established schools in all its mission stations and children received education and were indoctrinated into the Catholic faith.¹² As a result of the efforts of Father Borghero, Catholicism spread from Lagos to other parts of Nigeria; this included: Onitsha, Oghuli, Ondo, Oyo, Ilorin, and Lokoja. Father Borghero and the former slaves he ministered to were responsible for the existence of the Catholic faith in Nigeria. In 1886, Bishop Shanahan proselytized Onitsha and Oghuli areas and built Roman Catholic mission stations at Onitsha and Oghuli.¹³

The missions used unorthodox methods to evangelize the native people. For instance, the Holy Ghost Roman Catholic Missionary Society in Africa bought slaves, to

¹⁰ Ajayi, 35-44.

¹¹ Modupe Oduyoye, *The Planting of Christianity in Yoruba Land* (Ibadan: Day Star Press, 1961), 61.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Emmanuel Ayankanmi Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact On Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914; a Political and Social Analysis*, Ibadan History Series (London: Longman, 1971, 1966), 265-273.

whom they promised freedom when they settled in villages, and made converts out of them.¹⁴ The French and the European slave traders used this method to gather scattered slaves who had been displaced.

Many Nigerians received Bible instruction at Catholic mission stations in Nigeria. The missions offered Nigerians the added benefit of providing them with Western educations.¹⁵ Also, some of the important contributions made by the missionaries were the elimination of pagan religion, human sacrifice, and slavery in Eastern Nigeria and the establishment of Christian villages.¹⁶ The missions also established primary schools to educate the young in Eastern and Northern Nigeria.¹⁷

Not to be outdone, the Methodists and Anglicans established missions and schools in Lagos and Abeokuta in 1846, soon after the closedown of the Lagos slave market. Ministers of African heritage were posted in both Lagos and Abeokuta to spread Christianity.¹⁸ In the missionary-established schools, instruction was largely oral because of the scarcity of books. Prayers and Biblical texts were given and memorized by oral recitation.¹⁹

In 1850, Thomas Bowen, an American Baptist missionary, established a mission station at Badagry. There he met Wesleyan Missionary Society missionaries. Bowen

¹⁴ Ibid., 274-291.

¹⁵ Ajayi, 131-141.

¹⁶ Ibid., 64-65.

¹⁷ Ibid., 131-141.

¹⁸ Ibid., 38-40.

¹⁹ Ayandele, 283-86.

studied the Yoruba language so he could communicate without an interpreter. Bowen was responsible for writing the Yoruba grammar and dictionary.²⁰

The Nigerian Baptist Convention was officially established in 1912. The Nigerian Baptist Convention is now completely autonomous, self-propagating, and self-reliant.²¹ In 1920, a visiting minister of the Baptist faith established a mission station in Nigeria for Baptist adherents. While the minister was on a trip from Jos, he detoured to Kaduna and founded a mission station for the Yorubas who resided in Kaduna.²² American missionaries, in collaboration with some of their Nigerian counterparts, established a secondary school, a teacher training college, and a seminary in the Northern Nigerian cities of Jos, Minna, and Kaduna, respectively. The Nigerian Baptist Convention runs several hospitals and medical establishments in addition to nine religious training centers for pastors across the country. The largest of the nine pastoral training institutions was the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomosho.²³

Effects of Colonization on Christianity

The British government's role cannot be overlooked in Christianity's setback in Northern Nigeria. The Missionaries encountered many roadblocks in their attempt to establish mission stations in the northern parts of Nigeria.²⁴ Chief among the obstacles was the system of indirect rule initiated by the Colonial masters. Frederick Lugard, the

²⁰ Ibid., 117-118.

²¹ Edmund Patrick Thurman Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*, 2nd ed. (Zaria, Nigeria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1976), 162-165.

²² Ibid., 62.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 49-65.

crown governor of the colony in Nigeria, needed the cooperation of the people of Northern Nigeria to collect taxes. To gain their cooperation, Lord Lugard promised the people of Northern Nigeria that no religion other than Islam would be allowed in the area. Lord Lugard made this policy of Christianity non-interference with the Moslem's religion in the northern part of Nigeria so that he could control the northern people.²⁵ Lugard added a clause that stated "whoever tried to plant Christianity in the area must seek the permission of the Muslim leader in the area before embarking on it."²⁶ Furthermore, the acting high commissioner, Wallace, pledged to the emirs, "I do hereby in the name of His majesty promise you protection and I do guarantee that no interference by Government shall be made in your chosen form of religion, so long as the same does not involve acts contrary to the laws of humanity and oppression to your people."²⁷ The Colonial government's policy of religious non-interference in the north and the establishment of indirect rule throughout the north was the greatest obstacle to the spread of Christianity in the region. This policy essentially put Christianity and Islam on an inevitable collision course.

For this reason, Islam became the only official religion of Northern Nigeria and her people. The British promise emboldened some emirs to persecute some evangelists who tried to plant Christianity, such as Tugwell and his group in the Kanu area.²⁸ However, the building of the railway that joined north and south provided an avenue for some Yoruba businessmen and laborers to plant Christianity in the north, including the

²⁵Crampton, 48-60.

²⁶ Ibid., 50.

²⁷ Ibid., 48.

²⁸ Ibid., 49.

northern cities of Ilorin, Kano, and Kaduna, to the chagrin of the emirs and the local people.²⁹

Early Conflicts

Christianity's spread in the northern part of Nigeria was also obstructed by other factors. Chief among the church-planting problems in Northern Nigeria was the violence against the establishment of Christianity. In 1904, Muslims burned down the Dekina mission station to stop missionaries from disseminating the Gospel.³⁰ In 1905, a melee occurred in Dekina between Christians and the Muslims over winning souls and eradicating the evil each perceived in the opposite belief system.³¹ In another commotion involving the mission station at Dekina, about ten British soldiers under Major Merrick lost their lives in an attempt to squelch a religious riot. Christian missionaries left the Dekina area in December 1905.³²

Other factors that prevented the spread of Christianity in the northern part of Nigeria were the harsh climatic conditions, diseases, and language barriers.³³ In addition, according to Cramptom, the Europeans who brought Christianity to Nigeria were drinking and importing whiskey, and such behavior could compromise the morality of the

²⁹ Ajayi, 270-271.

³⁰ Jacob A. Owolabi, *Christianity in Nigeria* (Lagos, Nigeria: National Open University, 2009), 56.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 57.

³³ Crowder, 139.

natives.³⁴ For these reasons, the northerners were against the establishment of Christianity.

Effects of Christianity

Christianity brought many good things to Nigeria. Among the good things was the freeing of people from bondage to sickness, human sacrifice, evil spirits, wizards, witches, slavery, and illiteracy, and many souls were won for Jesus Christ in Nigeria.³⁵ The Church in Nigeria has been responsible for many achievements, such as economic, social, health, and education growth. For example, Christian missionaries made great contributions to education in Nigeria. Even today's Nigerians are direct and indirect recipients of the missionaries' work. The missionary schools created the first generation of Nigerian elites. Missionary education gave many Nigerians tools they used for social advancement. I am a product of a mission school and I can testify to the worth of the instruction Nigerians such as I received; it helped mold me both morally and intellectually.

The contribution of Christianity to Nigerian education goes "beyond mission schools. The story of faith communities is entwined with the evolution of the nationalist struggle. The formation of African churches run by indigenous pastors was part of the educational awakening birthed by the scriptural aphorism of equality and justice."³⁶ It is my strong belief that education brings out the best that is in humanity and enables people

³⁴ Crampton, 51.

³⁵ Ayandele, 329-345.

³⁶ Kayode Fayemi, "Christians in Politics: The Challenge of Transformative Public Engagement," (paper Presented at Annual Partners of the Apostles in the Marketplace, Lagos, Nigeria, February 21, 2013), 3, accessed June 27, 2015, <http://kfayemi.com/christians-in-politics-the-challenge-of-transformative-public-engagement/>.

to live healthy and happy lives. The eradication of the disease of ignorance is a result of Christian educational engagement.

Christian educational engagement has helped people understand Christianity and salvation, has guided individuals to tell God's story in comparison to their own stories, and has prepared individuals to hear God's invitation to go and serve. Churches, through educational engagement, have helped learners strive for faith-filled dialogues and lives of authentic action. It is my opinion that educational engagement has enabled Christians to fully participate in the larger culture, to seek to add to the common good of society at all levels, and at the end of the day to seek the shalom of the cities in which they reside.

Furthermore, education has made a way for many individuals in Nigeria to evangelize for a living. For example, founders of some indigenous churches have no means of survival other than through the evangelistic mission.³⁷ Also, the establishment of Christianity in Nigeria has inspired some individuals to aspire to political and other leadership positions.³⁸ They have followed such missionaries as Philips and Lennon, who once engaged in the politics of Nigeria and brought economic and social services to the people of Nigeria.³⁹ The engagement of some Nigerians in evangelical work has encouraged the further spread of Christianity in the country.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ayandele, 283-289.

³⁸ Ibid., 290-293.

³⁹ Crampton, 197.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Summary

In summary, the first attempt to plant Christianity in Nigeria failed due to the Portuguese missionaries' connection with the slave trade. It was significant and fitting that the subsequent attempts that finally succeeded should be a concomitant of the abolitionist movement. It is true that the Portuguese attempted to Christianize the people of Benin and Warri as early as the fifteenth century, but most missionaries arrived by sea in the nineteenth century.⁴¹ As with other areas in Africa, Roman Catholics and Anglicans each established areas of control in Southern Nigeria.⁴²

Lord Luggard promised the Muslim emirs colonial non-interference with Islam in Northern Nigeria. However, when Tugwell and his men attempted to plant Christianity in the northern city of Kano, Luggard's promise became a source of great controversy.⁴³ The promise handicapped missionaries in planting Christianity in the north.

Christian missions in Nigeria contributed to the spiritual, economic, and personal growth of Nigerians. Many Nigerians were set free from various bondages and slavery; witchcraft, evil spirits, and human sacrifices were eradicated because of Christianity. Christianity improved trade, inspired many Nigerians to seek education, and opened employment opportunities.

Islam

This section discusses the introduction and propagation of Islam, including its southern advance. It explains the attraction the religion held for the indigenous people

⁴¹ Ayandele, 3.

⁴² Crowder, 310-311.

⁴³ Crampton, 49.

and describes the influence of the Islamic system of education in spreading Islam. The impact of Islam on the country, the effects of colonization on Islam, and the Islamic court system are also discussed.

Introduction of Islam

Islam came into what is now Northern Nigerian through the influence of Arab traders moving across the trans-Sahara trade routes. The Arab traders used the trade routes linking North Africa to what was known as the Bilad al-Sudan (Land of the Blacks).⁴⁴ This eastern trans-Sahara trade route connected Tripoli and Kanem through Fezzan and Bilma.⁴⁵ Other minor trade routes linked Kanem to other areas that surrounded northern Nigeria.⁴⁶ Firearms were traded across the trans-Sahara route, the knowledge of writing was spread, and pilgrimages were conducted. All the traffic contributed to the spread and acceptance of Islam.⁴⁷

Propagation of Islam

The merchants and Islamic evangelists propagated Islam through several methods. One of the potent methods used in propagating Islam has been termed “acceptance by practice.”⁴⁸ Acceptance by practice is the adoption of Islam that occurs through “adhering to correct principles and living an exemplary life, holding the word of Allah in very high esteem, fighting corruption and tyranny, bringing dignity and honor to Muslims and

⁴⁴ Crowder, 35-37.

⁴⁵ J Spencer Trimingham, *Oxford Paperbacks*, vol. 223, *A History of Islam in West Africa*, (London: Published for the University of Glasgow by the Oxford U.P., 1970), 151-154.

⁴⁶ Crowder, 40-41.

⁴⁷ J. D Fage, *An Introduction to the History of West Africa*, 3rd ed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 37-38.

⁴⁸ Salau S. Omotoso, *Islam in Nigeria* (Lagos, Nigeria: National Open University, 2011), 33.

saving them from the humiliation of having to live under nonbelievers.”⁴⁹ One of the principles of acceptance by practice is giving people “the opportunity to enjoy a life that is governed by faith, permeated by morality and justice using the Quran and Hadith as their guide.”⁵⁰ Because the ruling class formed close relationships with the merchants and Islamic missionaries, they became the first group of people to accept Islam in the northern Nigeria area. Ordinary people followed as Islam slowly became the state religion.⁵¹

Islam spread because the people were attracted to Islam for many reasons. Chief among the reasons was that adherence to Islam bestowed full citizenship privileges on those who believed and exempted them from taxes that were levied on those who did not believe.⁵² Secondly, Islam supported the lifestyle of the people, including polygamy and slavery, which the people generally accepted. In other words, the religion grew because it did not disrupt traditional life.⁵³ Finally, a sense of equality was felt among the believers. Equality was observed in the way believers dressed, their diet, and their housing. To the faithful, Islam offered practical solutions to problems of life and power to overcome evil forces. Furthermore, Islam became the religion of the royal courts, thus the state religion.

Islamic education, introduced in the early years of Islam in what is now Northern Nigeria, encouraged the propagation of the religion. Before Islam was introduced in the northern Nigeria area, the people worshipped traditional gods. The introduction of

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Crowder, 36.

⁵² Omotoso, 34.

⁵³ Obaro Ikime, ed., *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Published for the Historical Society of Nigeria by Heinemann Educational Books, 1980), 220-222.

Islamic education brought the worship of traditional gods to an end. The curriculum included the study of various facets of Islam, jurisprudence, and explanation and interpretation of the Quran and other Islamic sciences.⁵⁴ The aims of Islamic education were to facilitate the spread of the religion, enhance social justice, provide political stability, and promote better administration of the state.⁵⁵ Thus the government relied on some of the fundamental values of Islam.⁵⁶

Rulers such as Idris Alooma in the sixteenth century earned a reputation for strict adherence to the commands of the Quran and Hadith.⁵⁷ Alooma fought many battles, and his victories furthered the spread of Islam in the region.⁵⁸ Most of the rulers promoted the spread of Islam internally by bringing Muslim immigrants such as Shuwa Arabs as instructors. This helped the number of Muslims in their domain to grow.⁵⁹

Finally, Islam spread through Jihad, which is a war to compel total observance to the spiritual and moral edicts of Islam as contained in the Quran. Usman Dan Fodio fought Jihads in the last decades of the 18th century to spread Islam against governments that he found corrupt and unjust, oppressing the poor and the weak and acting contrary to the dictates of the Quran.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Abdur Rahman I. Doi, *Islam in Nigeria* (Zaria, Nigeria: Gaskiya, 1984), 57-60.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Doi, 33-35.

Southern Advance of Islam

Islam was not restricted to the northern area of Nigeria; it marched southward. The date for the beginning of the southward advance of Islam in Nigeria is unknown. Some authors, such as Ikime, suggest that Islam reached some southern communities as early as the seventeenth century and planted deep roots in the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁶¹ What is known is that Islam marched southward along the trade routes linking the Nupe, Hausa, and Borno people. The Kano-Badagry route formed a major north-south link from Kukawa, the capital of Kanem-Borno, to the Benuethen, and the Niger-Benue waterways connecting many places.⁶² Many Southern Nigerian Muslim communities faced resistance and persecution from people of different faiths, such as Christians. The resistance caused many to leave for safety. Muslims in the south scattered because of suspicion and distrust; they were compelled to practice in secrecy.⁶³

Impact of Islam

Islam had a tremendous effect on the lifestyle of the people of southern Nigeria. These effects can be seen in the religious, social, cultural, educational, and political activities of the area.⁶⁴ The introduction of Islam brought changes in the way people dressed and also in their languages. The native people were fascinated by the way the Arabs dressed and began to copy them. Over time, Shuwa Arabic and Kanuri languages,

⁶¹ Ikime, 217.

⁶² Ibid., 217-220.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ikime, 219.

the languages of Muslims, overtook some of the minority languages.⁶⁵ Moreover, Muslim festivals and ceremonies replaced most of the traditional festivals and events.⁶⁶

The spread of Islam had its greatest effect in the way it undermined traditional religion and worship.⁶⁷ Local shrines were destroyed and their oracles killed.⁶⁸ This opened the way for the preaching and teaching of Islam, and converts were made as Islam became popular. Major Islamic teaching centers were established in Lagos, Ibadan, Ilorin, Auchi, and other cities.

As Islam spread southward, more people migrated from the north to the south. Islam spread slowly and converts were won in many southern areas. The religion allowed and accommodated for local socio-cultural activities, which gave the religion an additional impetus. The acceptance of local customs is evident in the mixture of Islamic and traditional beliefs seen in festivities such as Id al fitr, Id al-kabir, and Maulu.⁶⁹

Effects of Colonization

The trans-Saharan trade routes and the Arab merchants who used those routes were not the only means of contact Nigerians had with the outside world. Contacts between Nigerians and Europeans dated to the Middle Ages. These contacts eventually led to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which lasted for more than three hundred years.⁷⁰ The abolition of the slave trade in the nineteenth century opened the door for missionary activities and

⁶⁵ Omotoso, 36-42.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Doi, 121-130.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 148.

⁷⁰ Crowder, 66-78.

the exchange of goods and services between the locals and the Europeans, especially the British. The contacts and relationships between the indigenous people and the Europeans was at first beneficial to both parties, but they produced constant disagreement. Some of the conflicts were over terms of trade and interpretation of treaties between indigenous chiefs and British agents.⁷¹ The conflicts caused the merchants and missionaries to seek protection from the British government.

In response to the merchants' and missionaries' requests, and in order to protect its economic interests, the British government took over the administration of the area and her people as a colony. Thus, between the late nineteenth century and 1903, Britain had subjugated the whole region called Nigeria under the imperial crown as a colonial territory.⁷² Both violent and non-violent means were used to subdue the people, starting in Lagos in 1851 and then in Sokoto, the heart of the Muslim caliphate, in 1903.

The northerners vehemently opposed colonization because they feared the fate of their religion. Colonial rulers meant a cessation of the use of jihad to spread Islam to areas outside where it had been accepted.⁷³ During the colonial period, Christian missionaries stationed in southern Nigeria began venturing northward. As mentioned earlier, Sir Lugard, the crown governor, and his immediate successors were mindful of Muslim opposition to the Christian missionaries' northern movement and kept the Christian missions away from Muslim areas. To mollify the Muslims and keep Christians away, the crown governors instituted indirect rule and strengthened hereditary rule in the north.

⁷¹ Ajayi, 53-61.

⁷² Crowder, 231-235.

⁷³ Ibid.

The policy of Lord Lugard and his cohorts to keep Christianity out of Northern Nigeria had several enormous consequences for the fledgling nation. One of the consequences of Lugard's policy was a delay in the introduction of Western-style education in parts of the north with strong Muslim communities. Anything Western, including education, very often was associated with Christianity and therefore rejected in the Muslim north. Lugard's policy had the additional consequence of keeping the number of Christian converts in the north very low, creating an atmosphere in which Islam spread peacefully and progressively.

However, a need arose for people trained in the Western style of education to work in the colonial civil service and ever-expanding commercial establishments.⁷⁴ Consequently, Western schools were introduced in Kano, the bedrock of Nigerian Muslim culture, in 1909 and subsequently in other areas. The north resisted the change in the schools' curriculum. The content of the curriculum kept Muslims away from the schools and limited Muslim children's access to Western education. But in the 1920s, Western-leaning Arabic schools were started by organizations such as Ahmadiyya and Ansar-ud-deen to meet the demands of the time.

At the onset of colonialism in Nigeria, those who practiced the faith feared that colonial authorities would obstruct the practice and spread of Islam, but colonialism actually aided the spread of Islam in Nigeria during its sixty years in the country. The system of indirect rule strengthened the position of the emirs and chiefs.⁷⁵ Villages were organized into districts and district heads were selected from the Muslim royal families

⁷⁴ Ayandele, 143-149.

⁷⁵ Ikime, 477.

even for districts made up largely of non-Muslims. This practice allowed the Muslim appointees to use their power and authority over the non-faithful, thus advancing Islam into non-Muslim areas.

Furthermore, the Hausa language was adopted as the official language of the colonial administration. Hausa language, culture, and religion were taught in the schools established by the colonial administrators.⁷⁶ The colonial agents, by using and mandating others to use the language spoken by the people of northern Nigeria in governance, helped the propagation of Islam.⁷⁷

The Legal and Judicial System

The British established alkali⁷⁸ courts in 1897 with a view to facilitating the administration of justice and reducing its cost.⁷⁹ The colonial authorities used these courts to consolidate their position, particularly in northern Nigeria. They removed sections of the Muslim Sharia court system, although some Islamic legal systems dealing with penal codes were retained. Throughout the period of colonial rule, the administration made sustained efforts to improve the courts in terms of procedure and personnel training. In doing so, however, they aided the spread of Muslim courts even into areas where the majority of the population was not Muslim.

⁷⁶ The Hausas are an ethnic tribe in the northern states of Nigeria.

⁷⁷ Crampton, 102.

⁷⁸ Alkali is an Islamic judge in the emirate of northern Nigeria.

⁷⁹ Ikime, 405-409. [The Alkali court served as the judiciary in the northern Nigeria emirate administration. The duty of the courts was to administer justice according to Muslim law. Nominees for alkali were made up of Islamic scholars, who sometimes also performed the duties of clerks in the colonial government.]

As stated earlier, Islam was introduced in what is now northern Nigeria area as far back as the fourteenth century. The introduction of Islam in Nigeria was a turning point in the country's legal and judicial practices. Islamic law was embraced and the affairs of people were governed by the Islamic legal system, which predated the arrival of colonialism. The religion gained so much acceptance and the approval of so many rulers and scholars that Islam became the religion of the state in many areas of Hausa land and Islamic law became the legal system by the mid-nineteenth century. Traditional rulers who in the past were responsible for making laws, enforcing them, and settling disputes were no longer needed.⁸⁰

All disputes regarding state matters rested with the Qadi courts, which were courts that administered justice based on Sharia law. All civil and criminal matters came under the jurisdiction of the Qadi courts. Thus, the north and some parts of the south with large Muslim populations came under Islamic law with all its implications, from moral to commercial and civil.⁸¹ Hence, Sharia law was *de facto* and *de jure* in the north and some southern areas before the onset of colonialism. The Sharia legal system proved very effective in the north, to the point that it made the colonial authorities uneasy. Hence, the establishment of the alkali courts.⁸²

Under provisions of the 1900 Native Courts Proclamation, the colonists set about creating an entirely new judicial system. The first step was to bring the Sharia laws into accordance with Britain's secular legal system. To this effect, some important parts of Sharia law that dealt with capital punishment for criminal offences were abolished. The

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ikime, 453-455.

⁸² Ibid.

colonists also put to an end such punishments as cutting off of limbs for theft, stoning for adultery, and capital punishment for murderers and those who renounce their Islamic faith.⁸³ These prohibitions introduced by the colonists to the Islamic judicial system gradually led to legal reforms in northern Nigeria and subsequently reforms to the penal code in the 1950s.⁸⁴

The penal code was eventually translated into Arabic and made available to the *alkalis*. In order to appropriately supervise the *alkalis*, the authorities introduced the position of district officer. The power to appoint the *alkalis* (judges) and other court officials who would serve in the native courts, formally reserved for the emir, was now the prerogative of the residents. The power to determine the jurisdiction of the *alkali* courts and to review sentences or judgments handed down by the *alkali*, together with a wide range of other powers, was commandeered from the emirs under the colonial judicial system.⁸⁵

Summary

In summary, Islam came to Nigeria through North African merchants who were trading with the people of Northern Nigeria. As a result of the trade relationships, rulers embraced Islam and spread it to adjoining communities. Islam was established and spread slowly among the people of Nigeria, leaving behind a number of effects in religious, social, cultural, educational, and political sectors.⁸⁶

⁸³ Ibid., 407.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ikime, 455.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 349.

A significant factor in the spread of Islam in Nigeria was the introduction of Islamic education. Islamic education in Nigeria predated Western education, and the system witnessed changes over the years. The imposition of colonial rule actually furthered the spread and influence of Islam in Nigeria even though it altered both the education system and the Islamic judicial system.⁸⁷

Conclusion

This chapter described how Christianity and Islam were introduced in Nigeria and the effects they had on the country's religious, social, cultural, educational, and political lives. Christianity was introduced in the south and advanced north; Islam was introduced in the north and advanced south. Because the two belief systems with opposing agendas sought converts in the same communities, they were bound to come into conflict. Ochonu clarifies, "In Northern Nigeria, clashes between Muslim groups, composed mainly of ethnic Hausa and Fulani, and Christian and traditionalist communities have become monthly affairs with devastating results."⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Crampton, 57-58.

⁸⁸ Moses Ochonu, The Roots of Nigeria's Religious and Ethnic Conflict, *GlobalPost*, March 10, 2014, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/nigeria/140220/nigeria-religious-ethnic-conflict-roots>.

CHAPTER 4:

CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN NIGERIA

Understanding the relations between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria requires an examination of the history of the interactions between the two groups. A number of the factors that have played major roles in the evolution of the relationship between Christians and Muslims since Nigeria became a nation in 1914 are discussed in this chapter. They include the attitude of the colonial administration to religions, the methods Muslims and Christians used in their quests for converts, the provisions of the Nigerian constitutions and the policies of the military government regarding religious affairs, and the dimensions of religious propagation and Sharia law. Various riots are mentioned as examples of religious fanaticism and fundamentalism, and religious terrorism as applied by the Maitsatsine and Boko Haram sects is identified.¹ This chapter also examines the interplay among politics, economics, and ethnicity in Nigeria's religious conflict. In brief, the chapter establishes that many different factors have contributed to the current state of Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria.

Political Amalgamation

Nigeria is a conglomeration and amalgamation of several ethnic groups with cultural and linguistic differences. The amalgamation that created modern Nigeria forced the various ethnic groups into a single political unit and created tension among the different parts. The process was comparable to forging a political union of France,

¹ N. D. Danjibo, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence: The "Maitatsine" and "Boko Haram" Crises in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Peace and Conflict Studies Programme, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, 2010), 6-7.

Germany, and Britain. Nigeria more or less bears a resemblance to Belgium, a country in which two separate and distinct nationalities were grouped together with predictable results.² Both northerners and southerners in Nigeria vehemently opposed the amalgamation. The northern emirs opposed the merger because they feared that a single centralized administrative system would undermine and diminish their authority, which depended on British rule; the southern educated elite feared the merger would lead to the introduction of the unpopular system of indirect rule and the curtailment of the few political rights they enjoyed under the legislative council system.³

In Nigeria, it is not possible for a single religious point of view to claim a monopoly on society. The Christian and Islamic viewpoints are only two among many, making Nigeria's situation a veritable marketplace of competing religious views. People professing Christianity, Islam, traditional religion, and various other religious beliefs live and work side by side, making Nigeria a pluralistic and multi-religious society.⁴

Colonial Administration

Nigeria as it is known today was born when the British under Lord Fredrick Lugard merged the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914.⁵ The merger of the North and South was made primarily because it accorded the colonizing power geopolitical and economic convenience. Of several reasons for the merger, two were

² Dapo Fafowora, "Lord Lugard and the 1914 Amalgamation of Nigeria," February 28, 2013, accessed August 30, 2014, <http://thenationonline.net/new/lord-lugard-and-the-1914-amalgamation-of-nigeria-2/>.

³ Michael Crowder, *A Short History of Nigeria* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1966), 244-248.

⁴ Taiye Adamolekun "The Role of Religion in the Political and Ethical Re-Orientations of Nigeria, *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 31, no. 2 (1999): 19-28.

⁵ Michael Crowder, *A Short History of Nigeria* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1966), 243-244.

most important. First and foremost, the British wanted a continuous colonial territory that stretched from the Sahara desert in the north to the Atlantic coast in the south.⁶ Second, the Northern Protectorate, which was one of the merging units, was not generating enough revenue to assist in the colonial administration whereas the Southern Protectorate generated revenue to more than meet its administrative requirement.⁷ The colonial administrators believed that having one continuous and coherent colony rather than two made sense for administrative purposes. Merging a territory that was a drain to the treasury with a territory that produced revenue also made sense to the colonial administrators. But what must be made clear is the fact that the indigenous people did not approve of the merger nor were they consulted regarding it.⁸

From the beginning, the sides involved in the merger obviously wanted little or nothing to do with each other. Sir Ahmadu Bello, a very influential Northern politician, stated publicly in 1940s that “the mistake of 1914 has come to light” to express the Northerners’ feelings regarding the amalgamation.⁹ Sir Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, another very prominent Northern politician and former Prime Minister of Nigeria, declared in 1952 in a speech in the Northern House of Assembly, Kaduna,

the Southern people who are swarming into this region daily in large numbers are really intruders. We don’t want them and they are not welcome here in the North. Since the amalgamation in 1914, the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigerian people are different in every way including religion, custom, language and aspiration. The fact that we’re all

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ochonu.

⁹ Dapo Fafowora, “Lord Lugard and the 1914 Amalgamation of Nigeria,” *Nation*, February 28, 2013, accessed June 23, 2015, <http://thenationonline.net/new/lord-lugard-and-the-1914-amalgamation-of-nigeria-2/>.

Africans might have misguided the British Government. We here in the North, take it that 'Nigerian unity' is not for us.¹⁰

Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a very influential and popular Southern politician, stated quite clearly, "Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression."¹¹ The three leaders made it clear in many of their public utterances that they did not see Nigeria as a united country.¹² The compromise that resulted was the Nigerian federal system.

Although the merger between the North and South Protectorates made lots of sense to the colonial authorities, to many Nigerians, the merger made little sense. Nigerians have often cited the merger as the underpinning of the acrimonious relationship between North and South and thus of the current religious conflict between Christianity and Islam. Northern Nigeria today is comprised of several states and the population, for all intents and purposes, is mainly Muslim. The Muslim populations of the Northern states were part of the Sokoto Islamic Caliphate of a pre-colonial empire; they "generally look to the Middle East and the wider Muslim world for unity and a sociopolitical paradigm."¹³ Southern Nigeria has many states, contains people of different ethnic backgrounds, is largely Christian, and generally looks to the West for sociopolitical influences. This difference in worldview has caused political disagreement and suspicion between North and South since the days of British rule.¹⁴

¹⁰ Adisa Adeleye, "Amalgamation of 1914: Was It a Mistake?," *Vanguard*, May 18, 2012, accessed June 23, 2015, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/05/amalgamation-of-1914-was-it-a-mistake/>.

¹¹ Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 47.

¹² Fafowora.

¹³ Ochonu.

¹⁴ Chima J. Korieh and Ugo G. Nwokeji, eds., *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu* (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2005), 126-36.

To add to this messiness, both the North and South have ethnic and religious factions who carry resentment against ethnic and religious majorities they perceive as dominant and oppressors.¹⁵ These complaints are sometimes manifested through nasty political and sectarian conflicts fueled by political elites and provocative media reports, and through venomous uprisings.¹⁶

Peaceful Coexistence

What must be made clear at this point is that Christianity and Islam co-existed peacefully in the protectorates before the merger in 1914, give or take a few incidents such as Muslims burning down the Dekina mission station in 1904 in order to stop the dissemination of the Gospel by missionaries and the 1905 melee in Dekina between Christians and the Muslims in a struggle to win souls and eradicate the evil they perceived in the other belief system.¹⁷ The competition for converts between Christianity and Islam was fierce but peaceful; many families had members in different religious camps and they tolerated one another because family unity and harmony was much more important than religious solidarity.

According to Crowder, “The year 1906 is seen as the real beginning of colonial administration throughout Nigeria even though the amalgamation of the North and South Protectorates occurred in 1914.”¹⁸ The protectorate of Lagos and the Southern Nigeria

¹⁵ The three major ethnic groups in Nigeria are Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba; these are also the most influential in the country.

¹⁶ Chima J. Korieh and Ugo G. Nwokeji, eds., *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu* (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2005), 126.

¹⁷ Crowder, 241-246.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

Protectorate were brought under one lawmaking body that was introduced to counsel the colonial government on how to administer the expanded territory. The Northern and Southern Protectorates were eventually merged in January 1914.

As stated earlier, the overriding interest of Britain in the merger was economics.¹⁹ Also, the indirect system of governance not only enhanced British economic interest but it did not interfere with religion. Rather, the indirect system restricted religions from interfering in other religions' areas of influence. That is, Christianity was protected in the South against native religion and Islam was protected in the North against Christianity.²⁰ There was no open confrontation between Muslims and Christians during the colonial period due to the protection given to the two groups in their respective areas of influence. The Independence Constitutional Conference of 1958 continued the colonial policy of religious tolerance and non-interference. Christianity and Islam were allowed to operate in their respective areas of influence and traders, missionaries, and adherents propagated the religions in peaceful ways.²¹ The government honored both Islamic and Christian major religious celebrations by granting public holidays for their observance, especially in the Southwest, where Christianity and Islam existed side by side.²²

¹⁹ Ibid., 233-235.

²⁰ Ayandele, 146-152.

²¹ Alan Lennox-Boyd, "A Memorandum On Nigeria's Constitutional Conference (1957-1958) and Background to the Willink Commission," accessed August 25, 2014, http://www.waado.org/nigerdelta/ConstitutionalMatters/willink_commission/background_lennox_boyd.pdf

²² Enyinna S Nwauche, "Law, Religion and Human Rights in Nigeria," *African Human Rights Law Journal* 14, no. 2 (2008): 570-82.

Independence

Nigeria became an independent country in 1960, along with sixteen other African nations. Transferring power from the colonial administration to Nigerians took fifteen years, several constitutional reforms, and political parties organizing and growing national leadership.²³ Although Nigeria achieved its independence, it went through a period of growing pains that could be likened to the “terrible twos.” Part of the pain in this period came because political organizing accentuated religious, ethnic, and regional differences, a practice that was a harbinger of the conflict that would rage in the country for years after. The Biafran civil war, which started in 1967 and ended in 1970 at a cost of more than 1 million lives, was the most disastrous of the conflicts.²⁴ The Igbo ethnic group, who are mainly Christians, were massacred in the North by the Hausas, who are mainly Muslims, when the Igbos attempted to split and form an independent Republic of Biafra nation. After a thirty-month civil war, Nigeria succeeded in retaining Biafra as a part of its territory.

According to Adamolekun, “The 1963 federal constitution incorporated fundamental human rights and guaranteed freedom of religion in Nigeria.”²⁵ This constitution did not impose one religion on all the people.²⁶ The Islamic legal system was allowed in areas with large concentration of Muslims, and newly established native authority courts recognized native laws and customs. The 1963 federal constitution,

²³ Crowder, 273-289.

²⁴ Phillips Barnaby, “Biafra: Thirty Years On,” *BBC NEWS*, January 13, 2000, accessed June 20, 2015, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/596712.stm>.

²⁵ Adamolekun, 60.

²⁶ “Federal Republic of Nigeria, “Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1963,” accessed August 25, 2014, <http://www.dawodu.com/const63.pdf>.

section 10, stipulates: “The government of the Federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion.” Section 35 declared: “Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom [...] to manifest and belief in worship, teaching, practice and observation.”²⁷ Therefore, the Nigerian constitution made space for nonviolent relations between religious groups and provided an atmosphere conducive for citizens to practice their religions, maintain good human relationships, and interact amicably. It gave no reason for immoderation or religious radicalism.²⁸

Military Government

On January 15, 1966, the Nigerian military began running the country after a “bloody coup d’état and thereafter ruled by decree.”²⁹ Between 1966 and 1979, when the army ruled, there were several coups, counter-coups, and civil wars. After the Biafra civil unrest, the military regime began a campaign of reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.³⁰ However, the process of reconciliation with the Igbos in the Southeast is still incomplete. Some personal properties and public infrastructures that were destroyed during the war remain in a state of disrepair and the issue of abandoned properties has never been satisfactorily resolved.³¹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Adamolekun, 61.

²⁹ James Obioha Ojiako, *13 Years of Military Rule 1966-79* (Onitsha: Daily Times of Nigeria, 1981), 222.

³⁰ Adamolekun, 61.

³¹ The Nigerian government took over property left behind by people fleeing the ravages of the Nigerian/Biafra civil war, mainly Igbos. The properties were regarded as abandoned, so when the war ended, people had difficulty repossessing their property. Almost four decades after the conclusion of the

The military government did not engage in religious oppression or promotion. Rather, it undertook policies that gave rise to religious crises. In the opinion of many Nigerians, Nigeria's foreign policy was influenced by religious politics.³² For instance, the decision to join the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1986, relations with the state of Israel, and the administration of pilgrimages were matters with religious overtones. The country had associations or diplomatic missions with Arab countries yet nonetheless cut-off diplomatic missions with the state of Israel due to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and Israel's occupation of parts of Arab land,³³ making Christians unhappy. The matter of Nigeria's full membership in OIC spawned angry responses and disagreement from Christians, but the government's actions remained ambiguous regarding the matter.³⁴ Christians opposed membership in the conference since the 1979 constitution declared Nigeria as a secular state, and Christians worried that membership in the conference would turn their country into an officially Islamic state.³⁵

Government involvement in pilgrimages was a concern to Nigerian Christians. That involvement is a clear example of politics messing up a religious practice. Politics and economics destroyed a peaceful religious practice in a multi-faith environment. Christians complained that the government sponsored Muslim pilgrimages to Saudi

Nigeria/Biafra war, the properties seized by the Nigerian government are yet to be returned. The Igbos want the government to order that the abandoned property be returned to their owners in whatever state it is in. Returning the properties would go a long way in assuaging the damage of the war.

³² W.O Alli, *Religious Crisis in a Pluralistic Religious State: The Muslim Perspective in Religious Understanding in Nigeria* (Illorin: NASR, 1993), 110-115.

³³ Adamolekun, 63.

³⁴ Chima J. Korieh and Ugo G. Nwokeji, eds., *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu* (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2005), 117.

³⁵ Jacob Olupona and Toyin Falola, eds., *Religion and Society in Nigeria: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 1991), 263.

Arabia morally and financially but disregarded Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem.³⁶ This matter of pilgrimage was controversial and of such a great concern for Christians that the government had to step in and establish a Pilgrims' Welfare Board to support both Muslim and Christian pilgrims.³⁷

Christians also complained that the military government was playing religious favoritism in ministerial appointment to key governmental positions.³⁸ Several sensitive government policies generated enmity between the two religions. In addition to showing favoritism in political appointments, the government permitted each head of state to embrace his faith by building an Islamic or Christian place of worship in the Presidency. The part played by the government in religious matters cannot be overemphasized. The military meddling in religious matters led to acute rivalry between the two religions and negatively disturbed relations and interactions between the two religions.³⁹

In 1977, the military government established a committee, which consisted of fifty members, to draft a new constitution for the nation. Subsequent to the committee's constitutional proposal, a constitution assembly was formed by the military government in 1978 to debate the proposals in preparation for civilian administration in 1979.⁴⁰ Provisions for establishing a federal Sharia court of appeals generated heated debate. Eventually, the new constitution included Sharia courts of appeal at the state level but not at the federal level. The constitution called for basic human rights and assured religious

³⁶ Alli, 115.

³⁷ Chima J. Korieh and Ugo G. Nwokeji, eds., *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu* (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2005), 117.

³⁸ Ibid., 135.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Adamolekun, 63.

freedom. The government would not promote or discriminate against any religious group and Nigerians were allowed to engage in any religion of their choice.⁴¹ The Muslims were not content with the decision to have Sharia courts of appeal merely at the state level.

Fundamentalism and Fanaticism

At the time the 1979 constitution was being debated, religious fundamentalism and fanaticism were on the rise in Nigeria and the question of Nigeria's membership in OIC was becoming an issue.⁴² According to Adamolekun, a sense of anarchy and instability pervaded the country particularly in the North, due to rising tide of religious hate, and harassment was fast becoming a daily occurrence.⁴³ Militant groups perpetrated a number of destabilizing atrocities in the North. The incidents included, among others, "the Maitasine uprising in Kano city in December 1980, the Bulunkutu uprising in Maiduguri in October 1982, various religious riots in Kaduna in October 1982, the Jimeta and Yola riots in 1984, the Katsina and Gombe riots in 1985, the Kafanchan riots, Tafawa Balewa, Zango Kafa, and the violent demonstrations in Sabon-Gari Kano by the Muslim Students' Society in October 1992."⁴⁴ The inflammatory statements of such Islamic scholars and preachers as Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky in Zaria did not help matters. All these riots were religious conflicts aimed at purifying religion. Their effect was to strain or

⁴¹ Olupona and Falola, 265.

⁴² According to Merriam-Webster dictionary.com online "Fundamentalism is the movement or attitude stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles whereas fanaticism means behavior exhibiting excessive enthusiasm, unreasoning zeal, or wild and extravagant notions on some subject."

⁴³ Adamolekun, 63.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

undermine relations among religious faiths.⁴⁵ Oshintelu notes, “Destructive forces seem to have been loose among men of extreme religiosity. Each made absolute claims for his religion. In modern times with means of mass destruction widely available, this is very dangerous and a grave threat to the peaceful co-existence of believers of all faiths.”⁴⁶

Case Study: Kanfanchan

The crisis in Kanfanchan, Kaduna State, will serve as an illustration of religious conflicts that strained relations among living faiths in Nigeria. The riot between the two religions in areas of Kaduna State marked an inflection point in inter-communal relations. A small misunderstanding between Muslim and Christian students at the College of Education in Kafanchan on March 6, 1987 “sent sparks whose destruction went beyond Kafanchan to other parts of the state and threatened the stability of the entire country. It took nearly two weeks to bring the situation under control.”⁴⁷

The riots began because the Federation of Christian Students (FCS) at the college announced a plan to hold a week of religious activities. Among other preparations, the students posted a banner that read, “Welcome to Jesus’ campus.” Some members of the Muslim Student Society (MSS) were offended at the banner and complained to school authorities. The FCS heads were instructed to take down the banner, and they did so. The FCS had invited Reverend Abubakar Bako, a Muslim convert to Christianity, to be the guest speaker for the occasion. As he spoke, Bako supposedly made points that sparked

⁴⁵ G.A Oshintelu, “Religious Fundamentalism in a Pluralistic Society,” *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 1, no. 2 (December 1999): 90-91.

⁴⁶ Oshintelu, 90.

⁴⁷ Matthew Kukah, *Religion, Politics, and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1993), 185.

angry reactions among MSS members. The result extended well beyond the campus and students. The college authorities made efforts to bring the melee under control but were rebuffed by the unyieldingness of the Muslim students. The Muslim students surrounded the college with barriers and terrorized countless passers-by.⁴⁸ Despite the immediate closure of the college, violence broke out in Kafanchan town and extended to other areas of Kaduna State and many lives were lost.⁴⁹

The religious climate in Nigeria at the time was very tense and emotionally charged. Every religion was making frantic efforts at reforms to restore the orthodoxy to their religions. Both Christians and Muslims took a very forceful attitude in their preaching. There were fierce religious riots at several institutions of higher learning across the land, and the violence cost many lives. The use of mass media and electronic communication fueled the religious revivals, crusades, and jihads.⁵⁰ When the conflict was brought under control through government use of force, there was prohibition on public preaching.⁵¹

Approval of Sharia Law

In preparation for return to civilian rule in 1999, a new constitution was drafted. The military government under Abacha did not put the new constitution to public debate compared to the preceding constitutions.⁵² The constitution became law under Abubarkar,

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 187-192.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 193-200.

⁵¹ Ibid., 206.

⁵² Adamolekun, 63.

who succeeded Abacha.⁵³ Abubarkar, like his predecessor, did not allow public scrutiny of the proposed 1999 constitution.

According to Adamolekun,

The constitution retained the provision for religious freedom and fundamental human rights but allowed the operation of Sharia law in each state. The constitution made provision for a Sharia court of appeal in the federal capital territory of Abuja and Sharia courts of appeal in the states. This gave room for each Muslim state in Northern Nigeria to impose Sharia law as its total legal system, covering civil and criminal matters as well as personal law that dealt with marriage and divorce.⁵⁴

At the present, only Zamfara and Kano States operate fully according to the Sharia legal system.⁵⁵ These states argue that imposing full Sharia law is in compliance with the spirit of Nigeria's constitution and of federalism.⁵⁶ This situation has definitely curtailed the expansion and propagation of faiths other than Islam and curtailed basic human rights of people of other religious faiths. Christian-Muslim relations and interactions have been reduced in these areas and freedom of worship restricted.

In the midst of the constitutional debate rose the Maitatsine and the Boko Haram sects. These two Muslim sects led by their charismatic leaders: Mohammed Marwa and Mohammed Yusuf, respectively, use terror to compel full implementation of the Sharia legal system.⁵⁷ The Maitatsine sect advocates for an Islamic state in Nigeria, whereas

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Adamolekun, 64.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Kukah, 14.

Boko Haram opposes Western education and insisted on implementing the Sharia legal system.⁵⁸

Boko Haram

The activities of Boko Haram had a large impact on the religious conflict in Nigeria. “Boko Haram” is the common name for the sect, which is also called the “Yusufiya,” after its leader. “Boko” in the Hausa language means “Western system of education” and “haram” means “forbidden.” As the name implies, the group opposes Western education for Muslim children. Members of the sect expressed their antipathy over what the group sees as the bad influence of Western education and thought.⁵⁹

Boko Haram had its origin in 2001 as a nonviolent Islamic splinter group. Members preached in the North, propagating their ideals. Politicians exploited the group for election purposes. But in 2009, the sect’s spiritual leader, Mohammed Yusuf, died in police custody and Boko Haram turned to violence. Video footage of Mohammed Yusuf’s interrogations while in police custody and the events surrounding his death circulated over mass and electronic media but no one was held accountable for his death. Boko Haram members sought revenge by making symbols of government such as the police, military, and local politicians targets of their anger.⁶⁰

Boko Haram targeted Muslims they considered not sufficiently orthodox at the beginning of their campaign but later turned their fight to include government institutions

⁵⁸ Sunday Awoniyi, “Religious Conflicts and Tolerance in Multi Faith Nigeria: Resolving the Dilemma from Global Perspective” (a Paper Presented at Mid-Term International Conference, Abuja, Nigeria, January 27-30, 2012), 43.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

and international bodies such as the United Nations office in Abuja. Currently, Boko Haram targets Christians and threatens Nigerians from the South who reside in the North with annihilation.⁶¹ The group uses all kinds of terror devices including mines and explosives. They burn churches, kill ministers, murder and assassinate, intimidate, and engage in suicide bombing.⁶² All these acts of violence have further strained Christian-Muslim relations.

Politics and Religious Conflict

In Nigeria, politics is without a doubt the primary contributor to religious conflict. National politics is greatly influenced by Christian apprehensions about Muslim control of national politics and the fear that Muslims will use their dominance to make national institutions subject to Islamic laws and institute Sharia law on Christians.⁶³ On the other hand, Northern Muslims seek to protect the society from unrestrained adoption of Western values. In their view, the West is the pervasive producer and exporter of sexually explicit and pornographic material.⁶⁴ This perception reinforces the belief of many Muslims that Westerners are morally loose and a bad influence on society. As a result, Muslims in Nigeria have periodically sought protection in parochial religious reforms.

⁶¹ Awoniyi, 6.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Chima J. Korieh and Ugo G. Nwokeji, eds., *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu* (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2005), 130-133.

⁶⁴ John N. Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* (Berkeley: ACLS Humanities E-Book, 2009), 88-95.

Many Northern states adopted the Sharia criminal legal system between 2000 and 2002.⁶⁵ This politicization of religion became a highpoint for many of the states with Muslim majorities.⁶⁶

Once Sharia was introduced, it added to the fear of Christians that they would be persecuted and their freedoms, guaranteed in the Nigerian constitution, curtailed. Christian communities in the affected states protested, their protests fueled by the rhetoric of Christian politicians and leaders. Clashes between Christian and Muslim communities with a history of peaceful cohabitation followed; thousands of people were killed, property was destroyed, and hundreds of thousands were displaced.⁶⁷

This is another example of how political and economic interests have affected Christian-Muslim relations in an adverse way in modern Nigeria, destroying what had been peaceful religious coexistence in a multi-faith setting.

According to Ochonu, “Sharia had been a sticking point in Nigerian politics for decades. In 1978, when many Northern Nigerian Muslim delegates to a constitutional conference sought to extend Sharia beyond the realm of family law, Christian delegates protested, and the Sharia debate almost tore the conference apart.”⁶⁸ They reached a compromise, which allowed majority Islamic states to set up Islamic courts. However, these courts were restricted to inheritance and family law.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Moses Ochonu, “A Bridge in Kaduna: Crossing Nigeria's Muslim-Christian Divide,” *GlobalPost*, March 10, 2014, accessed June 21, 2015, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/nigeria/140220/nigeria-religious-ethnic-conflict-roots>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Religion has become a key subject of national political arguments, with the different religious communities advocating more and more antagonistic agendas.⁷⁰ “In Northern Nigeria, clashes between Muslim groups—mainly ethnic Hausa and Fulani—and Christian and traditionalist communities have become monthly occurrences with devastating consequences.”⁷¹ In a place where political identity is primarily expressed via religion, clashes over resources and political positions have often taken on a religious overtone, with Muslims pitted against Christians.⁷²

Moreover, the increase of religious fundamentalism in both religious camps is a real threat to the secular nature of the nation.⁷³ The long years of military rule encouraged and legalized the use of force and violence against any group, tribe, or affiliates in order to implement so-called social change and attain certain goals and demands. And unfortunately, the return to democracy did not help the situation but instead worsened it through power-sharing and election malpractice. It can even be argued that Nigeria does not have a religious crisis but a crisis of power and of finding a credible system for sharing power.

Economics and Religious Conflict

From the federal to the local government, political power in Nigeria is seen as a gateway to wealth. As a result, politicians use economic recruitment to gain political power. Indeed, most of the religious crises can be traced or attributed to the desire for

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Chima J. Korieh and Ugo G. Nwokeji, eds., *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu* (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2005), 133-136.

⁷³ Oshitelu, 90-91.

political power. Alhaji-shehu described the path from political mismanagement to religious conflict:

The failure of the Nigerian leaders to establish good governance, foster national unity and integration and the will to promote real economic growth through just and well-articulated policies has no doubt led to mass poverty and a high rate of unemployment. It is this failure and negligence that culminated in the communal, religious and ethnic conflict that has now characterized the Nigerian polity. Idleness, despair and loss of hope are the products of absolute poverty and high rate of unemployment have left people with little or no choice other than to indulge in religious violence and crimes.⁷⁴

Widespread election irregularities and the perception that politicians use patronage and violence to gain office and manipulate voting have produced an atmosphere of cynicism.⁷⁵ Then-U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also attributed ethno-religious conflicts to government neglect, saying in 2009:

The most immediate source of the disconnect between Nigeria's wealth and its poverty is the failure of governance at the federal, state and the local levels. [...] Lack of transparency and accountability has eroded the legitimacy of the government and contributed to the rise of groups that embrace violence and reject the authority of the state.⁷⁶

Mismanagement of national resources and misrule by multi-ethnic and multi-religious coalitions of ruler after ruler since the days of independence have led to impoverished citizens with a distinct lack of opportunity. As a result, the blame has been pointed at members of religious communities that differ from one's own, and people have pushed for national religious reform as a solution to society's problems.⁷⁷ "This genuine,

⁷⁴ Bashir Alhaji-shehu, "Ethno-Religious Conflicts/Violence in Northern Nigeria," Master's thesis, University Vienna, 2012, 56-57.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Abdulfattah Olajide, Charles Onunaiju, and Aisha Umar, "Nigeria: Clinton - Leadership Has Failed Nigeria – Yar'adua Admits Challenges," *Daily Trust*, August 13, 2009, accessed September 8, 2014, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200908130002.html>.

⁷⁷ Chima J. Korie and Ugo G. Nwokeji, eds., *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu* (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2005), 124.

if misplaced, quest for a religious utopia has given some opportunistic political gladiators an excuse to curry legitimacy through politicized appeals to piety and religious fervor.”⁷⁸

According to Ochonu, “The desperate advancement of religious solutions to Nigeria’s economic and political problems has opened social crevices and bred extremist and violent insurgencies such as the ongoing Boko Haram Islamist terrorist campaign, which has killed and maimed Christians and Muslims alike.”⁷⁹ It must be noted that the lopsided socioeconomic development in Nigeria goes back to colonial times and was a result of the South’s earlier and more prolonged contact with Europeans. Educational opportunity, people learning how to read and write, and civil service opportunity were the result of Western influence.⁸⁰

This situation of imbalanced economic growth and educational ability provoked Northern leaders’ unwillingness to the independence process in order to afford Northerners time to catch up.⁸¹ The closest evidence of Northern fear of being dominated by the South was the adoption of the “Northernization policy” whereby locals got first bite at the apple in local civil service recruitment.⁸² Recently, leaders in the North have also insisted that federal jobs and jobs at other government industries should be allocated in a manner that reflects the “federal character of Nigeria.”⁸³ The issue of public

⁷⁸ Ochonu.

⁷⁹ Ikime, 593.

⁸⁰ Ayandele, 339-345.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

appointments to reflect federal character was, in fact, recognized in the constitution of the Second Republic.

Social tensions have been rising because of the growth in unemployment and bad economic outlook. The effect of these conditions in other parts of Nigeria has been higher incidences of drug use and trafficking, armed robberies, and other crimes; in the North, the unemployment and social tensions have led to the expansion of the population from which Boko Haram and similar groups recruit.⁸⁴ Lubeck says:

It should be pointed out that the most destructive religious riots and even class-based social and religious antagonisms have occurred in the Northern region. They have taken place largely in the cities and urban centers in the North. Prior to colonial rule and throughout its duration, a social class of the talakawa (commoners) was forming and consolidating among the Hausa people of Northern Nigeria. What Islam did was to graft on to this indigenous social class formation a new sense of solidarity and integration of workers from divergent ethnic and rural backgrounds in the new urban environments in which they found themselves.⁸⁵

The recessive economy and its resulting social tensions and unemployment resulted in many of the religious riots that occurred frequently in many cities in the north in the early part of 1980s.⁸⁶

Industrial workers and urban wage earners in the major metropolises of the North did not participate in the violent, spontaneous forms of class conflict reminiscent of the Maitasine insurrections of the early 1980s. This was largely due to the energies of those workers and wage earners in the cities being channeled towards partisan political activities, the growing sense of class maturity, and the strengthening of trade union organizations.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Paul M. Lubeck, *Islam and Urban Labor in Northern Nigeria: The Making of a Muslim Working Class*, African Studies Series vol. 52 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 308-320.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 116.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 243.

The fact that many in Northern cities did not take part in class conflict is not something for the Nigerian state to brag about. Once class struggles began to take place in workplaces, they diverged in secular and religious directions. The new open party politics of the late 1970s and early 1980s gave working people an outlet, and it remained a secular hobby. On the other hand, when there was military rule with bans on open political activities and the economy was doing poorly, the workers would gravitate toward Islamic nationalism.⁸⁸ As Lubeck observed “Radical Islamic populist ideology exists and appears attractive to the impoverished urban masses of Muslim Northern Nigeria. And when it comes to direct action to challenge the country’s ‘establishment’ or the socio-economic status quo, the enlarging pool of unemployed urban youths is clearly a fertile place for recruitment.”⁸⁹

Ethnicity and Religious Conflict

Nigeria, as a multi-ethnic nation state with over four hundred ethnic groups affiliated with numerous religious camps, has been attempting to juggle the issues of ethnicity and religious conflicts.⁹⁰ The balancing act exists because ethnic intolerance has led to frequent religious conflicts, which in turn give rise to several ethnic militias such as the “O’dua People’s Congress (OPC), the Bakassi Boys, the Egbesu Boys, the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), and the Igbo People’s Congress (IPC). Other militias are the Arewa People’s Congress (APC), the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign

⁸⁸ Ibid., 305.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Chima J. Korieh and Ugo G. Nwokeji, eds., *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu* (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2005), 116.

State of Biafra (MASSOB), and the Ohanaeze N'digbo.”⁹¹ As divides between various ethnic groups deepen and result in ethnic militias, religious intolerance has increasingly become more violent and the results more widespread and devastating.⁹² The ethnic militias are carrying out religious agendas.

Contrary to the general consensus that considers the amalgamation of the various ethnic groups and protectorates a mistake and the root cause of the Christian-Muslim conflict, some argue that colonial policies and actions “did not create the conditions and identities that have generated tensions and conflicts between Christians and Muslims.”⁹³ Granted, some conflicts between Muslims and Christians did result from missionary excursions that predated colonization. However, scholars and historians are unanimous in asserting that colonization exacerbated the religious conflict in Nigeria. Ochonu notes,

The British colonial policy of indirect rule, a divide-and-rule system that required sharp religious differentiation among Nigerians, made religion and ethnicity the preeminent markers of identity and pushed exclusionary identity politics into the political arena. As a result, in Northern Nigeria, minority ethnic groups, mostly Christians, defined and still define themselves against the Muslim Hausa-Fulani majority, under the political rubric of Middle Belt, which is usually a stand-in for “non-Muslim.”⁹⁴

Additionally, colonization made identity politics an avenue of acquiring political and economic power; it is not a surprise that religious differences continue to play a

⁹¹ B. Salawu, “Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Causal Analysis and Proposals for New Management Strategies,” *European Journal of Social Sciences* 13, no. 3 (2010): 345, accessed September 9, 2014, <https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/0071-Salawu-2010-Nigeria-ethno-religious-conflict.pdf>.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ochonu.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

major role in national crises and many point their finger to religious difference as the culprit for the country's civil war, which lasted for three years between 1967 and 1970⁹⁵

In a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society that is fragile but peaceful such as Nigeria, contentious politics and poor economics destroy peaceful multi-religious and multi-ethnic coexistence. Any state that acts with biased intention to favor and accord preferential treatment to one particular ethnicity or religion fuels ethnic and religious conflicts.⁹⁶ In Nigeria, with its many ethnic and religious groups, the struggle to control state policy produces competing communal interests, thereby paving way for each ethno-religious group to turn to the state to favor it when distributing public resources.

Conclusion

Since colonial times, Muslim and Christian communities have dominated the various spheres of life in Nigeria. Although the Muslims have “always called attention to their numerical strength, which some Christians have always challenged, the Christians on their part point to the all-pervading influence of Christianity in Nigeria and their claim that Jesus, as lord and savior of the world, should rule the country.”⁹⁷

Nigerian Muslims “believe that Nigeria's problems will be solved if the classical concept of the Islamic state and its principles are rightly adhered to, pointing out that the concept has adequate provision for non-Muslims.”⁹⁸ The federal constitution provided fertile grounds for peaceful coexistence, but military involvement invalidated the

⁹⁵ Chima J. Korieh and Ugo G. Nwokeji, eds., *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu* (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2005), 116.

⁹⁶ David A. Lake and Donald S. Rothchild, *International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 241-275.

⁹⁷ Adamolekun, 65.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

provisions of the constitution. Subsequent government policies followed the military lead.

This politicization of religion became a high point for many states with Muslim majorities. The introduction of Sharia law added to Christians' fear of persecution and losing their freedoms that were guaranteed in the Nigerian constitution.⁹⁹ Clashes between Christian and Muslim communities with a history of peaceful cohabitation followed, destroying what had been peaceful religious practice in a multi-faith setting.

Some Muslims and Christians in Nigeria preached, taught, and practiced their religion in ways that betrayed the tolerance espoused by many of their adherents. Their lack of tolerance of other religious views, their wrong loyalty to their religions' founders, and their seeming zealotry and fervently obdurate practices were counter to the basic assertions of their religions and their religions' founders.¹⁰⁰ The entrenched religious differences, biases, and competitions that trailed from these extremisms often gave birth to unguarded conflict and abuse of religious freedom.¹⁰¹

The poor economic condition of the country has been identified by many as a major cause of religious conflicts in Northern Nigerian and even beyond. Competition over scarce resources is always a driving factor that breeds and fuels violence. The working of economic forces makes for tension between groups with competing

⁹⁹ Chima J. Korieh and Ugo G. Nwokeji, eds., *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu* (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2005), 118-122.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

interests¹⁰² and, by and large, leads to large reserves of youth who can easily be recruited for the execution of ethnic or religious violence.

Ethnic and even sometimes religious communities tend to violently compete for property rights, social amenities, healthcare facilities, jobs, education, and, most controversially, cultural or linguistic dominance.

¹⁰² John Sydenham Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 311.

CHAPTER 5:

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION MODELS

The Christian-Muslim conflict is a burning issue and a great challenge for all religious communities in Nigeria. The issue is national in its breadth and challenging in its requirements. In reflecting on this urgent matter, I consider three models that have been used in other parts of the world and which could be used to restore Christians and Muslims to a harmonious, peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. I chose these three for their worldwide notoriety and common relevance to both religious communities. The models are the Nuremberg trials, the Good Friday or Belfast agreement, and the Truth and Reconciliation model of South Africa.

This chapter suggests some initial lessons for Nigeria from each model that will be important in the proposal made in the next chapter. The chapter looks again at Biblical material relevant to these models. The writer is aware of other peace models that have been used in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Indonesia, and the Philippines, to name but a few. The writer believes these countries' models are derivatives or combinations of the Nuremberg trial, the Good Friday or Belfast agreement, and the Truth and Reconciliation model of South Africa.

The Nuremberg Trials

The Nuremberg trials were a series of military tribunals by the main victorious Allied nations in World War II for the prosecution of certain individuals in charge of

Nazi Germany's military and economic and political leadership.¹ The trials took place in the city of Nuremberg, Germany; thus the name "Nuremberg trials." The Allies, instead of conducting trials of their own Nazi prisoners, drew up the Nuremberg Charter of August 1945, agreeing to conduct trials of the prominent Nazi war criminals by an international military tribunal.² Each Allied nation was represented on the tribunal and convictions were decided by majority vote.³ The tribunal had the authority to try three crimes: (1) "crimes against peace," or, "waging or conspiring to wage a war of aggression;" (2) "war crimes," defined as "inhumane wartime treatment of civilians and prisoners;" and (3) "crimes against humanity," which encompassed "murder, extermination, enslavement, or other inhumane treatment of or discrimination against any civilian population, immediately before or during the war."⁴

The purpose of creating the charter for the trials was to hold individuals responsible for their own actions and omissions. "No one was to be either above or below the law."⁵ Officials at the helm could not assert immunity, nor could individuals under them assert they merely followed orders. According to the Yearbook of the International Law Commission, 1950, vol. II, paragraph. 97, "The Nuremberg Charter had three principal objectives: (1) to make wars of aggression an international crime, (2) to make

¹ Michael R. Marrus, "The Nuremberg Trial: Fifty Years After," *The American Scholar* 66, no. 4 (Autumn 1997): 563-70.

² Herbert R. Reginbogin, Christoph Johannes Maria Safferling, and Walter R. Hippel, eds., *The Nuremberg Trials: International Criminal Law Since 1945* (München: K.G. Saur, 2006), 106-14, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&an=556826>.

³ The four Allied powers were the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union.

⁴ Yearbook of the International Law Commission, 1950, vol. II, paragraph 97.

⁵ Arnold S. Nash, "The Nuremberg Trials," *Christian Century* 63, no. 39 (September 25, 1956): 1148.

atrocities against civilian populations an international ‘crime against humanity,’ and (3) to achieve both goals through trials that exemplified the rule of law.”⁶ The goal was to raise atrocities, whether home or abroad, in peace or in conflict, to the higher level of “crimes against humanity.”⁷ Additionally, “People would not be left to the mercy of their governments. Nor could governing officials, high or low, be permitted to hide behind national laws or military orders.”⁸

The Nuremberg principles can be applied to the leaders and members of Christian or Muslim groups in Nigeria who engage in overt acts of insurrection against the Federal Republic of Nigeria and perpetrate murder, extermination, enslavement, or other inhumane treatment of or discrimination against any civilian population.

Victors’ Trial

The Nuremberg trials have been broadly criticized for lack of fairness based on two grounds, both emanating from the trials’ charter. First, they have been criticized because the victors set themselves up as prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner. Second, the tribunal was established by the Allied nations acting as representatives of all the nations of the world. It is true that the victorious Allied nations selected the best legal minds in their countries to conduct the trials, but the trials might have been fairer had representatives of neutral nations been invited to sit on the court.⁹

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Nash, 1149.

But the facts that a neutral nation did not participate and the victorious Allied nations made themselves prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner do not negate what the Nuremberg tribunal achieved. Yes, the tribunal had the appearance of a trial of Germany by her conquerors, but it was in actuality a trial of individuals by society for crimes against society.

Criminal trials in many civilized societies around the world apply the same standard. Take, for example, the case of Edward Snowden, the leaker of the United States National Security Agency secrets. The criminal Edward Snowden has eluded capture by the various police agencies that represent the United States. The United States must become the victor over Edward Snowden before the United States can bring him to trial. If Mr. Snowden is ever brought to trial the United States through its various law enforcement agencies and representatives, the United States will be the prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner. Mr. Snowden will be accorded some due process, mainly the rights to a lawyer, to present exculpatory evidence, to cross-examine adverse witnesses, and to testify on his own behalf. Justice does not require that the United State relinquish her responsibility to enforce her own laws and protect the safety and interests of all her citizens by reducing a criminal trial to an argument or arbitration between the state and the accused as though they were equal parties. So far as trial of the defeated by the victors is concerned, the Nuremberg trials were parallel to any other criminal proceedings although the offense was different and the tribunal was international.¹⁰

Nevertheless, if the Allied nations had not been victorious, naturally they would not have been in a position to conduct a trial or do anything else to address the crimes.

¹⁰ "Was It a Trial by Victors?" *Christian Century* 63, no. 44 (October 30, 1946): 1300.

The charter permitted trial only of war criminals of the “European Axis powers.”¹¹

People could argue that some of the victorious Allies had also committed war crimes deserving of international trial. For example, the judges convicted German officials for the invasion of Poland but denied the defense any reference to Russia’s secret agreement with Hitler to divide Poland.¹² Similarly, the judges convicted German officials for the invasion of Norway but did not allow the defendants to present evidence concerning British plans to annex Norway, which might have supported Germany’s assertion of preemptive self-defense.¹³ Finally, the judges convicted Admiral Doenitz for the practice of sinking ships without warning, a tactic also used by American Admiral Chester Nimitz.¹⁴

Russian officials were not put on trial for the same crimes of which German officials were convicted. The United States and British officials who made the decisions to carpet bomb and drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki escaped without a scintilla of inquiry by the tribunal as to whether these were legitimate acts of war or brutal atrocities, that is, crimes against humanity.¹⁵ No power in the world dragged the triumphant Allied officials to court or made them account for their own crimes against humanity as the Allies did to the German officials; this discrepancy shows the unfairness

¹¹ Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular Des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin, 2007), 745. [The axis powers were: Germany, Italy, and Japan. The Axis powers did not act jointly in prosecuting their wars but they all had the Allies as common enemy. The Yugoslavia and Rwandan tribunals made changes and improvement on Nuremberg. The Yugoslavia and Rwandan tribunals were created by parties not involved in the war, thus the new tribunals are much less susceptible to the charge of implementing victors’ justice.]

¹² Telford Taylor, *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials: A Personal Memoir* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2013), 638-640.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 639.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 640.

of the Nuremberg Charter. In effect, the Allied nations were “the world” and their leaders were immune from prosecution because they were the only power that existed.¹⁶

Douglass Cassel, a leading legal scholar regarding international human rights, lamented the fact that the failure of the tribunal to examine all potential crimes of all parties compromised the integrity and the value of the proceedings:

This impotence of civilization to mete out justice to the Russians, and to inquire into the justice or injustice of Great Britain’s and America’s conduct of the war subtracts from the legitimate cogency of the huge majority of the convictions and they challenge Nuremberg’s moral authority.¹⁷

In the case of the Christian-Muslim conflict in Nigeria, there are no victors to impose justice. Each side in the conflict is involved in tit-for-tat and vicious actions. Because of the absence of a military victory, whether most parties guilty of crimes will ever be taken into custody remains highly uncertain.

Rule of Law

The purpose of the Nuremberg tribunal was to employ international standards of humankind to define a person’s criminal liability. In a way, the tribunal characterized the hope, the dream, and the shared moral viewpoint of humanity holding individuals accountable for wars and atrocities to the rule of law, equitably.¹⁸ As has been previously stated, one objective of the Nuremberg Charter was to exemplify the rule of law, which entailed making sure everyone received a fair trial. The integrity of all the verdicts hinged on reaching this goal; that is, “Beyond ensuring the defendants a trial, the Charter

¹⁶ Ibid., 641.

¹⁷ Douglass W, Cassel Jr., “Judgment at Nuremberg: A Half-Century Appraisal,” *Christian Century* 112, no. 35 (December 6, 1995): 1181.

¹⁸ Nash, 1148.

promised them a fair one. It gave them the right to be notified of full particulars of charges, to defend themselves personally or through counsel, to present evidence and to cross-examine, and to have the proceedings translated into German.”¹⁹ These protections were for the benefits of all the parties involved, especially the tribunal and the defendants. According to the chief U.S. negotiator and prosecutor, Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, “We must never forget that the record on which we judge these defendants is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow. [...] We must summon such detachment and intellectual integrity to our task that this trial will commend itself to posterity as fulfilling humanity’s aspirations to do justice.”²⁰ In all the cases, the “defendants were represented by counsel and had ample opportunity to present defenses during more than nine months of trial. In general, the judges conducted themselves with dignity and almost always with apparent fairness.”²¹ Therefore, it can be said that the objective of exemplifying the rule of law was realized.

On the other hand, some people castigated the tribunal for a number of trial failures. In 1992, Telford Taylor, the successor of Jackson as chief United States prosecutor, detailed what he considered to be a miscarriage of justice in his memoir *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials*. He described what he called Nuremberg’s “half-truths, if there are such things.” Chief among Taylor’s complaints against the tribunal was *ex post facto* prosecution.²² According to Taylor, “the tribunal established new legal

¹⁹ Cassel, 1181.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² *The Encyclopedia of American Law*, Facts On File Library of American History (New York: Facts on File, 2002), 168. [*Ex post facto* is Latin for “after the fact.” It can refer to laws about an action enacted after an action has already occurred, making the action illegal although it was legal when done.

standards that inherently conflicted with a basic principle of criminal justice that bars *ex post facto* prosecutions because one cannot be prosecuted for violating a law that did not exist at the time of the alleged action.”²³ Making the charge of “crimes against humanity” violated the prohibition against *ex post facto* prosecution because in 1944, “the U.S. delegate failed to persuade the United Nations War Crimes Commission that such a crime existed.”²⁴ The Nuremberg Charter created the criminal category of crime against humanity, but the new designation did not pose a serious problem of justice nor was it unfair to defendants. Most nations recognized under their laws that mass murder and the other actions of which the defendants were accused were serious crimes, and defendants could not sincerely be amazed to find out that their actions were considered unlawful.²⁵

But *ex post facto* law would bar prosecutions on “crimes against peace and aggressive war.” Soldiers had never before been accused of committing a crime by the “mere act of participating in a war, aggressive or otherwise.”²⁶ Cassel notes, “Aggressive war had never been legally recognized as a crime until it was so defined in the Nuremberg Charter after the war for which the defendants were charged.”²⁷ The soldiers could justifiably assert to be shocked to realize that they could be tried for doing such actions. It is true that the 1928 Kellogg-Briand pact, with forty-four signatory states plus

Such a law would render some people guilty of breaking laws even if their actions were not considered illegal at the time they were taken. In many cases, an *ex post facto*, or retroactive, law does not allow a court to find someone guilty of behavior that was legal prior to the law’s establishment. More often, this type of law might toughen punishments on crimes; if the law is changed before a suspect comes to trial, the suspect might be subject to tougher punishment than previously expected.”]

²³ Taylor, 629.

²⁴ Cassel, 1182.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Germany, had “condemned recourse to war.”²⁸ But the Kellogg-Briand pact did not criminalize aggressive warfare. The UN War Crimes Commission could not agree that aggressive war should be criminalized as late as 1944.²⁹ France and the Soviet Union originally objected to the inclusion of aggressive war as a crime at a conference for drafting the Nuremberg Charter in July 1945.³⁰ However, the representative of France buckled and yielded to the inclusion of aggressive war, a “crime against peace,” to the Charter because of the intense pressure from Jackson, despite clearly stating that to treat a “crime against peace” as a crime would be “shocking” and amount to “*ex post facto* legislation.”³¹

Lesson One for Nigeria

Ex post facto prosecution would not pose the likelihood of serious miscarriage of justice in Nigeria because the acts enumerated in the Nuremberg Charter are recognized as crimes today. In Nigeria, the Achilles heel of the judicial system is corruption, not *ex post facto* prosecution. Judicial corruption in Nigeria includes “bribery, theft of public funds, extortion, intimidation, influence pedaling, abuse of court procedures for personal gain, and inappropriate influence on the impartiality of the judicial process by an actor

²⁸ Kellogg-Briand pact-1928, August 27, 1928, League OF Nations Treaty Series 94, no. 2137 (1929), 57. <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/LON/Volume%2094/v94.pdf> [“The Kellogg–Briand pact was a 1928 international agreement by which signatory states promised not to use war to resolve disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them.”]

²⁹ Taylor, 20.

³⁰ Ibid., 40.

³¹ Cassel, 1182.

within the court system.”³² According to a Human Rights Watch report, judiciary corruption has become pervasive across the country and dogs the system.³³ The report concluded that judiciary corruption had reached pandemic proportions. “Why pay a lawyer when you can buy a judge?” is such a common refrain that it has achieved notoriety; quite a few Nigerian judges are said to have become the best judges money can buy. Many times, prisoners’ files are “misplaced” when the criminals are taken before magistrates; the misplacements are attempts to extract bribes from prisoners. Judges commonly ask for a substantial amount of money in exchange for a favorable decision. Court personnel and support workers often run their own rackets. I witnessed this personally about three years ago when I visited Nigeria to examine a judicial investigation of the suspicious shooting that resulted in the death of my brother-in-law. Although I was not surprised, I was greatly disappointed to be told by someone posing as a clerk, “If you want the favor of the judge, you must offer a figure commensurate to his stature.” This incident provides just a peek of the plague of corruption that has permeated the judicial system in Nigeria.

As the “upholder of justice and individual rights,” a disinterested and incorruptible judiciary is necessary to good governance and to ending the conflict between the two main religious groups in Nigeria.³⁴ “A corrupt judiciary negatively impacts all sectors of government by stunting trade, economic growth, and human

³² Gafar Idowu Ayodeji and Samuel Ibidapo Odukoya, “Perception of Judicial Corruption: P Assessing Its Implications for Democratic Consolidation and Sustainable Development in Nigeria,” *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 16, no. 2 (2014): 68, accessed May 9, 2015, <http://jsd-africa.com/Jsda/Vol16No2-Spring2014B/PDF/Perception%20of%20Judicial%20Corruption.pdf>.

³³ *World Report 2014: Events of 2013* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2014), 148-55.

³⁴ Ayodeji and Odukoya, 67.

development, as well as by depriving citizens of justice.”³⁵ Fighting corruption in the judicial must be of supreme importance if the country is to attempt a Nuremberg type of trial.

National Sovereignty

Nuremberg was a reaction to the vilest in humanity. Nigeria as a sovereign nation has the sole right to try her own people and protect her own citizens in conflict as well as in peace. The practice of national sovereignty is plainly adequate for dealing with the Christian-Muslim conflict. It is true that, as Cassel states, “the acts of Nazi Germany left no doubt that massive evil could emanate from the very summit of a nation state and permeate a nation’s laws.”³⁶ When this happens, it is necessary for an international court to try the country’s leaders and the culprits for violations of universal human rights and accepted norms.³⁷ Atrocities committed by Boko Haram and other militia group may seem to have violated the Nuremberg Charter that empowered the tribunal to try three crimes: crimes against peace, or “waging or conspiring to wage a war of aggression;” war crimes, or “inhumane wartime treatment of civilians and prisoners;” and crimes against humanity, which are “murder, extermination, enslavement or other inhumane treatment of or discrimination against any civilian population before or during war.”³⁸ However, in the case of the religious conflict in Nigeria, the above acts are domestic matters; they are not far-reaching enough to warrant violating Nigeria’s sovereignty.

³⁵ Ibid., 69.

³⁶ Cassel, 1180.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Yearbook of the International Law Commission, 1950, vol. II, paragraph 97.

Revenge

One of the most significant criticisms of the Nuremberg tribunal is that the trial represented vengeance by the four victorious Allied nations on their captive enemies.³⁹ According to *The Guardian*, a series of documents released by the British War Cabinet on January 2, 2006 revealed that in December 1944, the Cabinet discussed punishment of the top Nazis if captured. Among the options considered by the Cabinet was summary execution of the captured prisoners by using Bill of Attainder to sidestep legal barriers.⁴⁰ The British Prime Minister William Churchill was discouraged from this Cabinet policy of summary execution after consultations with the leaders of United States and Soviet Union later in the war.⁴¹ After World War I, the British were unsuccessful and frustrated in their effort to get certain individuals tried for war crimes; they were leery of the proposal for an international tribunal.⁴² In meetings with Churchill, Roosevelt had waffled, and Joseph Stalin, the instigator of the Moscow show trials of the 1930s, insisted on an international tribunal.⁴³ Joseph Stalin asserted that the trials had degenerated into mere forms of legality to cover an act of revenge.

Chief Justice of the United States Harlan Fiske Stone stated that the Nuremberg trials were a fraud. He said, “Chief U.S. prosecutor Jackson is away conducting his high-

³⁹ Michael White, “Shooting Top Nazis? The Nuremberg Option Wasn't Apple Pie Either,” *The Guardian (United Kingdom)*, October 26, 2012, accessed May 10, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/blog/2012/oct/26/nazi-shooting-nuremberg-international-justice>.

⁴⁰ According to Merriam Webster dictionary “A bill of attainder is an English common law legislative act designed to by-pass judicial proceedings by proclaiming a person or group of persons guilty of some crime and punishment.”

⁴¹ White.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

grade lynching party in Nuremberg. I don't mind what he does to the Nazis, but I hate to see the pretense that he is running a court and proceeding according to common law. This is a little too sanctimonious a fraud to meet my old-fashioned ideas."⁴⁴ Associate Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas alleged that the victorious Allies were guilty of "substituting power for principle at Nuremberg. I thought at the time and still think that the Nuremberg trials were unprincipled. Law was created *ex post facto* to suit the passion and clamor of the time."⁴⁵ Even the Charter of the International Military Tribunal permitted the use of normally inadmissible "evidence." Article 19 specified, "The Tribunal shall not be bound by technical rules of evidence... and shall admit any evidence which it deems to have probative value."⁴⁶ Taylor notes "People whose nations had been attacked wanted legal retribution."⁴⁷ In an atmosphere full of political and emotional factors, the rule of law was not honored.

Let me make this clear: I am not defending the Nazis who committed war crimes, but rather questioning the system under which they were tried, the system under which the U.S., the U.S.S.R., and other victorious Allied nations tried to proclaim a sort of moral superiority. The New Testament declares several times through Jesus' teachings that matching one evil act with another is unacceptable. The New Testament is unequivocal in stating that revenge should never be taken. In Matthew 5:39, Jesus instructed Christians not to retaliate. Jesus specifically urged his followers not to resist

⁴⁴ Alpheus Thomas. Mason, *Harlan Fiske Stone: Pillar of the Law*. (New York: The Viking Press, 1956), 716.

⁴⁵ Harold Keith Thompson and Henry Strutz, *Doenitz at Nuremberg, a Reappraisal: War Crimes and the Military Professional* (Torrance, Calif.: Institute for Historical Review, 1983), 112.

⁴⁶ The Charter of the International Military Tribunal, Article 19, accessed May 10, 2015, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/imtconst.asp>.

⁴⁷ Taylor, 629.

one who is evil, but rather to offer the other cheek to the person who strikes the first one. The lesson here from Jesus' teaching is that Christians should not act with vengeance against someone who harms them. In 1 Peter 2:23 Peter wrote, "When he was insulted, he returned no insult; when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead he handed himself over to one who judges justly." The message here for Christians is to not to seek revenge, for the Lord will always judge justly.

In Luke 9:53, Jesus taught his followers to abstain from vengeful actions. According to the Gospel, Jesus had planned to travel to Jerusalem through a Samaritan village, and he had sent an emissary there to prepare for his arrival. But the Samaritans would not receive Jesus because he was travelling to Jerusalem. Upon hearing this, Jesus' disciples James and John asked if the village should be consumed by fire from heaven for not welcoming him, but Jesus rebuked the disciples and they journeyed to a different village. In this situation Jesus did not seek vengeance when the Samaritans refused to welcome him.

Romans 12:17 states, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody." The instruction here for Christians is to act as role models for others. Christians should not look for revenge but leave revenge to God. Ezekiel 25:15-16 gives the ultimate reason not to seek revenge: because God will punish those who seek revenge. When we consider these Biblical examples, the criticism of the Nuremberg model as being overtly vengeful and contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ does appear to have legitimacy.

The Good Friday Agreement

A different peace and reconciliation model is found in Northern Ireland. Since the 1600s, Northern Ireland has consisted of two religious communities—Protestant and Catholic—with deep divisions between them. The British government interfered in the affairs of Northern Ireland and the island was absorbed into the United Kingdom in 1801.⁴⁸ In 1919, most of southern Ireland rejected this absorption and a northern region of Ireland called Ulster rejected everything else.⁴⁹ As a remedy, the government enacted the United Kingdom’s Government of Ireland Act of 1920.⁵⁰ This act “created two self-governing units: one comprising six of Ulster’s nine counties and was later known as Northern Ireland, the other comprising the three remaining counties of Ulster together with the twenty-three counties of the rest of Ireland.”⁵¹

According to Ivan, while “the Protestant majority of the six counties of Northern Ireland clearly preferred continuation of the union of all of Ireland, it settled for Home Rule for itself, and the Northern Ireland parliament and government began functioning in June 1921.”⁵² However, the Catholic majority of the twenty-six counties for whom Home Rule had originally been intended rejected it as insufficient.⁵³ The British maintained

⁴⁸ Democratic Progress Institute, *The Good Friday Agreement – an Overview* (London: Democratic Progress Institute, 2013), 10-12, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www.democraticprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/The-Good-Friday-Agreement-An-Overview.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “Northern Ireland,” accessed October 1, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/419739/Northern-Ireland>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Gibbons Ivan, “The British Parliamentary Labour Party and the Government of Ireland Act 1920: Parliamentary History,” *Wiley-Blackwell* 32, no. 3 (October 2013): 510, Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost.

⁵³ Ibid., 518.

sovereignty over Northern Ireland but granted powers to Northern Ireland's parliament to make legislation relevant to the area. The South joined the United Nations as an independent state in 1955.⁵⁴

In the meantime, Northern Ireland's parliament, which was composed in large part of the Protestant majority, wielded an extensive degree of autonomy and dominated the political sphere between 1920 and 1972.⁵⁵ Governmental boundaries were determined in a way that ensured Unionist domination, even in areas that were mostly Catholic.⁵⁶ This resulted in widespread civil, political, and socio-economic rights violations and inter-communal unrest. The Catholic population advocated for more educational opportunity and complained about discrimination in employment, public housing, and regional development. It is worth mentioning that some Catholic discrimination against the Protestant population existed, although this discrimination had little impact on the Protestant community. The leader of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) always chose the prime minister of Northern Ireland because the UUP always had a majority in every parliament.⁵⁷ The Democratic Progress Institute notes that the "disparity in political representation contributed to the rise of Sinn Fein and other Catholic nationalist parties at the expense of a more moderate opposition."⁵⁸ Also, the disparity in political representation increased already-present hostility between Catholics and Protestants, and

⁵⁴ Ibid., 519.

⁵⁵ Democratic Progress Institute, *Good Friday Agreement*, 10-12.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 11. [The Protestant community favored maintaining the union with the United Kingdom (hence the name "Unionist") whereas the Catholic community in most instances favored union with the Irish Republic which has Catholic majority; thus the name Catholics Nationalists or Republicans.]

⁵⁸ Democratic Progress Institute, *Good Friday Agreement*, 11-12.

the hostility was exacerbated by the inability of the political institutions in place in Northern Ireland to address issues of injustice, unrest, and exclusion.⁵⁹

In 1966, violent conflicts exploded between Protestants and Catholics and British troops were sent in 1969 to the region to squelch the trouble. The 1960s also saw the rise of paramilitary organizations.⁶⁰ Some of these paramilitary organizations split because of tactics. But out of this messiness rose the Irish Republican army (IRA) and its political wing, Sinn Fein. At this time, Unionist paramilitary groups appeared, such as the Ulster Volunteer Force, the Ulster Defense Association, and the Democratic Unionist Party, to name but a few. The apex of the formation of the paramilitary groups came on Sunday, January 30, 1972, which came to be known as “Bloody Sunday;” it was the deadliest day of the conflict.⁶¹ Overall, 496 people were murdered in violent clashes in 1972.⁶²

In response to the chaos, the British government suspended Northern Ireland’s parliament and initiated direct rule over the area, instituting and amplifying several security measures. Despite increases in security measures and several peace initiatives such as the Sunningdale agreement, signed in 1973, and the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985, violent clashes and reprisals persisted throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.^{63,64} During the thirty years of the conflict, which was known as the “Troubles,”

⁵⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Eamonn McCann, *The Bloody Sunday Inquiry: The Families Speak Out* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 4-6, accessed May 26, 2015, <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0643/2006273456-d.html>. [“Thirteen unarmed civilians were shot dead and the British Army injured fourteen others during a peaceful civil rights protest march in (London) Derry, Northern Ireland, on January 30, 1972. This became known as “Bloody Sunday,” or “the Bogside Massacre.”]

⁶² Democratic Progress Institute, *Good Friday Agreement*, 13.

⁶³ Arwel Ellis Owen, *The Anglo-Irish Agreement: The First Three Years* (Cardif: University of Wales Press, 1994), 41. [“The Anglo-Irish agreement, signed on November 15, 1985, was an agreement

over 3,600 people were killed, including civilians, paramilitaries, security forces, and soldiers.⁶⁵ None of the security measures or agreements resulted in lasting peace until the Good Friday agreement.

Adoption of the Agreement

The Good Friday agreement, also called the Belfast agreement, dealt with issues ranging from “devolution, rights, safeguards, and equality of opportunity to decommissioning; security; policing and justice; prisoners; and validation, implementation, and review.”⁶⁶ The Good Friday agreement was signed on April 10, 1998, by the British and Irish governments, including the leaders of the key political parties engaged in the conflict.⁶⁷ The agreement was approved by referendum in Northern

between the United Kingdom and Ireland that aimed to bring an end to the troubles in Northern Ireland. The treaty gave the Irish government an advisory role in Northern Ireland’s government while confirming that there would be no change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland unless a majority of its people agreed to join the Republic. It also set out conditions for the establishment of a devolved consensus government in the region.”]

⁶⁴ Fionnuala McKenna, “The Sunningdale Agreement (December 1973),” CAIN Web Service, July 30, 2014, accessed May 27, 2015, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/sunningdale/agreement.htm>. [“The British and Irish governments signed the Sunningdale agreement on December 9, 1973. It attempted to establish a power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive and cross-border Council of Ireland. Unionist opposition, violence, and a loyalist general strike caused the collapse of the agreement in May 1974.”]

⁶⁵ Martin Melaugh, “The Northern Ireland Conflict,” CAIN Web Service, February 3, 2006, accessed May 27, 2015, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/faq/faq2.htm#when>. [“The “Troubles” is an expression used as a euphemism to describe the violent clashes in the late 1960s until 1998. The worst of the Troubles took place in 1972, when 496 people were killed.”]

⁶⁶ Austen Morgan, *The Belfast Agreement: A Practical Legal Analysis* (London: Belfast Press, 2000), 566.

⁶⁷ Democratic Progress Institute, *Turkey: Comparative Studies Visit to the United Kingdom Conflict Resolution* (London: Democratic Progress Institute, 2014), 53, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www.democraticprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/DPI-UK-Comparative-Study-Visit-2011.pdf>.

Ireland by 71.2 percent of the population (with an 81 percent voter turnout) and in the Republic of Ireland by 94.39 percent (with a 51 percent turnout) on May 22, 1998.⁶⁸

Decommissioning

An important part of the Good Friday agreement was Article 25. Instead of requiring the warring parties to disarm and disband their militias, Article 25 of the Good Friday agreement left the issue exclusively to the purview of politicians. Further, Article 25 did not impose penalties should decommissioning of arms fail at the grassroots level; thus this omission became a point of contention.⁶⁹ Because decommissioning was left to the parties' good will, each party hesitated to initiate decommissioning. The resultant feeling of uneasiness was exacerbated because of mistrust and disagreement between the parties over the order of disarmament and addition into the political process. The two sides pointed fingers at each other for failure to abide by the spirit of the Good Friday agreement's requirement.⁷⁰ Sinn Fein, the political arm of the IRA, accused the British government of foot dragging and failing to demilitarize quickly. Although the issue of decommissioning was beset by numerous challenges, of which mistrust was the least, the parties eventually decommissioned.

In 2002, Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein, announced the IRA's intention to disarm. In July 2005, there was a formal announcement by the IRA Army Council to terminate its armed campaign and the Council made clear its intent to use purely political

⁶⁸ Democratic Progress Institute, *Good Friday Agreement*, 32.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷⁰ Austen Morgan, *The Belfast Agreement: A Practical Legal Analysis* (London: Belfast Press, 2000), 435-440.

and democratic means to achieve its goal of peace.⁷¹ To prove its trustworthiness, the IRA destroyed its arms in the presence of an independent International Commission on Decommissioning. Decommissioning is still a controversial issue in Northern Ireland because the parties still do not trust each other due to a record of both sides hiding weapons for use in the future.⁷²

As for the Troubles, the violent clashes between the parties, the 1998 Good Friday agreement incapacitated the architects. They accepted a political settlement and dismantled their arms. Moreover, the agreement seems to have stripped most of the perpetrators of enough motivation to continue killing.⁷³

Lesson Two for Nigeria

Similarly in Nigeria, the mutual distrust between Christians and Muslims is great, and this mutual lack of trust has been one of the key reasons that has inhibited the decommissioning of the various religious militias. The Nigerian government, unlike the British government, has on many instances rejected to engage constructively with the so-called religious radicals. The government of Nigeria made decommissioning a condition for negotiations.⁷⁴ According to Oladipo, the Nigerian government has framed its position about the peace between the various religious groups in terms of giving in to the

⁷¹ Ibid., 37.

⁷² Ibid., 41.

⁷³ Nigel Biggar, "Forgiving Enemies in Ireland," *Journal Of Religious Ethics* 36, no. 4 (2008): 571.

⁷⁴ Oladipo Oladipo, "Nigeria's President Rejects Boko Haram Amnesty Call," *British Broadcasting Corporation News*, March 8, 2013, accessed May 10, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-21709915>.

demands of Boko Haram and similar groups.⁷⁵ It is true that the government has genuine concerns about the nation's security situation and thus requires Boko Haram and other religious groups to disarm before discussions, but many of the militias distrust the government and one another. The militias will not disarm prior to reaching an agreement because they believe possession of arms strengthens their negotiating position and acts as a deterrent to other militias' efforts to thwart cessation of hostility by taking advantage of what would be their military weakness.⁷⁶ What needs to happen for the Good Friday model to work in Nigeria is for the parties involved in Nigeria's struggle to gradually come to realize that non-violent political negotiation provides the best solution for solving their religious conflict. However, this prospect seems far off.

Release and Assimilation of Parliamentary Prisoners

One of the most controversial provisions of the Good Friday agreement was the release and reintegration of paramilitary prisoners and those convicted of acts of violence.⁷⁷ These prisoner releases and their reintegration triggered a public outcry because the release and reintegration was seen as kowtowing to the perpetrators of the Troubles and as a reward to terrorists. Also, the involvement of these former paramilitary convicts in the political process was widely criticized as adding insult to injury. For example, Martin McGuinness, a leader in the IRA movement, received intense media scrutiny for his involvement in the 2011 Republic of Ireland presidential elections.⁷⁸ The

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Democratic Progress Institute, *Good Friday Agreement*, 39.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

heavy media focus on Mr. McGuinness's history was clear evidence that the past continued to have political relevance. It is worthy of note that release and amnesty were given to paramilitary prisoners on the condition that they desist from future political violence, and in the event of recidivism they would serve out their original sentence. However, conditioning the release of former paramilitary prisoners was tantamount to denying full legitimacy of their political struggle and was not able to differentiate between the political nature of their activities and law breaking.⁷⁹

On the positive side, "many former combatants in Northern Ireland, notably politicized ex-prisoners, have significantly contributed to reintegration and to the wider process of peace building in Northern Ireland by bringing credibility and perspective to peace building. Many of the key participants involved in peace negotiations leading up to the adoption of the Good Friday Agreement were ex-combatants with a record of conviction and imprisonment. Their active participation in the peace building process, as well as their involvement in local programs and awareness campaigns have been claimed to positively impact communities' will to end the conflict, as efforts to reduce violence can carry greater weight when they are led by former combatants."⁸⁰

In Nigeria, the release of prisoners who engaged in religious violence before their sentences expire might be construed as a peace treaty at the end of fighting and a retreat from the structure of criminal justice.⁸¹ That is, those convicted in Nigeria's religious conflict might be seen as treated like prisoners of war. The main demarcating factor

⁷⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁰ Kerim Yildiz and Susan Carolyn Breau, *The Kurdish Conflict: International Humanitarian Law and Post-Conflict Mechanisms* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, England: Routledge, 2010), 240-41.

⁸¹ Nigel Biggar, "Forgiving Enemies in Ireland," *Journal Of Religious Ethics* 36, no. 4 (2008): 571-572.

would be that prisoners of war are not subject to any condition whereas early release of religious combatants would be conditioned on their agreement to desist from future religious or political violence. If a prisoner violates the conditions of his release, he would be subject to re-incarceration and would serve out the balance of his original sentence plus any sanction imposed as a result of the new offense. Nevertheless, the Nigerian government thus far has treated religious paramilitary violence as criminal rather than acts of war. According to Biggar, “The integrity of the state and popular confidence in it and in a future under it is on the line.”⁸² The risk with additional trials is that they would without a doubt continue to disrupt and conceivably destabilize political, economic, and social life in the country. Many of the combatants would be appalled to see their members penalized for activities performed in the fight to defend their religion.

Police Force and the Judicial System

The Good Friday agreement made provisions for a policing service that is representative of the community it serves. The agreement calls for a new policing service that is “democratically accountable, free from political control, respectful of human rights, and culturally neutral.”⁸³ Symbols that identified the police with the British or Irish state were changed or removed. For example, the Royal Ulster Constabulary was renamed the Police Service of Northern Ireland.⁸⁴ The police force uniforms, badges, and logo and the Union flag on police buildings were made politically neutral to represent the Police Service of Northern Ireland. In order to prevent organized disarmament from the

⁸² Ibid., 572.

⁸³ Democratic Progress Institute, *Good Friday Agreement*, 41.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

police force, application eligibility was relaxed to permit individuals with prior criminal offenses to serve in the police force. Democratic Progress Institute notes, “this was a particularly contentious provision as it inherently enabled former political activists with criminal records to apply and potentially enter the police force.”⁸⁵ The Ulster Unionist party condemned these provisions as a “gratuitous insult” to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, but the measures were broadly applauded as an important move towards inter-communal peace.

Lesson Three for Nigeria

In Nigeria, Section 194 of the 1979 constitution designates the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) as having exclusive jurisdiction throughout the country; as such, it lacks the ability to provide community policing.⁸⁶ Although a career in the Nigerian Police Force is generally considered attractive, the NPF experiences pervasive problems with low recruitment, poor training, inefficiency, and poor discipline as well as a dearth of knowledge in specialized fields. Dishonesty and corruption in the force are widespread, engendering in the general public a low esteem, a failure to report crimes, and a tendency to resort to self-help.⁸⁷ According to Obaro,

Police were more adept at paramilitary operations and the exercise of force than at community service functions or crime prevention, detection, and investigation. The NPF is alleged to follow a policy of “Fire for Fire,” in which many captured suspects die in police custody or are shot while attempting to escape. Decades of police and official corruption and continued failure to train police officers properly has led to a situation in which extrajudicial killing is an accepted form of

⁸⁵ Ibid., 42.

⁸⁶ Federal Republic of Nigeria. “Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1963,” accessed October 3, 2014, <http://www.dawodu.com/const63.pdf>.

⁸⁷ Ogaga Ayemo Obaro, “The Nigeria Police Force and the Crisis of Legitimacy: Re-Defining the Structure and Function of the Nigeria Police,” *European Scientific Journal* 10, no. 8 (March, 2014): 422-425.

dealing with people the police believe to be criminals. The most recent notorious victim of such extrajudicial killing was Yusuf Mohamed, the leader of the Boko Haram militia, who was alive when captured by the army. Even before the violence surrounding the Boko Haram uprising in northern Nigeria, questions arose over the conduct of the security forces.⁸⁸

A 2014 report by human rights groups condemned the human rights record of the Nigerian Police Force, citing poor training, problems in community policing, poor attitudes, indecency, lack of proper temperament, and other structural issues.⁸⁹ The human rights groups alleged that torture had “become such an integral part of policing in Nigeria that many police stations had an informal ‘Officer in Charge of Torture’ or O/C Torture.”⁹⁰ The NPF uses a disturbing array of torture methods, involving nail or tooth extraction, choking, electric shock, and sexual abuse.⁹¹ Human rights groups noted that torture is not even a criminal offense in Nigeria, and he called on Nigeria’s parliament to immediately criminalize torture, noting that its criminalization is long overdue.⁹²

The government is currently attempting to reform the police especially in the area of detainees’ access to the outside world, including lawyers, family members, and courts.⁹³ These reforms would be necessary for the implementation of any peace initiative modeled after the Good Friday agreement.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 424. [“An extrajudicial killing is the killing of a person by governmental authorities without any judicial proceedings or legal process. Extrajudicial punishments are by their nature unlawful, since they bypass the due process of the legal jurisdiction in which they occur. Extrajudicial killings often target leading political, trade union, dissident, religious, and social figures and may be carried out by the state government or other state authorities such as the armed forces and police.”]

⁸⁹ *World Report 2014*, 149-155.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 149.

⁹¹ Obaro, 427.

⁹² *World Report 2014*, 154-155.

⁹³ Ibid.

Truth and Reconciliation Model of South Africa

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was formed in July 1995 pursuant to legislation of South Africa's parliament authorizing its formation.⁹⁴ The Commission was designed to promote reconciliation and forgiveness between the victims and perpetrators of apartheid. It hoped to fully disclose the truth regarding the practice.⁹⁵ According to Paul van Zyl, "The Commission was charged with three specific tasks: (1) to discover the causes and nature of human rights violations in South Africa between 1960 and 1994, (2) to identify victims with a view to paying reparations, and (3) to allow amnesty to those who fully disclosed their involvement in politically motivated human rights violations."⁹⁶ Additionally, Arch Bishop Desmond notes that "Amnesty to individuals in exchange for full disclosure relating to the crime for which amnesty was being sought was the carrot of possible freedom in exchange for the truth; the stick was, for those already in jail, the prospect of lengthy prison sentences, and for those still free, the probability of arrest and prosecution and imprisonment."⁹⁷ The South African choice was restorative justice rather retributive justice. The TRC represents a third way of handling a history of human rights abuse and beginning to institutionalize universal justice. This path forms between the extremes of "uncompromising insistence on the one hand and a defeatist acceptance of amnesty on the other."⁹⁸

⁹⁴ *The South African Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995: The Written Evidence of a Transition* (Raleigh, NC: Lulu Press, Inc, 2008), 1.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁶ Paul van Zyl, "Dilemmas of Transitional Justice: The Case of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *Journal of International Affairs* 52, no. 2 (1999): 653.

⁹⁷ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 30.

⁹⁸ Paul van Zyl, 648.

Respectable and growing sets of literature have been devoted to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. In this discussion I do not dissect all the nuances of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa because that is not the purpose of this dissertation. I examine primarily the issues of amnesty and establishment of the truth as they pertain to the Christian-Muslim conflict in Nigeria.

Who Are the Victors?

Without a doubt, the method in which a country decides to treat those involved in a conflict who have committed atrocious human rights violations is greatly affected by the balance of power between the warring parties at the cessation of hostilities.⁹⁹ For example, “The Nuremberg trials were possible in postwar Germany only because the Allies had achieved military victory over the Nazi regime and therefore possessed enough power to make certain the prosecution of the leaders of the Third Reich.”¹⁰⁰ In Northern Ireland, prior to the Good Friday agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement, the conflict between Nationalist and Unionist parties within Northern Ireland was seemingly intractable, with no victory in sight for either of the warring parties. In South Africa, the African National Congress and other liberation movements did not possess the power to militarily remove the apartheid regime from office.¹⁰¹ As a matter of fact, throughout the period of negotiation that led to the first general election in South Africa, the apartheid regime kept a large military and police force. If the apartheid government had wanted to hold on to power at all costs, the apartheid regime had the capacity to do so for a very

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

long period of time. However, South African power was not entirely in the hands of the apartheid government. Therefore, one thing that becomes obvious upon inspection of the Nuremberg trials, the Good Friday agreement, and other approaches to dealing with people who have grossly violated human rights is “that a country’s choice of policy has as much to do with power as it does with principle.”¹⁰²

Amnesty

In 1995, the South African legislature promulgated legislation that called for amnesty for the actors of human rights violations during the apartheid era.¹⁰³ The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995 gave two basic preconditions for those seeking amnesty: “the violation had to be an act or acts associated with a political objective as defined in the legislation, and the individual seeking amnesty had to provide full disclosure of the act for which amnesty was sought.”¹⁰⁴ Also, the law listed classes of people who were eligible to apply for amnesty. People eligible for amnesty included “members of political organizations, members of liberation movements, and members of state security forces. Further, the individuals seeking amnesty must prove that they were engaged in a struggle or resistance against the state or a former state.”¹⁰⁵

A Truth and Reconciliation Committee was established to determine the eligibility of applicants for amnesty. In determining eligibility, the committee had to

¹⁰² Ibid., 649.

¹⁰³ The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995, 12-13.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

consider the individual's purpose, nature, and circumstance of the act. Amnesty would not be granted for acts performed for personal gain unless the person who had committed the acts was paid or received something of value for being an informer. Acts committed due to spite, personal malice, or ill will were excluded from acts for which a person might be granted amnesty. The Committee could conduct a public hearing before granting amnesty if the act was a gross human rights violation. The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995 states, "Once amnesty was granted, any entry or record of the conviction for the crime for which amnesty had been granted was expunged and the conviction was deemed not to have taken place. The person's name and information about the act were then published in the Government Gazette, the official government publication."¹⁰⁶

Lesson Four for Nigeria

In Nigeria's situation, there are a number of practical and political reasons why the government would be unable to defeat and prosecute more than a tiny percentage of those engaged in the religious conflict and human rights abuses. Chief among the reasons is that the parties in the religious conflict have sympathizers in both the Nigerian military and police force. For this reason, the government of Nigeria must develop plans for dealing with the religious conflict and not become narrowly focused on a military campaign to defeat, capture, and attempt to prosecute. Both the rights of victims and the needs of Nigerian society as a whole must be addressed, so a wide range of strategies should be considered and implemented.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 17.

Some will probably oppose amnesty in Nigeria because it represents a loss of judicial review, especially for civil damages by victims. They may say that amnesty is too high a price to pay irrespective of the turmoil or societal upheaval that might exist without it.¹⁰⁷ However, outside a deal lacking amnesty, only a small handful of the perpetrators and the leaders of the conflict could be apprehended and prosecuted successfully.¹⁰⁸ The criminal justice system in Nigeria essentially is not performing up to par. Many of the perpetrators of crimes such as rape, murder, armed robbery, and other serious offenses are never apprehended, much less prosecuted. The police do not have the training and resources to investigate and effectuate arrest.

Thus in Nigeria, a prosecutorial approach would be futile in dealing with and punishing those responsible for the violent religious conflict. The nature of the religious conflict in Nigeria joined with the failure of Nigeria's criminal justice system to act against those answerable for the conflict make other solutions necessary. Granting amnesty to the combatants and developing a better way for dealing with the past than the misguided military campaign would be more likely to succeed. Further still, insofar as

¹⁰⁷ Paul van Zyl, 653. ["In South Africa, those who opposed amnesty agreements argue that prosecuting perpetrators would be better. But the apartheid government and its security forces never would have allowed the transition to a democratic society if its members, supporters, or operatives could face arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment. As a matter of fact, just a few months before the scheduled elections, the ANC received warnings from the generals in command of the South African police that they would not support or safeguard the electoral process if it led to the formation of a government that intended to prosecute and imprison members of the police force."]

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in his book *No Future Without Forgiveness* contended on page 33 "that granting amnesty to individuals in exchange for full disclosure relating to the crime for which amnesty was being sought was justified." Tutu noted that this option was consistent with a central feature of African culture, which is the interconnectedness of humanity: "I am human because I belong. I participate; I share, rather than the competitiveness and individualism of Western culture, Africans value social harmony and community." The proceedings of the TRC were in public view, which meant the penalty of public humiliation and exposure of atrocities committed by people who previously were considered respectable members of their communities. Also, the TRC granted amnesty only to those who pled guilty and accepted responsibility for their crimes.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 652.

amnesty is concerned, forgiveness is a defining feature of a Christian ethic of response to wrongdoing.¹⁰⁹

In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established by the legislature in order to fully ascertain the legacy of the apartheid regime. The commission was tasked with identifying victims and making reparation to the victims for their suffering as an essential component of reconciliation. Obviously, South Africans realized that to deal with a history of systemic human rights violation the records must be as complete as possible and that any single institution or approach could not properly confront the past. From the onset, the fact that the criminal justice system could not cope with the massive and systemic historical human rights abuses was clear because there were no victors. The deficiencies of the criminal justice method to the past underscored the significance of supplementing this tactic with the commission. The commission provided victims with a platform for telling their stories of anguish and revealing the horrific human cost of the violent conflicts.¹¹⁰ Through the actions of the commission, both Blacks and Whites became aware that people from the other side also felt pain and suffered loss.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission allowed for a broad scrutiny of liability past the limited observance to the “letter of the law” definition of guilt. The commission generated a method of national soul-searching that required that all South

¹⁰⁹ Tutu, 32.

¹¹⁰ van Zyl, 648-57.

Africans, including government and private officials of all stripes, assess their role in the apartheid era.¹¹¹

Establishing a commission in Nigeria similar to the TRC of South Africa might provide Nigerian families the truth about the fate of their loved ones, but it would not lead to any official closure about the causes of the Christian-Muslim conflict and liability for acts committed as a result of the conflict. Knowledge of the fate of love ones is important and would help bring some feeling of direction to the bewildered worlds of victims. It may also strengthen people's faith in the country's political outlook, knowing that what occurred illegally is recognized by the government as a matter of public record. However, I cannot imagine a truth commission playing any significant role in Nigeria.

First, the idea that awareness of what happened alone will placate the victim's family is not a given.¹¹² For instance, Joyce Mthimkulu, whose son Siphiwo was murdered by the South African police, said at a hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Committee on Human Rights Violations, "If they can just show us the bones of my child, I'll be grateful. Where did they leave the bones of my child? Where did they take him? Who handed him over to them? What did they do to him?"¹¹³ But when those who murdered her son answered her questions as part of their petition for amnesty, she requested justice. Knowledge of the truth in Nigeria might help the victims' families to have a feeling of direction in their bewildered lives, but it will not necessarily placate their bitterness or their cries for justice.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Nigel Biggar, "Forgiving Enemies in Ireland," *Journal Of Religious Ethics* 36, no. 4 (2008): 570-573.

¹¹³ "Getting Away with Murder?" a BBC TV documentary about the TRC presented by Michael Ignatieff and originally broadcast on November 1, 1997, as part of the "Correspondent" series.

Secondly, investigation into the past could be destabilizing to a still-fragile peace.¹¹⁴ Mistrust between Christians and Muslims is widespread, and having a commission question the legitimacy of existing institutions could further destabilize the country. Thus each party may have legitimate apprehension that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission would allow their opponent to advance a selective and unfair version of the past and subsequently rewrite the history in a fashion that would absolve themselves of blame for atrocities.

Conclusion

This chapter presented three models for consideration in resolving the Muslim-Christian conflict in Nigeria: the Nuremberg trials that followed World War II, the Good Friday agreement of Northern Ireland, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa.

The Nuremberg trials were a succession of military tribunals by the key victorious Allied Nations in World War II for the prosecution of certain individuals in charge of Nazi Germany's military, economic, and political leadership.¹¹⁵ The Nuremberg model "established a precedent that all persons, regardless of their status or occupation in life, can be held individually accountable for their behavior during times of conflict."¹¹⁶ Combatants cannot protect themselves from punishment simply by insisting they were under orders or following chain of command. Combatants or government officials are now compelled by duties that surpass their responsibility to observe an order issued

¹¹⁴ van Zyl, 658-67.

¹¹⁵ Nash, 148-50.

¹¹⁶ Cassel, 1180.

higher up. Carrying out orders that breach the norms of warfare or mistreat civilians and prisoners are considered a criminal offense under Nuremberg principles. Moreover, the Nuremberg Charter plainly recognized three distinct acts or crimes falling within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal and punishable under international law: “crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, and crimes in violation of transnational obligations embodied in treaties and other agreements.”¹¹⁷ Prior to the Nuremberg Charter, these acts or crimes were ill defined, and a multinational tribunal had never punished persons who committed such crimes.

The Nuremberg trials have been criticized as “victors’ justice” because “the Allied nations that tried and convicted the leading Nazis at Nuremberg did not come to the table with clean hands.”¹¹⁸ But absent a military victory, whether many of the people guilty of similar crimes will ever be brought into custody for trial in Nigeria remains doubtful. Implementation of the Nuremberg model in Nigeria would be a herculean task because of the lack of victors and the presence of judicial corruption.

In Northern Ireland, the peace process involved a negotiation between the disputing parties aiming to end the political conflict peacefully; thus the process can be described as successful. Various mechanisms such as “decommissioning, the release and reintegration of paramilitary prisoners, and the reform of the police force and the judicial system were designed by the Good Friday agreement to safeguard and promote respect

¹¹⁷ Taylor, 628.

¹¹⁸ Cassel, 1182.

for human rights in Northern Ireland.”¹¹⁹ No formal truth and reconciliation commission was established and the idea of retributive justice was largely dismissed.

The relevance of this model for the parties in the Nigerian Christian-Muslim conflict is the importance of transitional justice and of reforming the police force and the judicial system. Establishing access to transitional justice and reforming both the judiciary and police force would not only enhance the legitimacy of the government and possibly give it future support, but it would also allow the government to be perceived as an avenue of redress for injustices and past violations. Besides, it may help foster trust between the government and society where trust has been absent.

Finally, the South African Truth and Reconciliation model provided proactive measures for preventing human rights violation by placing victims rather than culprits at the heart of public attention and providing victims with much-needed reparation. Instead of judging guilt or innocence in complex conflicts, truth commissions instead sought to induce critical thinking about the past, making easy dismissal of the victims’ suffering impossible. As The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995 states, “Uncovering what really happened about human rights violation affords a society an understandings into the mechanics of repression.”¹²⁰

Establishing a truth commission in Nigeria, apart from enabling victims’ families to learn the fate of their loved ones, would do little to promote peace and reconciliation in the Nigerian context. One reason is that information of the fate of loved ones alone will not mollify the victims. Knowing the fate of their loved ones does not take away the

¹¹⁹ Austen Morgan, 566.

¹²⁰ The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995, 1.

bitterness or bring about justice. Investigating what happened in the past could undermine the very peace the investigation is trying to achieve because Christians and Muslims in Nigeria do not trust each other. If the two parties each attempt to use the investigative process to advance their own selective and biased interpretation of past events and to rewrite history so as to absolve themselves of responsibility for atrocities, the result is likely to be further destabilization of the country.

It is important to remember that “Prosecution and punishment are important components of justice, but they are only after-the-fact interventions.”¹²¹ Justice in Nigeria requires the truth, change in the government apparatus, reparations for victims, and creativity that promotes reconciliation.¹²² Courts are crucial in battling violent conflicts, but the struggle for human rights, peace, and reconciliation cannot be confined to one state agency or one approach for dealing with the past.

¹²¹ Nigel Biggar, “Forgiving Enemies in Ireland,” *Journal Of Religious Ethics* 36, no. 4 (2008): 571.

¹²² Audrey R. Chapman and Hugo van der Merwe, eds., *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Did the TRC Deliver?* Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 285-286. [“In South Africa, the reparation process has failed many victims of apartheid. The government has engaged in a dismissive approach to victims, failing in its constitutional duty and giving preference to those with political connections. Many victims identified by the TRC have yet to receive any compensation. In addition, those who have not been identified as victims have been entirely left out of the process and may find asserting their right to compensation impossible under the current system.”]

CHAPTER 6:

PROPOSALS

Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria remain a burning issue and a challenge for both religious communities. The conflict is demanding and the need to resolve it is urgent. For all Nigerians, a solution requires examining relational patterns that can make sense for both Christians and Muslims and that are practical and helpful in normal, everyday life. In this chapter I offer suggestions for addressing the challenges of the Christian-Muslim conflict in Nigeria. The proposals do not constitute an exhaustive analytical guide; rather, they provide a framework for dealing with the religious conflict. The following five proposals involve both individual and government actions for arresting the conflict:

1. Individuals should be open to the theological similarities between Christianity and Islam.
2. Individuals need to let bygones be bygones; in other words, people need to forgive.
3. The government needs to extend amnesty to the combatants.
4. The government needs to make changes to the academic curriculum to include religious study.
5. The government needs to develop the country's economy.

This author believes that both individual and governmental actions are necessary to make meaningful differences in a problem this complex and full of such passion.

Common Theology

One burning question frequently asked by people trying to understand the Christian-Muslim conflict is this: “Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God?”¹ I believe the answer to this question and acceptance of the answer will go a very long way to diluting the raging religious conflict in Nigeria. To answer the question sufficiently, this chapter examines the core beliefs of the two systems. The core beliefs of both Christians and Muslims govern adherents’ views of human relations.

The central feature of Christianity is the self-giving love of God in Christ, who seeks the welfare of all humanity and the reflection of this character in believers.² For Muslims, the central feature is the principle of surrender to God, who wills obedience and piety as laid out in the Quran.³ Both of these core beliefs have goodness as a common factor in their expression.

Before proceeding further, I would like to caution that I do not propose or intend to suggest amalgamation of Christianity and Islam based upon certain common monotheistic features. My intent is to show that many similarities are present in the two religions, more similarities than most people are aware of and enough to allow for mutual understanding and redemptive dialogue between Christians and Muslims. To begin, I examine the genesis of Allah as the Islamic name for God and then consider the six Islamic articles of faith.

¹ Mioslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 11.

² Roland E. Miller, “Deradicalizing and Reconstructing Christian-Muslim Relations: Six Models,” *Word and World* 31, no. 3 (2011): 308.

³ Ibid.

In Genesis 1:11 of the Christian and Hebrew Bible, the first name used to reference God is *Elohim*. The Quran uses the Arabic name *Allah* for God. Both Elohim, the Hebrew divine name, and Allah, the Arabic divine name, have their origin in the Semitic language. But just because both Allah and Elohim have their root in Semitic language, it is not sufficient for one to assume that Allah and Elohim mean basically the same thing.

For one to conclude that Christians and Muslims worship the same God, a look at the description of the object of worship by this two religions is necessary and examination of what the Bible and the Quran say about this deity is warranted.

Orthodox Christianity and Islam espouse that God is omnipotent, omniscient, merciful, all-loving, forgiving, and Judge of humanity.⁴ A further step is to look at a few scriptural verses and the Ten Commandments.

Table 1: Scriptural Verses

Bible	Quran
“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” ⁵	“So know, [O Muhammad], that there is no deity except Allah and ask forgiveness for your sin and for the believing men and believing women. And Allah knows of your movement and your resting place.” ⁶

⁴ Mark Durie, *Revelation? Do We Worship the Same God?* (Upper Mt Gravatt, Australia: CityHarvest Publications, 2006), 85.

⁵ Deuteronomy 6:4.

⁶ Surah 47:19.

Bible	Quran
“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” ⁷	“[He is] Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you from yourselves, mates, and among the cattle, mates; He multiplies you thereby. There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.” ⁸
“Who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.” ⁹	“Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision; and He is the Subtle, the Acquainted.” ¹⁰
“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.” ¹¹	“And He is the Forgiving, the Affectionate.” ¹²
“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” ¹³	“And when Allah is mentioned alone, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter shrink with aversion, but when those [worshipped] other than Him are mentioned, immediately they rejoice.” ¹⁴

⁷ Genesis 1:1.

⁸ Surah 42:11.

⁹ 1 Timothy 6:16.

¹⁰ Surah 6:103.

¹¹ 1 John 4:16.

¹² Surah 85:14.

¹³ Deuteronomy 6:5.

¹⁴ Surah 39:45.

Bible	Quran
“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” ¹⁵	“Love for your brother what you love for yourself” ¹⁶

Table 1 Source: Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 97-105.

Table 2: Ten Commandments

No.	Bible	Quran
1	“You shall have no other gods before Me.” ¹⁷	“And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him.” ¹⁸
2	“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.” ¹⁹	“And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham said to his father Azar, ‘Do you take idols as deities? Indeed, I see you and your people to be in manifest error.’” ²⁰
3	“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” ²¹	“And do not make [your oath by] Allah an excuse against being righteous and fearing Allah and making peace among people. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.” ²²

¹⁵ Matthew 7:12.

¹⁶ Hadith 13[The hadith is a collection of the authentic sayings of the prophet Mohammed].

¹⁷ Exodus 20:3.

¹⁸ Surah 17:23.

¹⁹ Exodus 20:4.

²⁰ Sura 6:74.

²¹ Exodus 20:7.

²² Sura 2:224.

No.	Bible	Quran
4	“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” ²³	“And We raised over them the mount for [refusal of] their covenant; and We said to them, ‘Enter the gate bowing humbly,’ and We said to them, ‘Do not transgress on the Sabbath,’ and We took from them a solemn covenant.” ²⁴
5	“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.” ²⁵	“And to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], ‘uff,’ and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word.” ²⁶
6	“You shall not murder.” ²⁷	“And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right. This has He instructed you that you may use reason.” ²⁸
7	“You shall not commit adultery.” ²⁹	“And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way.” ³⁰

²³ Exodus 20:8.

²⁴ Surah 4:154 [This is an account of the injunction to the Jews and not a command to the Muslims].

²⁵ Exodus 20:12.

²⁶ Surah 17:23.

²⁷ Exodus 20:13.

²⁸ Surah 6:151.

²⁹ Exodus 20:14.

³⁰ Surah 17:32.

No.	Bible	Quran
8	“You shall not steal.” ³¹	“[As for] the thief, the male and the female, amputate their hands in recompense for what they committed as a deterrent [punishment] from Allah. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.” ³²
9	“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.” ³³	“[The true servants of the Merciful One] are those who do not bear witness to any falsehood and who, when they pass by frivolity, pass by it with dignity.” ³⁴
10	“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” ³⁵	“And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others. For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned. And ask Allah of his bounty. Indeed Allah is ever, of all things, Knowing.” ³⁶

Table 2 Source: Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 106-107.

A review of the Scriptural verses in Table 1 and the commands in Table 2 shows that the description and character of the object of worship by Christians and Muslims,

³¹ Exodus 20:15.

³² Surah 5:38.

³³ Exodus 20:16.

³⁴ Surah 25:72.

³⁵ Exodus 20:17.

³⁶ Surah 4:32.

although not identical, are sufficiently similar to warrant a conclusion that it is the same object.³⁷

Also, the Vatican during the Second Vatican Council (the gathering of Catholic bishops from around the world between 1962 and 1965) weighed in on the issue of Christian and Muslim worship of the same God. The Council, in a serious and thoughtful engagement with the world's different religions, cultures, and experiences, issued a document called *Nostra Aetate*.³⁸ The *Nostra Aetate* declaration states in pertinent part:

The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the Day of Judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.³⁹

The Council in addition cited a missive written by Pope Gregory VII in 1076 to al-Nasir, a Muslim King of Mauretania, to buttress the Council's declaration. It is worth noting that the Pope had several disputes and failed crusades, which strained the relationship between the Pope and the King. But the two men felt it was fitting for them to agree on the ordination of Servandus as Bishop.⁴⁰ In the Pope's missive to the King, the Pope underscored what the two men had in common in regards to the one God:

³⁷ Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 89.

³⁸ Hassan Hathout, *Reading the Muslim Mind* (Plainfield, Ind.: American Trust Publications, 1995), 39.

³⁹ Pope Paul VI. Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religion On Social Concern "Nostra Aetate." (The Holy See, October 28, 1965) Papal Archive, accessed April 13, 2015, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

⁴⁰ Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 97.

God, the Creator of all, without whom we cannot do or even think anything that is good, has inspired to your heart this act of kindness. He who enlightens all men coming into this world (*John 1.9*) has enlightened your mind for this purpose. Almighty God, who desires all men to be saved (*1 Timothy 2.4*) and none to perish is well pleased to approve in us most of all that besides loving God men love other men, and do not do to others anything they do not want to be done unto themselves (*Mt. 7.14*). You and we must show in a special way to the other nations an example of this charity, for we believe and confess one God, although in different ways, and praise and worship Him daily as the creator of all ages and the ruler of this world. For as the apostle says: "He is our peace who has made us both one." (*Eph. 2.14*) Many among the Roman nobility, informed by us of this grace granted to you by God, greatly admire and praise your goodness and virtues [...] God knows that we love you purely for His honor and that we desire your salvation and glory, both in the present and in the future life. And we pray in our hearts and with our lips that God may lead you to the abode of happiness, to the bosom of the holy patriarch Abraham, after long years of life here on earth.⁴¹

Considering the above Scriptural verses, the declaration of the Church Council, and the church tradition established by the popes, one must conclude that both Christians and Muslims worship the same God.

Jews and Christians in Arabic-speaking countries use Allah to reference God.⁴² For example, the Arabic Christian Bible translates John 3:16 as "For Allah loved the world so much..."⁴³ No one can argue that the Coptic Christians, one of the earliest Christian communities in the world, dating back to the first century, are traitors to the Christian faith by using Allah to mean God in their worship. During worship, the Coptic assembly often erupts in the shout of Allah when a cross is tattooed to the wrist of a child as a mark of religious and ethnic identity in Egypt, which is a predominantly Muslim and

⁴¹ Jacques Dupuis, ed., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 6th ed. (New York: Alba House, 1996), 418-19.

⁴² Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 82.

⁴³ Miroslav Volf, Ghazi bin Muhammad, and Melissa Yarrington, *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.2010), 182.

Arabic-speaking country.⁴⁴ What can be said so far is Allah is the Arabic term for God just as *theos* is Greek for God, *Bog* is Croatian for God, *Dieu* is French for God and *Chukwu* is Igbo for God.⁴⁵

Of course pre-Islamic Arabs used the name Allah to refer to their many gods such as their creator god and the giver of rain. None of the many gods was regarded as the sole deity in pre-Islamic Arabia.⁴⁶ Similarly, the Hebrews worshiped many gods prior to switching to a monotheistic covenant relationship with Elohim. Therefore, the conversion of polytheistic Arabs to Islamic monotheism can be compared to the phenomenology of the ancient Hebrews because the formerly polytheistic Hebrews adapted the use of the name Elohim to monotheism, just as the Arabs who changed to monotheistic Islam adapted the use of the name of Allah. Elohim and Allah both convey the meaning of “God” in their respective languages.

The implication of the similarity in referring to God is that Christians should not discount the Arabic term Allah as a legitimate reference to the one, true, living God. In the Republic of Indonesia, the nation with the largest Muslim population on earth, Christians and Bible societies have no problem whatsoever using the name Allah to refer to the God of the Bible. In fact, Bibles that have been translated into the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, use the name Allah to refer to the Judeo-Christian God.⁴⁷ For example, Genesis 1:1 in the Bahasa language reads, “*Pada mulanya Allah*

⁴⁴ Otto F A. Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2002), 265-66.

⁴⁵ Hassan Hathout, *Reading the Muslim Mind* (Plainfield, IN: American Trust Publications, 1995), 4.

⁴⁶ Peter Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Baha'i Faith* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 274-75.

⁴⁷ Dengan Alkitab and Jemaat Kidung, *The Bible with Congressional Hymns* (Jakarta: Indonesian Bible Society, 1998).

menciptakan langit dan bumi.”⁴⁸ This passage, when translated into English, reads, “At the beginning of everything, Allah caused to be created the heavens and the earth.”⁴⁹

I must at this point disclose that I am not a Muslim or an Islamic scholar, but an ordained Christian pastor. Most of the knowledge about Islam I have acquired comes from reading the Quran and articles and books written by Muslim scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Majeed, Hassan, and Ayoub and from speaking to Muslim leaders in my community. On March 9, 2012, I attended the Friday noon service at the Masjid Fresno Mosque in Fresno, California. After the service, Sheikh Ramadan spent about three hours answering my questions, making sure I really understood the origins and meanings of certain key Islamic terms and the fundamental principles of Islamic theology. From our discussion, the Imam left no doubt that he wanted to be sure that the knowledge I have acquired about Islam came from sources that are objective and the data have not been distorted or presented in a way that promotes a particular agenda. At the conclusion of our meeting, I was left with the impression that some Muslims, including religious leaders, may not truly understand the fundamental articles of their faith because non-Arabic speaking Muslims are not competent in the language of the Quran and Islamic prayer.⁵⁰ Sheikh Ramadan stated that Muslims who understand the orthodoxy of their religion will testify that Allah is the God of Abraham, the same God who has been revealed in the Judeo-Christian scriptures, for so it is written in the Quran (surah 3.65-67): “O followers of earlier revelation! Why do you argue about Abraham, seeing that the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Similarly, some Christians and Christian leaders do not understand the original languages of the Bible nor the history of Christian theology.

Torah and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Will you not, then, use your reason? Abraham was neither a ‘Jew’ nor a ‘Christian,’ but was one who turned away from all that is false, having surrendered himself to God.”

One can conclude that in the above passage the “followers of earlier revelation” alludes to Jews and Christians. Plainly, the text deals with the issue of the historical conflict among Jews, Christians, and Muslims and their disputes over which religious group can rightfully claim that its members are the true children of Abraham and as such valid members of the family of God. This passage acknowledges the historical fact that when God initially revealed himself to Abraham, Abraham was not a Jew or a Christian, but a Mesopotamian Semite who was raised in the polytheistic religion of his father, Terah. Consequently, neither Jews nor Christians can claim exclusive rights to a spiritual lineage to Abraham because, as the apostle Paul pointed out in the fourth chapter of Romans, God credited righteousness to Abraham for his faith prior to his circumcision, and God established his everlasting covenant with Abraham 430 years before God established the covenant of the Torah with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. This makes Abraham the spiritual ancestor of believers who are uncircumcised and circumcised. Therefore, a point that Christians and Muslims can agree on is that the faith of Abraham exemplifies the most primitive and universal essence of true religion, walking in trust and obedience to God.

Belief in Allah

The first and most important article of faith in Islam is the conviction that God exists and there is only one God.⁵¹ Muslims call the one and only God “Allah” because

⁵¹ Fatima S. A. Majeed and Amina Mah S. A. Majeed, 32.

Allah is the Arabic term that refers to the one, true deity. The first article of Islamic faith is in essential agreement with Judeo-Christian theology, for it is written in Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”

Orthodox Christianity is an unequivocally monotheistic religion. However, Christians believe in the incarnation of God in the man Jesus Christ. For in order for the sin of humanity to be forgiven and the gift of eternal life to be made effective, God had to become a human being, take the sins of all of humanity upon himself, receive the penalty of capital punishment, experience physical death, and be bodily resurrected.

The Quran testifies that Jesus was one of God’s prophets and that Jews, Christians, and Muslims must believe the teachings of Jesus alike. However, Muslims regard the Christian doctrines of the incarnation and the trinity as pagan polytheism and convincing them otherwise is extremely difficult.⁵² Even entertaining the possibility that these doctrines might be true is extremely upsetting to a devout Muslim because this might make him or her guilty of the unforgiveable sin of shirk (idolatry), for it is written in the Quran: “Truly Allah will not forgive should a partner be ascribed to Him, but He will for other than that for whom He will, and whoever ascribes a partner to Allah, then he has indeed invented a great sin.” (surah 4:48)

In order for Christians to understand why Muslims associate the Christian doctrines of the incarnation and the trinity with the unforgiveable sin of shirk, they must consider the historical and cultural context of the emergence of Islam as a religious movement. Pre-Islamic Arabs practiced pagan, polytheistic religions, and one of the features shared among some ancient Near Eastern pagan religions is the telling of legends

⁵² Hassan Hathout, *Reading the Muslim Mind* (Plainfield, IN: American Trust Publications, 1995), 31-32.

about certain deities or supernatural beings. Some of the deities were said to have engaged in sexual relationships with mortal human beings, and children were begotten as a result of these affairs.⁵³ For a pious Muslim, the supernatural conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary as a result of Mary being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit sounds quite similar to certain pagan mythologies. And then, when Christians describe the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as three distinct persons, the shirk flags start waving all over the place.

Most Christians are unfamiliar with the cultural and historical context of the emergence of Islam. Consequently, they do not realize that doctrines that have become second nature to Christians can easily be misinterpreted and the presentation of the Gospel and Christian theology seen as an attempt to entice Muslims into idolatrous beliefs.⁵⁴ Christians must become aware of and respect the cultural and historical aspects of inter-religious dialogue and relationships and learn to adjust their communication so it honors the Muslim's desire to be obedient to God and reject all forms of idolatry.⁵⁵

Finally, because various terror groups around the world associate themselves with Islam, many Christians believe that Allah is not a loving God. However, Muslims who understand the basics of their faith contend that Allah is merciful and loving. According to the Quran, Allah's kindness toward humanity is shown in surah 2:186: "Allah does not *have* to love us. Allah does not *have* to do anything for us. Allah just loves us because of

⁵³ Fatima S. A. Majeed and Amina Mah S. A. Majeed, 39.

⁵⁴ Christians in their history also struggled over the oneness of God. These struggles led to the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and show that Christians are unequivocally monotheistic and reject as heresy anything that would lead to polytheism. Christians can affirm the common belief in the oneness of God in any dialogue with Muslims.

⁵⁵ The history of Christian doctrine affirms that the trinity is NOT in opposition to monotheism. Both the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds begin with an affirmation of the Christian belief in one God.

the Quality of loving that He made incumbent for Himself because of His Eternal Mercy towards mankind, which He again made incumbent upon Himself.”⁵⁶

The Quran further states in surah 24:22:

And when my servants did ask you, concerning me, then truly I am near. I answer the prayer of he who calls out when he calls me, therefore let them listen to me, and let them believe in me, so that they may be guided. And let them forgive, and let them show indulgence. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is forgiving, most merciful.

Obviously and without doubt, the Quran portrays Allah as merciful and gracious.⁵⁷

Belief in Angels

The second Islamic article of faith is belief in the angels of Allah. Here, a great amount of overlap exists between what Islam says about angels and what the Bible says about the origin, nature, and purpose of angels. However, one cannot ignore differences.

Muslims believe that God created two types of supernatural sentient creatures: the angels and the jinn.⁵⁸ For it is written in the hadiths,⁵⁹ “The angels were created from light, the jinn were created from the smoke of fire and man was created from that which has been described to you.”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Fatima S. A. Majeed and Amina Mah S. A. Majeed, 45.

⁵⁷ Surah 24:22 is nearly identical to Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 6:14-15: “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

⁵⁸ El-Zein Amira, ed., “Jinn,” in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: an Encyclopedia*, edited by Josef W. Meri, vol. 2, 420-421 (New York: Routledge, 2006). “Jinn, or genies, are supernatural creatures in Arab folklore and Islamic teachings that occupy a world parallel to that of mankind. Together, jinn, humans, and angels make up the three sentient creations of Allah. Religious sources say barely anything about them; however, the Quran mentions that jinn are made of smokeless flame or ‘scorching fire.’ Like human beings, the jinn can also be good, evil, or neutrally benevolent.” Surah 15:27.

⁵⁹ Hadith is a compilation of traditions comprising aphorisms of the prophet Muhammad that, with reports of the prophet’s day-to-day practice, form the main source of direction for Muslims separately from the Quran.

⁶⁰ Fatima S. A. Majeed and Amina Mah S. A. Majeed, 104.

The Christian and Muslim concepts of angels are similar in that both hold that angels are created supernatural beings whose purpose is to serve God. According to the Quran, surah 16:50, “They fear their Lord from above them and they do all that they are commanded.” And from the Bible, Hebrews 1:14, “Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?”

The main difference between what Muslims and Christians believe about angels has to do with whether they have free will and are capable of disobeying God. Muslims believe that angels are not capable of transgressing against Allah because they have not been endowed with choice.⁶¹ However, Christians believe that according to Matthew 25:41 and Revelation 12:9, a certain number of angels rebelled against God and sided with Satan.

Belief in the Books of Allah

Orthodox Islamic doctrine directs the Muslim to believe in all scriptures and revelations of God, complete and in their original versions.⁶² Muslims are taught that these sacred writings were compiled and given to earlier messengers, but the original sacred writings no longer exist today in the forms in which they were originally revealed.⁶³ It is written in surah 4:136 of the Quran: “O you who believe! Believe in Allah, and his Messenger, and the Book that He has sent to his Messenger, and the Books

⁶¹ Ibid., 105.

⁶² Hassan, 34-36.

⁶³ Ibid.

that he sent before. Whosoever denies Allah, and His angels, and His Books, and his Messengers, and the Hereafter, then has indeed gone far, far astray.”⁶⁴

This passage explicitly states that it is a sin for a Muslim not to believe in all of the Books of Allah. These books are God’s law, his commands and prohibitions, which Muslims believe were initially sent forth to the messengers (the prophets) through the angel Jibril (Gabriel). Scribes wrote these instructions in book form. Orthodox Islamic doctrine states that these sacred writings were compiled in the following five books: (1) Suhuf Ibrahim, or Messages sent to the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham); (2) Tawrah, which is the Torah that was sent to the Prophet Musa (Moses); (3) Zabur, or the Psalms of the Prophet Dawud (David); (4) Injil, or the Gospel of the Prophet Isa (Jesus); and (5) Quran, God’s final message given to the Prophet Muhammad.⁶⁵

Even though the Quran commands Muslims to believe in all of the books of Allah, including the books of the Bible that make up the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospels, Muslims are taught not to believe in the Torah, Psalms, and Gospels as they exist today.⁶⁶ Abdullah Yusuf Ali argues that since the original manuscripts of the biblical texts no longer exist, there is no way to determine the accuracy of modern translations.⁶⁷ Majeed also notes that with the revelation of the Quran, the instructions of the biblical books have been repealed, and the Quran is the final revelation that suits all people at all times.⁶⁸ Cyril Glasse also believes that changes have been made to the

⁶⁴ Fatima S. A. Majeed and Amina Mah S. A. Majeed, 129.

⁶⁵ Cyril Glassé, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 72.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Elmhurst, NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur, 1987), 287.

⁶⁸ Fatima S. A. Majeed and Amina Mah S. A. Majeed, 129-130.

biblical texts that have corrupted their original meanings.⁶⁹ This conclusion is based upon surahs 2:75 and 5:13 of the Quran: “Do you, actually hope that they will believe you when already a party of them did hear the word of Allah then they distorted it, after they had reasoned, knowingly? They change the words from their places. And they forgot a good part of that which they were reminded with.”

In summary, Muslims are taught to acknowledge that the Torah, Psalms, and Gospels originally came from God, but the meanings and interpretations of modern translations can no longer be trusted. However, in spite of this obstacle, the explicit command in the Quran to believe in these books remains a potential bridge of redemptive dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

Belief in the Messengers of Allah

The messengers of Allah are human beings who have been given the code of law and the articles of faith of true religion (Islam) through the angel Jibril (Gabriel). Twenty-five such messengers are mentioned in the Quran and are listed in Table 3, below. Of the twenty-five messengers mentioned by name in the Quran, nineteen are biblical characters and Jesus is counted among them. Interestingly, in the Quran, Muhammad is mentioned by name 4 times, Jesus is mentioned 25 times, Abraham 69 times, David 16, and Moses 136 times.⁷⁰ Consequently, there are ample opportunities for Christians and Muslims to discuss the lives of certain heroes of faith that are mutually recognized and admired.

Christians must also be aware of certain beliefs about God’s messengers that are particular to Islamic theology. Muslims do not believe that it is possible for any

⁶⁹ Glasse, 72.

⁷⁰ Hassan, 20-27.

legitimate messenger of Allah to commit any sin, and they completely reject the biblical record of any of the character flaws of biblical characters they regard as messengers, such as King David's acts of adultery and murder and the incest that occurred between Lot and his daughters. However, this difference can be discussed in a positive way, for it underscores the Islamic conviction that people who are chosen by God as messengers should live exemplary lives of outstanding character. Muslims also believe that Muhammad was the final messenger of Allah, and no others will follow him.⁷¹

Table 3: Islamic Prophets and Their Christian Equivalents

Islamic Prophet (in Quran)	Christian Equivalent (in Bible)
Adam	Adam
Idris	Not Applicable
Nuh	Noah
Hud	Not Applicable
Yunus	Jonah
Ilyas	Elijah
Al-Yasah	Elisha
Sulaiman	King Solomon
Dawud	King David
Is-haq	Isaac
Ibrahim	Abraham
Lut	Lot
Musa	Moses
Zhul-Kifl	Not Applicable
Yah-yah	John
Zakariyah	Zechariah
Isa	Jesus

⁷¹ Ibid., 158-166.

Islamic Prophet (in Quran)	Christian Equivalent (in Bible)
Shu'aib	Not Applicable
Salih	Not Applicable
Ayub	Job
Harun	Aaron
Yusuf	Joseph
Ya'qub	Jacob
Isma'il	Ishmael
Muhammad	Not Applicable

Source: Fatima S. A. Majeed and Amina Mah S. A. Majeed, The Religion Is Simple: The Theology of Islam (Tawheed) (Singapore: Ze Majeed, 1988), 158-166.

Belief in the Day of Judgment

Muslims believe in a Day of Judgment (or a day of life after death) in which humans will be given a second life in which they will have to undergo a series of tests that will prove Allah's justice and plan for creation. Although some similarities can be found in Muslim and Christian eschatology, some Islamic doctrines are decidedly non-biblical. The Quran mentions several types of events, each of which describes a different facet of the Day of Judgment. These events include the hour or the last hour; the hereafter; the day of resurrection; the day of gathering, meeting, or assembling; the day of reckoning; the day of religion; the day of decision; the day of mutual loss and gain; the day of eternity; the day of coming forth; the day of distress; the day of summoning; the Approaching; the great disaster; the deafening noise; the true certainty; the overwhelming event; and the happening.⁷²

⁷² Fatima S. A. Majeed and Amina Mah S. A. Majeed, 208-209.

Muslims believe that these final acts of judgment will begin with tumultuous events on earth accompanied by panic and chaos. Then an angel called Israfil will blow a trumpet, everything will be destroyed, and the universe will remain in this condition for an extended period of time. Then the angel will blow the trumpet a second time, and all people will be resurrected and given back their bodies. People will be resurrected in the following order: the Prophet Muhammad, the rest of the messengers, the saints (the true Muslims who are not messengers), the weak Muslims, the untrue Muslims, and the non-believers. At this point the angels will descend from the heavens and encompass all of humankind, terrifying them. The experience will be so unbearable that people will want to escape from these conditions, even if escape means going to Hell. After this testing comes *jazakh*, an Arabic term for retribution and reward. Muslims believe that all of man's life on earth is a series of tests and each test has a result of pass or fail. Whether a person acquires Heaven or Hell is determined by his or her pass and fail record.⁷³

Although Christians can agree with Muslims that there will be an end to this world, a resurrection, and eternal punishment for those who persist in non-belief and doing evil, they can also see the fundamental flaw and great tragedy of Islamic eschatology: there is no real assurance of salvation, even for those who are in pursuit of submission to God. Passages in the Quran such as Surah 2:186 and Surah 24:22 testify about the general benevolence of God, but a person's ultimate fate depends upon a performance record.

But herein lies a great opportunity of freeing multitudes of people from the bondage of insecurity about their final destination. Muslims need to know about the

⁷³ Ibid., 210-212.

assurance of salvation that is guaranteed through Jesus Christ. But Christians must be careful about their motivation. Do they attempt to “convert” Muslims to Christianity in order to prove them wrong and win their version of a jihad (holy war)? Do they intend to display converts as trophies to receive the praise of men or to prove to the world that Christianity is the true religion? Or are they moved by compassion and simply want Muslims to be saved and begin enjoying some peace of mind and assurance of eternal security?

Belief in Fate

The final article of Islamic faith is the belief in the qadakh (judgment) and qadar (fate) decided by Allah, whether they are good or bad. In short, Muslims believe that Allah has decreed to pass judgment to allow fate as part of His plan for creation. Imbedded in this principle is confidence in the following attributes of Allah: Allah is good, Allah is just, Allah is all-powerful, Allah is all-knowing, and Allah has a will and an aim for everything He does.⁷⁴ The judgment that people receive from Allah is based on the simple principle of rewards for obedience and punishment for disobedience. However, Muslims make a distinction between deliberate action and non-deliberate action. Non-deliberate actions, whether good or bad, are not judged as good or bad by Allah because non-deliberate actions do not involve free will or choice.⁷⁵

With respect to fate, Muslims believe in human free will, but because Allah is all-knowing, he has foreknowledge of everyone’s ultimate fate before he or she is born into the world. Muslims also believe that Allah has a book in Paradise called the Ummul

⁷⁴ Fatima S. A. Majeed and Amina Mah S. A. Majeed, 228-229.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 233-237.

Kitab that has all the deeds of everyone and their ultimate fate pre-recorded. However, Muslims reject the idea that a person's fate is predetermined. It is possible for the pre-recorded fate of a non-believer or evildoer to be changed if Allah mercifully accepts that person's sincere repentance and submission.⁷⁶

Conclusion

After reviewing the Islamic articles of faith, one can conclude “that Christian and Islamic descriptions of God and God's commands, while by no means identical, are sufficiently similar to conclude that Christians and Muslims do worship the same God.”⁷⁷ This common denominator can allow Christians and Muslims in Nigeria to have “respectful, mutual witness to their faith as well as joint witness to the true source of human flourishing.”⁷⁸ It can inspire fighting together against idolatries connected with ethnic and religious identity and offer the prospect of life unruffled in politically plural societies such as in Nigeria. This understanding can lead to a collective battle against terrorism.⁷⁹ In my view, the actual distinctions between the Christian and Muslim God are not “deal breakers,” but rather encouragements to profound contemplation.

Some Christians might challenge the assertion that Christians and Muslims worship the same God because Christians believe that the love of God is matchlessly articulated in Christ dying on the cross for their sins and rising again, a concept Muslims repudiate. 1 John 2:23 states in pertinent part, “No one who denies the Son has the

⁷⁶ Ibid., 270-273.

⁷⁷ Mioslav Volf, 89.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 225.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 256.

Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” This might be worded this way: Muslims reject Jesus as the crucified and risen Son of God, the Savior of the world; therefore, Muslims reject God. According to those Christians who believe Christians and Muslims do not worship the same God, Muslims do not stand together with them on common ground or a common understanding of God or God’s love.

However, like the Samaritan who rescued and cared for the Israelite who had been stripped, robbed, severely beaten, and dumped on the side of the path to die, Christians must also demonstrate love, care, mercy, and hospitality to folks with whom they have an irresolvable religious dissimilarity. The Israelite who was mortally wounded and left on the roadside to die did not convert to the Samaritan’s belief system before the Samaritan would love, care for, and help him. Of the floods of unresolvable theological differences between Christians and Muslims, many may never be resolved. So rather than dwell on the numerous differences that exist between them, Christians and Muslims can bandage each other’s wounds without having to believe as the others do. As disciples of Jesus Christ, Christians have been tasked with the commission of loving their neighbors, including those who symbolize the Samaritans of their lives.

Some may think that because people worship the same God, peaceful coexistence should naturally follow. The American Civil War, which was one of the goriest wars ever, demonstrates the fallacy of that reasoning. In that war, folks really worshipped the same God and believed the same scriptures, but those common beliefs did not encourage peacemaking.⁸⁰ Mioslav Volf, in an interview with Mark Galli, notes that “Some of the worst violence in the world today between estranged religious and ethnic groups happens

⁸⁰ Mark Galli, “Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?” *Christianity Today* 55, no. 4 (2011): 28-30.

not on the battlefields but in the middle of living rooms, and it happens between people who have a lot in common.”⁸¹ So having common values does not necessarily prevent violence. However, having common values does make negotiating differences possible. In the absence of common values, people either have to live isolated in their own spaces, which is not possible in modern Nigeria, or choose violence as a course of action to settle disputes.

Forgiving

Forgiveness, far from being just a religious topic, is instead a desperately practical need in Nigeria. The religious conflict in Nigeria can be traced to the inability to forgive. The intensity of the conflict in Nigeria could be reduced if Christians practiced forgiveness. The violent religious conflict, which has intensified lately, is an attempt to settle scores of longstanding disputes. This reality makes forgiveness one of the essentials of Nigeria’s path to peaceful coexistence among its religious groups. Therefore, Christians must decide how to respond to the challenge to forgive.

The Bible commands forgiveness in Colossians 3:13-15: “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”

⁸¹ Ibid., 29.

This passage is illustrated by the story of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 50:15-21.⁸² In the story, Joseph's brothers despised and were jealous of him because of his gifts and his special relationship with their father. The brothers decided to kill Joseph but later altered their murderous plans, selling Joseph into slavery in Egypt. They devised a cover up for their wickedness. According to the Biblical account, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt for food because of a great famine. Joseph, who had become governor of Egypt and was in charge of its food supply, was in a position to exact revenge on his brothers for their mistreatment of him. But instead, Joseph offered forgiveness and mercy, thanking God, who worked out everything for his glory. The lesson here for Christians in Nigeria is that forgiveness is given not by pretending there was no offense, but by loving the offender anyway.

As the story continues, Joseph's brothers were afraid that Joseph would exact revenge when their father died (Genesis 50:15-21). But Joseph was both generous and magnanimous. He gave his brothers assurances that enabled them to understand the ultimate significance of the past and present events, of the specific moment of history that was unfolding before them.⁸³ One big take-away for Christians in the story of Joseph is this: the fact that Joseph willingly forgave his brothers and did not resent them does not mean that he denied the horrors of the wickedness they perpetrated against him or that he condoned evil. In fact, wickedness and evil can never be justified. Evil is intolerable and must be resisted, for evil is contrary to the goodness of God. But retribution is not the correct path of action for Christians to follow. Forgiveness is something Christians are to

⁸² Pierre Berthoud, "The Reconciliation of Joseph with His Brothers: Sin, Forgiveness and Providence," *European Journal of Theology* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 5-11.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 4.

do, an action that Christians are commanded to choose. It is not dependent upon the behavior of the one who needs forgiveness.

“Christians are not responsible for the moral balance of the universe. The moral balance of the universe belongs to and is the prerogative of God alone. Many people believe the ideal for forgiveness is summed up in the old adage of ‘forgive and forget.’”⁸⁴ On the contrary, forgiveness does not mean forgetting. It is true that God promises in Hebrews 10:17 that he will remember the penitent’s sins no more, but this is an ability He has not shared with us.⁸⁵ People can push the delete button on their computers, but the human brain does not have a delete button.⁸⁶ Humans have no way to control what they will remember or forget. The human tendency is to hold on to the painful incidents in their lives. However, people can choose to bear no malice even in painful events. Proverbs 17:9 states, “He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.” Berthoud says, “Here the opposite of forgiving is not remembering, but repeating.”⁸⁷ Christians must set aside the wrongs that were done to them and not seek to repeat them. Christians recognize that they do not live in an isolated universe, that despite their mistakes and the mistakes of others, life is redeemable. Things can be made right, even though they can’t be taken back. Christians confidently leave the making right to the hand of God.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Barry Seagren, “Forgiveness – Joseph and His Brothers” (a sermon preached by Barry Seagren at the International Presbyterian Church, Greatham, United Kingdom, March 14, 1993), 3.

⁸⁵ Pierre Berthoud, “The Reconciliation of Joseph with His Brothers: Sin, Forgiveness and Providence,” *European Journal of Theology* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 9.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Just as the concept of God's mercy is central to the Bible, it is also reflected in the pages of the Quran. The common refrain throughout the Quran is the Basmala, which is translated "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful." Basmala is recited before each surah of the Quran except for the ninth. The Basmala is used extensively in everyday Muslim life, said as the opening of each action in order to receive blessing from God. Reciting the Basmala is a necessary requirement for Muslims, reminding them that Allah extends mercy to the repentant.

According to Mahmoud Ayoub, repentance is a basic principle of Islamic theology and worldview and a crucial component in understanding the Quran.⁸⁹ In the Quran, the word *tawbah* is often used for repentance; it means "turning."⁹⁰ Repentance is seeking Allah's forgiveness for one's misdeeds. Surah 24:22 ask believers who have wronged themselves to become repentant, seek Allah's forgiveness, and make a sincere *tawbah*. Surah 15:100 assures Muslims that a sincere *tawbah* will result in forgiveness by Allah, and Allah will exonerate them from their misdeeds. Therefore, *tawbah* is "turning to Allah as a personal act of love and devotion and not necessarily from a state of sin."⁹¹ For example, Muslims believe that God protected the Prophet Muhammad from all sin, and it is said that Muhammad declared, "I turn to God every day seventy times."⁹² Therefore, in the Muslim worldview, "repentance is more than just asking for forgiveness; it is turning to God with sincere love and devotion."⁹³ It includes reverence

⁸⁹ Mahmoud Ayoub, "Repentance in the Islamic Tradition," in *Repentance: A Comparative Perspective* (Washington DC: Lanham, 1997), 96-98.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 96.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 97.

in the presence of Allah, attentiveness to sin, authentic expression of personal regret felt after a person has committed an act that is in disobedience to Allah, and a desire to amend one's life. The Quran makes clear that this change of heart can be realized only by divine grace.

Furthermore *awbah* and *inabah* are two other words found in the Quran that mean repentance in a wider sense.⁹⁴ According to Mahmoud Ayoub, “*awbah* has the sense of repeated returning to God with humility, devotion, and praise and *inabah* signifies turning to God for help in total submission to God's will.”⁹⁵ As the use of these words and concepts show, God's mercy is affirmed in the Quran just as in the Bible. The Quran says, “God is often forgiving and most Merciful” (surah 5:98).

As I understand the passages, it is a grave sin to disbelieve in God's infinite mercy. In surah 39:53, God declares, “O my servants who have transgressed against their souls despair not of the Mercy of Allah, for Allah forgives all sins.” Furthermore, it is said, “When God created the universe, He prescribed with His own hand for Himself, my mercy shall overcome my wrath.”⁹⁶ Finally, in surah 15:100, Muhammad declared that Allah said, “When a servant of Mine advances to Me by a foot, I advance to him by a yard and when he advances towards Me a yard, I advance towards him the length of his arms' spread. When he comes to Me walking, I go to him running.”⁹⁷

Similarly, the Jewish Talmud says, “May it be My will that My mercy suppresses My anger and that My mercy will prevail over My other attributes, so that I may deal

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 98.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

with My children in the attribute of mercy and on their behalf, stop short of the limit of strict justice.”⁹⁸ The Bible is also clear that God seeks out the sinner and rejoices at his repentance (Luke 15, Matthew 9:9-13, Ezekiel 18:23).

Other passages in the Quran make clear that private retaliation should be limited; for example, “This day, let no reproach be cast on you: Allah will forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy” (surah 12:92). Retaliation is permissible in the Quran just as in the Old Testament, but the Quran makes plain that revenge, if taken, must be strictly limited and that forgiveness is preferable.

As is obvious from the above discussions on repentance, mercy, and forgiveness, both Christianity and Islam affirm both the justice and mercy of God. God’s justice is clear in both the Bible and Quran, but it is not given adequate attention in either religious circle in Nigeria. The Bible says that people are created in the image of God. Therefore, most offenses against human beings are also offenses against God. This conclusion means that repentance addressed to God is directed to the injured party as well.

Christians have a duty to play a healing role in the process of peace building in Nigeria. In South Africa, Desmond Tutu, who chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, said, “We here in South Africa are a living example of how forgiveness may unite people.”⁹⁹ Nelson Mandela set the example. Tutu notes “When Nelson Mandela was released after twenty-seven years in jail, he declared that his mission was to the victim and the victimizer.”¹⁰⁰ Tutu said of him, “Our miracle almost certainly would

⁹⁸ Marcus Braybrooke, *Islam: a Christian Approach* (Raleigh, NC: lulu.com, 2013), 72.

⁹⁹ K. K. Kuriakose, *Non Violence: The Way of the Cross* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2004), 207-12.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

not have happened without the willingness of people to forgive, exemplified spectacularly in the magnanimity of Nelson Mandela.”¹⁰¹

I agree with Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Just as there was no future in South Africa without forgiveness, without forgiveness, there really is no future in Nigeria. Asking people to forgive is not asking them to forget. Forgiveness means abandoning one’s right to seek revenge and payback for wrongs committed, and this liberates the victim. Tutu explained, “God wants to show that there is life after conflict and repression—that because of forgiveness, there is a future.”¹⁰²

Amnesty

In many hotspots around the world, the granting of amnesty has in the majority of the cases been part of the solution. The Nigerian government should consider granting amnesty to the various paramilitary groups, especially to the members of the Boko Haram Muslim sect. Continuing on the path of a military campaign alone will not solve the problem of Nigerian’s religious sectarian violence. The Nigerian government must consider the possibility of doing things another way. Amnesty for Boko Haram must be examined as a way out of the current quagmire. In any conflict, lines of communication among the contenders have to be opened at some point, and now is the moment.

Jonathan Goodwin, the president of Nigeria, said “You cannot declare amnesty for ghosts. Boko Haram still operates like ghosts. So, you can’t talk about amnesty for Boko Haram now until you see the people you are discussing with.”¹⁰³ However, the

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 211.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Elizabeth Embu, “Jonathan Visits Yobe, Says No Amnesty for Boko Haram,” *Nigeria Daily Times*, March 7, 2013.

president intimated “that he could consider the idea of granting amnesty if members of the group, which has claimed responsibility for a series of killings of persons and bombings of private and public buildings, make themselves available physically for negotiations.”¹⁰⁴

In Northern Ireland, the Good Friday agreement was reached because several means of contact were established between the major participants in the struggle, with much of the negotiation done in privacy between officials of the conflict.¹⁰⁵ Secret contacts between the British government and the IRA from 1972 onwards facilitated the peace process. The behind-the-scenes negotiations made it possible for contentious issues to be discussed out of sight from direct media oversight and second guessing and allowed the parties involved to expand their understanding of the aims, capabilities, and ways of one another.

Kerim Yildiz and Susan Breau say, “The British government and the IRA pursued both direct and indirect contact conducted by secret intelligence service agents and related individuals. For example, Father Alec Reid served as a go-between in negotiations between Sinn Fein and the British government from 1986 onwards.”¹⁰⁶ Father Alec Reid’s participation exemplified the importance of third parties in peace making discussions.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Kerim Yildiz and Susan Breau, *The Kurdish Conflict: International Humanitarian Law and Post Conflict Mechanisms* (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2010), 239-43.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 240.

¹⁰⁷ Democratic Progress Institute, *Good Friday Agreement*, 15. [“Father Alec Reid, an Irish priest, a member of the Redemptories’ Order based in West Belfast’s Clonard Monastery, had been close to the Republicans since the start of the Troubles in 1969. He had a personal relationship with Gerry Adams, which led to his role as an intermediary and mediator between the Republican movement and a number of other parties to the conflict.”]

The existence of back-channel discussions offered a clear sign to paramilitary groups that the British government was not against a negotiated path out of the conflict. These talks paved the way for the Downing Street Declaration,¹⁰⁸ which signaled the beginning of open talks between the British government and the IRA. Whereas in the 1970s and the 1980s the official position of the British government was to reject any public contact with the IRA, the ceasefires and negotiations during the 1990s led to the success of the Good Friday agreement.¹⁰⁹

Similarly, the Nigerian government could seek emissaries and open lines of communication with the various combatants, especially Boko Haram.

Many in Nigeria, especially among the Christian leadership, want freedom to worship without fear of terrorist attacks on their places of worship. They cry out for peace but bemoan the loss of justice in any mention of amnesty for Boko Haram and similar perpetrators of religious atrocities. At the very deepest level, people want things to be as they used to be and they want the harm that has been done reversed. For Christians, their faith tells them that only the resurrection of the dead will bring back their loved ones who were killed in the religious strife.¹¹⁰ So they may find solace knowing that the scripture tells them “being absent from the body is to be in the presence of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). Therefore, Christians have to wait patiently and be very careful to not let anguish control their desire for restoration and turn it into the desire to destroy the cause of their loss. They believe without a doubt that God Almighty will

¹⁰⁸ Ciaran Mullan, “Joint Declaration on Peace: The Downing Street Declaration, Wednesday 15 December 1993,” CAIN Web Service, July 30, 2014, accessed June 2, 2015, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/dsd151293.htm>. [“The Downing Street Declaration was a joint declaration issued on December 15, 1993, at the British Prime Minister’s office located at 10 Downing Street. It affirmed both the right of the people of Ireland to self-determination and the transfer of Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom to the Republic of Ireland if and only if a majority of its population was in favor of such a move.”]

¹⁰⁹ Democratic Progress Institute, *Good Friday Agreement*, 19-20.

¹¹⁰ Biggar, 570-72.

restore their beloved to them, but the pain of their murderer surely will not. Retaliation may taste like sugar at first bite, but it eventually tastes like wormwood.

A crucial component of justice is for the government to give aid and comfort to the victim by first and foremost stopping the offender from causing any more harm.¹¹¹ In the case of the religious conflict in Nigeria, amnesty would disable Boko Haram, as the group would have to agree to lay down its arms and decommission and dismantle them. Amnesty would rob most of the perpetrators of sufficient reason to resume killing. It is important to remember that there is some justice human beings cannot mete out, and any attempt to do more than is humanly possible would jeopardize the peace process. Boko Haram and its supporters would likely see the court trials as a furtherance of the conflict in a different way.¹¹² Biggar emphasizes that “the danger with further prosecutions is that they would certainly disturb, and perhaps destabilize, the process of returning Nigeria to normal political life.”¹¹³ Attempts at prosecutions would provoke violence and many paramilitary groups would be in an uproar that their former comrades in arm are being held accountable for participating in the conflicts.

Education and Religious Study

Education is a way of building cultural networks and the means of banding institutions together. Education is an instrument for effective national peace and security in any nation. It can be used as a solution to religious conflicts and it can enhance national security. The curriculum in schools in Nigeria mandates that every student

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 572.

demonstrate proficiency in English and math before graduating from secondary school. The government can add additional requirements and thereby use education to achieve national goals.

If one of the national goals for Nigeria is peace between religious groups, religious education should be given to all citizens as part of the core courses required for graduation from secondary school. The goal here is to make a concerted effort to teach the fundamental theology that Christianity and Islam have in common in schools and religious places of worship. Structured and disciplined teaching of the theology would help both Christians and Muslims understand the origins and meanings of certain key terms and the fundamental principles of each religion's theology. The instruction about Christianity and Islam must come from sources that are objective and the data cannot be manipulated or presented in a manner that promotes a particular agenda. This addition to the academic curriculum has great potential for promoting mutual understanding and redemptive dialogue between Christians and Muslims. This type of education will produce greater opportunities for national peace and security in the society by instilling or strengthening the fear of God, personal commitment, and personal dedication in the citizenry.

Both Christianity and Islam stress peace and love in their core belief systems. Education in Nigeria could take advantage of this common core belief by stressing the importance of peace, obedience, and national security and ignoring or minimizing the differences between the religions. In this way future generations would learn the relationship of peace to national stability and security.

In the United States of America for instance, the pledge of allegiance is recited across the land in public and private schools, and many public gatherings. Although the United States Constitution calls for the separation of church and state, the pledge of allegiance has a religious educational background.¹¹⁴ American society has been sustained by the virtues of faith, hope, and love and the Christian principles of justice, fairness, and equality.

However, inclusion of religious principles in public education needs to be done carefully. South Africa provides a paradoxical case that illustrates the need to approach religious education objectively. In that country, Christian religious education was used at different times to promote and to strike down apartheid.

Christians and Muslims in Nigeria should be re-educated on the need to live in harmonious relationship with one another to enhance national security. Efforts at preventing conflicts cannot realize their goals if Christians and Muslims do not absorb the basic concept of national peace and security. Proper religious education will enable Nigeria's two dominant religions to learn to foster peace, love, and unity, if for no other reason than both Christians and Muslims accept that God is love and that loving others can bring justice and national security. All Nigerians, whether Christian or Muslim, have a divine mandate to work for justice, peace, and security. These virtues provide fertile ground for sincere, open, and constructive dialogue and effective collaboration among the various religious groups. Religious education will show the various religious groups how

¹¹⁴ John Wilbur Baer, *The Pledge of Allegiance: A Revised History and Analysis, 1892-2007*, [rev. ed. (Annapolis, Md.: Free State Press, 2007), 70-84. [In August 1892 Francis Bellamy, a Baptist minister, wrote the original pledge of allegiance and it was published in the *Youth's Companion*, September 8th 1892 issue. Francis Bellamy also served as the committee chairman of a state superintendent of education of the National Education Association. The pledge reads as follows: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."]

to respect and appreciate whatever wisdom and goodness is contained in the tenets and traditions of other religious groups. The aim here is to convince both Christians and Muslims that the other's traditions have values similar to their own and the values, applied in the service of the nation, contribute to national unity.

I strongly believe that education brings out the best that humanity has to offer and enables people to live vigorous and blissful lives. The eradication of ignorance is a matter of religious educational engagement. Religious educational engagement helps people understand what is required to be a Christian or a Muslim, guides individuals to tell God's story with respect to their own stories, and prepares individuals to hearken to God's invitation to go and serve. Through educational engagement, churches and mosques can assist learners to strive for faith-filled discussions and lives of authentic action. In my opinion, educational engagement enables Christians and Muslims to discover means of sharing completely in the activities of the culture at large, seeking to participate to the collective interest of Nigeria at all levels, and, at the end of the day, seeking the shalom of the nation.

Economic Development

One of the best means to guarantee a durable amity in Nigeria and deny paramilitary factions new converts is to encourage economic development. Economic development can provide equal opportunity for Christians and Muslims as opposed to reparations, which benefit only a segment of the society. An estimated 70 percent of Nigerians live on less than \$1.25 a day, with Northern Nigeria bearing the brunt of the economic malaise because Northern Nigeria is far from the nation's oil fields and

agricultural areas.¹¹⁵ About 75 percent of Northerners live in poverty whereas only 27 percent of Southerners live in poverty.¹¹⁶ The economic gap between rich and poor, between North and South, seems to be to be a catalyst for discontentment and a source of recruitment for religious paramilitary groups.

To extinguish this source of combustion, the government should engage in economic development programs and create an atmosphere conducive for businesses to flourish. Economic prosperity would go a long way toward stamping out the widespread violence between Christians and Muslims, which has already taken hundreds of lives and threatens to thrust parts of the country into civil war.

An economic development program could be modeled after the United States Small Business Administration program section 8(a) that has helped certain disadvantaged minority-owned businesses “develop and grow through one-to-one counseling, training workshops, and management and technical guidance.”¹¹⁷ This program offers access to government contracting opportunities, providing funding that has allowed businesses to develop into strong players in the federal marketplace.

In northeast Nigeria, which has become a fertile ground for recruitment by Boko Haram, a new generation of entrepreneurs needs a great deal of help to create businesses. Many would-be entrepreneurs from poor rural and marginalized communities lack the entrepreneurial skills they need to break out of the poverty that often feeds violent

¹¹⁵ International Fund for Agricultural Development, *Rural Poverty in Nigeria* (Rome: International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2012, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www.ifad.org/operations/projects/regions/pa/factsheets/ng.pdf>).

¹¹⁶ National Bureau of Statistics, Federal Government of Nigeria, *Nigeria Living Standards: An Overview*. Abuja, Nigeria: National Bureau of Statistics, 2006.

¹¹⁷ Small Business Administration program section 8(a).

extremism. The majority of youth in the area have no employment. Therefore, assisting people to create their own jobs is perhaps the most immediate solution to unemployment. The Nigerian government can work in this direction by helping to create and nurture new businesses, which would generate much-needed economic activity, income, and employment in the impoverished areas and deprive the various religious paramilitary groups such as Boko Haram of grounds for recruitment.

The intent of an economic development program is to “widen opportunities for participation, increase competition, and ensure the proper and diligent use of public funds.”¹¹⁸ This proposal is not anticipated in any way to encourage nepotism or favoritism toward any individual or business in quest of these opportunities on the basis of ethnicity, religion, familial status, or state of origin. In fact, the program should be conducted so as to deliberately prevent any religious or ethnic conflict.

Some may doubt whether businesses can make much of a real difference in Nigeria because of the absence of peace in the northeast. I submit that lack of economic opportunity created part of the turmoil between Christians and Muslims, exacerbated by the actions of an unjust and corrupt government that has provoked and radicalized believers in the two camps. Both Christians and Muslims are angered at the inequalities they see in their communities and they have accepted a reaction to poverty that hunts for somebody to blame. They have selected mayhem and vengeance as the remedy for economic inequality and poverty. The concept I am putting forward is that an improved economy and provision for more opportunity can be effective in countering the advances of groups such as Boko Haram.

¹¹⁸ City of Asheville, North Carolina: “Minority Business Development Program.”

Furthermore, Christians in Nigeria have a duty to consider all accounts from the life of Jesus. Proclaiming good news to the poor, bringing freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, setting the oppressed free, and proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor are insufficient if Christians are oblivious to the economic plight of the poor. Believers have a duty to care for those who are impoverished, as commanded in Matthew 25:34-40. Working to alleviate poverty is Christ-like and is a depiction of God's redemptive plan to restore all things, including peace with Muslim brethren.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented suggestions for individual and governmental action that might quell the religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. The chapter began with a concise overview of the orthodox beliefs of Islam based upon the religion's six fundamental articles of faith. As the discussion demonstrated, Christianity and Islam have plenty of theological overlap, a condition that is sufficient in itself to provide space for redemptive dialogue. Christianity and Islam are both monotheistic religions, and both teach that the God of Abraham is the only true God and that people must submit to God's will in order to experience peace and well-being. Islam recognizes Jesus as a prophet and messenger of God and that the Torah, Psalms, and Gospels are divinely inspired revelations and instructions. The implication of this is that Christians and Muslims have a great deal in common with respect to fundamental theology and Christians should not discount that Allah is the same God Christians worship. The existence of theological overlap offers hope and can be practically utilized by Christians and Muslims in Nigeria in the effort to repair their relationship. My first proposal was to recognize and appreciate the theological similarities between Christianity and Islam.

The second proposal was to let bygones be bygones. Only through forgiveness can people free themselves from a hurtful past. Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu aptly notes, “The past, far from disappearing or lying down and being quiet, has an embarrassing and persistent way of returning and haunting people unless it has in fact been dealt with adequately.”¹¹⁹ According to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, “Unless we look the beast in the eye we find it has an uncanny habit of returning to hold us hostage.”¹²⁰ Talking about forgiveness is easy, but extending forgiveness is difficult for those whose loved ones have been killed or tortured. However, the only hope for total healing and lasting peace is for the injured to forgive. Forgiveness is an essential element of both Christian and Muslim faiths and integral to a relationship with God. For the Christian, faith dictates that the wrongdoer be viewed with compassion and love even in the face of the wrongdoer’s considerable injustice. Forgiveness means foregoing any claim of wrong against the wrongdoer and granting grace to the perpetrator of an injustice. It is about injured persons releasing themselves from destructive emotions and hurtful pasts.¹²¹

Thirdly, amnesty is a tool that can be used by the Nigerian government toward resolution of the religious conflict in the country. Offering amnesty as restorative justice as opposed to imposing retributive justice will promote national reconciliation and national unity. Although extending amnesty to Boko Haram and various paramilitary groups may appear to conflict with justice and human rights ideals, the search for justice for victims of these heinous crimes may be unworkable for an already-burdened criminal justice system.

¹¹⁹ Tutu, 28.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Pettigrove, 429-433.

Another proposal for repairing Christian-Muslim relations is a concerted effort to teach the fundamental theology the two religions have in common in schools and places of worship. Teaching the theology will help both Christians and Muslims understand the origins and meanings of the fundamental principles of each religion, particularly if care is taken to ensure the teaching is objective, not manipulated, and not biased toward a particular agenda.

Finally, I proposed economic development as a way to remove the frustrations fueling the religious conflict. Government interventions that develop infrastructure, create jobs, and alleviate poverty as well as improved governance and a genuine fight against corruption may be very useful in removing the incentives for the largely impoverished youth population to be recruited into Boko Haram and similar sects.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION

This dissertation examined ways to bridge the divide between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and discussed the duty of Christians to abstain from division and instead pursue and encourage peace. Redemptive encounters and dialogue with Muslims give Christians opportunities to speak the truth about the values of the Kingdom of God and acknowledge a common interest with Muslims in steering culture and policy in the right direction and finding space for coexistence. In this final chapter, I summarize the discussion, describing the historical origin of the conflict between Christians and Muslims, the series of missteps by the colonial government and successive regimes that widened the conflict, three reconciliation models, and proposals that Nigeria could follow that might lead the country out of the current religious quagmire.

Summary

Chapter 1 described how trying to solve socioeconomic and political problems through religious lenses has only widened social crevices and led to extremist and violent attitudes and insurrections such as the Boko Haram Islamist terrorist campaign, which has killed and injured both Christians and Muslims. Nigeria has been impoverished and successive leaders have denied opportunities to Nigerians due to mismanagement and misrule, across ethnicities and religions. As a result, it has become typical for religious people to put blame on the failing system of those of opposing religions, and propose religious reform as a solution to society's many ills. This misplaced quest for a religious

utopia has given some opportunistic politicians an excuse to seek acceptability through politicized demands to religious zeal.

In Chapter 2, I presented a Biblical theology of peace and redemptive relations between Christians and Muslims. Emphasis was placed on scriptural verses that dealt with peace, love, and unity rather than division. The story of the Samaritan who rescued and cared for a Jew who had been stripped of his clothing, robbed of his goods, severely beaten, and left on the side of the road to die was presented to demonstrate the Biblical mandate for Christians to love their enemies, even those with whom they have seemingly insurmountable differences. The animosity in Jewish-Samaritan relations is analogous to the emotions in Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria. Mutual misunderstanding, mistrust, and enmity continue to the present day as animosity continues in the forms of anti-Christian and anti-Muslim rhetoric, terrorism, counter-terrorism, and large-scale military operations. In the current religious conflict in Nigeria, Christians need to ask what Jesus would want his followers to do. I believe Jesus would have Christians think of encounters with Muslims as redemptive opportunities. Also, Jesus would tell His followers to love their enemies (Matthew 5:43-48) and to love their neighbor as themselves (Matthew 22:39), including the Muslims who represent the Samaritans of their lives and with whom they have irreconcilable religious differences.

Chapter 3 discussed the introduction and spread of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria. Christianity was introduced in the south and advanced north, while Islam was introduced in the north and advanced south; both sought converts in the same communities among the same people. The march of the two groups in opposite directions toward the same points with adversarial agendas was bound to end in a hostile collision.

The colonial government was instrumental in the clash; chiefly by instituting an indirect system of rule and assuring some of the emirs in Northern Nigeria that it would restrict religions other than Islam from practicing in the area. Since coming to Nigeria, both Christianity and Islam weathered many challenges and had great impact on the country's religious, social, cultural, educational, and political life.

In Chapter 4, Christian-Muslim relations in modern Nigeria—from 1914 to the present time—were discussed. The stance of the colonial government to religious faith was described, the approaches embraced by Christianity and Islam for conversion were identified, the provisions of the Nigerian constitutions and the military administration's policies as they affected religious matters were explored, and the effects of the implementation of Sharia law was discussed. Religious fanaticism and fundamentalism were examined. Specific riots were mentioned as examples of the fanaticism and religious terrorism by the Maitatsine and Boko Haram groups was described. The interplay between politics, economics, and ethnicity in Nigeria's religious conflict was discussed. In brief, the chapter demonstrated that several factors played a role in the present state of Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria.

In Chapter 5, three models for effecting peace and reconciliation were presented. The models have proven successful in other parts of the world and might be used or modified for use in Nigeria to bring Christians and Muslims together in a harmonious, peaceful coexistence. The three models were the Nuremberg trial, the Good Friday or Belfast agreement of Northern Ireland, and the Truth and Reconciliation model of South Africa. These were chosen for their worldwide notoriety and relevance to both religious

communities. The discussion examined the workability of these models for Nigeria and the lessons Nigeria could learn from the models.

Finally, in Chapter 6, relational patterns were presented that seemed to make sense for both Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and that could be practical and helpful in normal life. Five proposals were made for addressing the challenges to Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria and reducing the conflict: (1) openness to theological similarities between Christianity and Islam, (2) forgiveness, (3) amnesty for the combatants, (4) inclusion of religious study in the educational curriculum, and (5) economic development that would remove incentives for recruitment into extremist groups.

Concluding Remarks

Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria hold the key to peace and tranquility in the country because more than 95 percent of the citizens are at least nominally Christian or Muslim. For much of the past, only minor fracas erupted between Christians and Muslims. Now, however, the country has moved beyond traditional and predictable misunderstandings into a relational predicament so severe and so intense that it demands immediate resolution. Finding a way out is now an overriding concern not only because restoration of good relations is crucial for Nigeria's peace and security, but also because it is achievable in today's generation.

Christians and Muslims must develop overlapping horizons if they ever hope to understand each other. Understanding can lead to solidarity in a country characterized by poverty, exploitation, and hopelessness. Both Christian and Muslim faiths acknowledge that the God of Abraham is the one and only true God, that God is benevolent toward all

his creatures, and that God is willing to forgive the misdeeds of those who sincerely repent. Muslims are supposed to believe that Jesus was a prophet and messenger of God and that the Torah, Psalms, and Gospels are divinely inspired revelation and instruction. In other words, Christians and Muslims have lots in common with respect to fundamental theology. However, the distrust and resentment between Christians and Muslims is so great that the mere mention of theological positions has put people of both faiths on the defensive. But acknowledging what Christians and Muslims have in common theologically could become a basis for relationships, could lead to meaningful sharing, and presents the greatest hope for dialogue.¹

The tenets of repentance, mercy, and forgiveness are basic commonalities between Christians and Muslims.² These tenets express God's nature and what goodness demands. Notwithstanding that both Christianity and Islam teach mercy and forgiveness, neither of the two major religions in Nigeria has suggested these essential teachings as a foundation for relationship. Christians and Muslims need to plunge into the depths of their own hearts and draw healing waters.

The Quran depicts God as Al-Ghaffūr (the Forgiver) and as Al-Ghaffār (the All-Forgiving One).³ The Muslim theologian Imam Al Ghazali defined forgiveness as "putting the veil over the other's evil."⁴ The imam, commenting on Allah's name Al-Afū, which means "the One Who erases sin and disregards Disobedient," says, "Forgiveness

¹ Miller, 313-15.

² Ibid.

³ Robert Charles Stade, "The Ninety-Nine Names of God: Partial Translation of Al-Ghazali's Al-Maqasad Al-Asna Fi Sharh Asama," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 17 (2006): 35-37.

⁴ Ibid.

consists in forgiving everyone who does him wrong [...] as he sees God most high is the One who does good to the disobedient.”⁵ Similarly, the Bible stresses forgiveness. Without forgiveness, the Christian faith has nothing to offer humanity. Forgiveness is the article of faith on which Christianity stands. Forgiveness comes from God, who declares sinners righteous for Christ’s sake (Romans 3:25). Martin Luther said, “God daily and richly forgives.”⁶ Although the Bible states that forgiveness comes from God, it also says that God’s forgiveness and human forgiveness are interrelated.⁷ Jesus instructed his disciples that when they pray, they should say, “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation” (Luke 11:4). Therefore, as Christians travel the road of seeking God’s forgiveness for wrongdoing, they should also pay attention to those they need to forgive.

Looking at the South African experience, I suggest that the Nigerian government is not able, for a number of practical and political reasons, to drag to court more than a small fraction of those accountable for the religious conflict in the country. For this reason, the Nigerian government must develop plans for dealing with the past and not become myopic on attempts to prosecute or on a military campaign. Government officials must develop comprehensive and creative strategies that address the needs of the country as a whole.

In the five years since the insurgency started, Boko Haram has gained control of more than a dozen towns and other areas of land in the northeastern part of Nigeria. Obviously, the government has lost ground; it seems unable to defeat Boko Haram. This

⁵ Stade, 36.

⁶ Explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed in Luther’s *Small Catechism*.

⁷ Floyd, 33.

fact rules out use of the Nuremberg trials as a model for reconciliation. “The Nuremberg trials were possible in postwar Germany only because the Allies had militarily defeated the Nazi regime and therefore possessed sufficient power to ensure the prosecution of the leaders of the Third Reich.”⁸ Another argument against application of the Nuremberg trials model is the fact that Nigeria’s criminal justice system is almost dysfunctional. Very few who commit grievous offenses like murder, armed robbery, rape, and heinous attacks ever face charges.

However, granting amnesty to members of the various insurgent groups makes some sense in this context. The legacy of religious conflict, abhorrence, apprehension, guilt, and retaliation can be solved on the basis that understanding is needed but not vengeance; dialogue is helpful but not retaliation. Granting amnesty would advance reconciliation. Moreover, amnesty is part of the ethos of forgiveness for both Christians and Muslims.

The Nigerian educational system needs to be revamped to include material that will bring religious conflicts under control and promote peace and national security. Currently, some religious leaders tell their followers that the only act that guarantees salvation is dying while fighting a jihad. Some members of militant groups blow themselves up in acts of terror in an earnest desire for and a misguided pursuit of God’s favor. These acts of terror promote violence and murder and jeopardize the possibility of redemptive relationships between Christians and Muslims. Curricular changes at the primary and secondary levels might counteract extremist views, presenting some of the

⁸ Paul van Zyl, 649.

tenets of the two faiths in objective ways that highlight common beliefs and foster understanding and appreciation of all viewpoints.

The Nigerian government should strive to establish an economic system that is just, that permits all citizens to partake in the riches of the country. A just economic system is a stable system. The government needs to embark on a mission of economic development that will deprive the various paramilitary groups of their recruits. Economic development will assuage many who attribute their poverty to not having served Allah with enough fervor and faithfulness. Prosperity will be a disincentive to those who commit to the annihilation of Western institutions they see as opposed to Islam.

As I reflect on the words of the prophet Micah (Micah 3:11), spoken more than 2,700 years ago, and their relation to the Nigerian situation, I must conclude that the problem is not Boko Haram and the other paramilitary groups. Neither is the problem poverty per se. The problem is corruption throughout the country. As in Micah's day, the system in Nigeria is rigged in favor of the rich and the powerful. The rich buy off judges. Government officials sell their integrity. And worst of all, religious leaders degrade their calling for money. The religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria is a direct result of the work of an unjust and corrupt government, which has provoked and radicalized believers in the two camps. As John Edmiston says, "Enraged at the injustices they see in their own communities, they have embraced a response to poverty that searches for someone to blame, and they have chosen violence and retaliation as the cure for injustice and poverty."⁹

⁹ John Edmiston, *The Market, the Kingdom and the Terrorists: The Spiritual Dynamics of Our Current Global Disorder*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: GlobalChristians, 2001), 176.

What can individual Christians and Muslims do in the face of religious conflict fueled by corruption, injustice, and poverty? Both the Quran and the Bible instruct adherents of their faiths to be peacemakers.¹⁰ Psalm 34:14 states, “Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.” Peacemaking is a responsibility for all Christians. Jesus said in Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Surah 2:224 of the Quran enjoins Muslims, “Make peace among men, for God both hears and knows.”¹¹ Both the Quran and the Bible speak of repaying an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but both add that there is a better way. The Quran states, “He who pardons and puts things right, then his reward is with God” (surah 23:96).¹² In the New Testament, Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.” (Matthew 5:38-48) Christians and Muslims in Nigeria are both reminded by their respective holy scriptures that someone has to be the first to break the cycle of violence.

Muslims call God “Our Protecting Friend” because of God’s generosity to humankind, his care for believers, and his created wonders.¹³ Christians believe that friendship with God is instrumental in understanding God’s character and his relationship with a broken world. God’s friendship with humans is based on his selfless love. God’s friendship with an individual continues even when the individual fails to respond to God’s invitation for relationship. “God’s friendship holds nothing back. It is not

¹⁰ Miller, 318.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Stade, 26.

emotional, self-interested, changeable, impermanent, or frail. It is self-forgetting, even self-giving.”¹⁴ God’s friendship reaches out and is ready to suffer. In John 15:12-14, Jesus said, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.” In Philippians 2:5, the apostle Paul wrote, “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” These are trenchant calls for all Christians in Nigeria to rise to the utmost standard; any who ignore these calls do so at their own peril.

¹⁴ Miller, 322.

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