

An analysis of the historical development of the relationship between Islam and Christianity in Nigeria

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Abstract

Since a close look at the situation in Nigeria shows its heterogeneity, multiculturalism and pluri-religiosity, it is rational to investigate into this phenomenon and suggest means to develop a better understanding of the historical backgrounds of, and the social, political and theological conditions for the mutual co-existence of Christians and Muslims. This is to foster the possibilities for a better future relation between both religious traditions. The positive relationship should also be extended to members of other religious affiliations, especially the adherents of African Traditional Religion, and others if existent. This article is based on some archival research and desk research methods undertaken for a number of years in order to contribute to the prevalent question of interreligious relationships in Nigeria.

Keywords: Islam, Christianity, mutual co-existence, Nigeria

1. Introduction

In an analytical study of the historical development of the relationship between Islam and Christianity in Nigeria, it is pertinent to know that as long as both religions maintained their autonomous territories or areas of influence and missionary activities in the North and South respectively, there was no obvious conflict. The emergence of conflict and misunderstandings have affected, not only dialogical discourse, but also disturbed political, economic, and even social relationships.

As we may know, there are three main religions in Nigeria – African Traditional Religions, Islam, and Christianity. These have also co-existed for so many centuries. But in this paper, emphasis will be laid on the two later religions, which are missionary in nature and have really changed the course of religious worship and understanding in the Nigerian society. Islam *الإسلام* and Christianity *المسيحية* are said to have effected this change, mainly from the point of view of conflicts and crises, their positive contributions notwithstanding.

It is the aim of this paper, therefore, to help to develop a better understanding of the historical backgrounds of, and the social, political, and theological-religious conditions for the mutual co-existence of Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. This is to foster the possibilities for a better future relation between both religious traditions irrespective of the damage done to the polity in the last fifty years (1960-2010) in the name of religion.

2. Aim of the Paper

Since a close look at the situation in Nigeria shows its heterogeneity, multiculturalism and pluri-religiosity, it is the rationale of this paper to suggest means to develop a better understanding of the historical backgrounds of, and the social, political and theological conditions for the mutual co-existence of Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, in order to foster the possibilities for a better future relation between both religious traditions, as against the experiences of the past fifty years (1960-2010).

3. The Relationship between Islam and Christianity: A Historical Excursus (1960-2010)

The pre-Independence relationship between Islam and Christianity could be said to have been 'forced' to be cordial, or rather, 'indifferent', probably because the Colonial British Government did not allow them to express their disgust for each other openly. Some people still believe that the degree of anger, animosity, killings, etc. witnessed among Christians and Muslims, especially in the North in the last three decades indicate nothing truly spiritual or really religious. The result is that Nigeria has celebrated its Golden Jubilee of political independence without anything to show for it because of so many problems, aggravated by the religious conflicts and crises that have heightened the insecurity of life and underdevelopment of the whole country. Even political parties have been formed along the lines of religious and ethnic affiliations with the result that Nigeria has suffered a lot of disadvantages mostly rooted in the lack of the recognition of merits and efficiency.

The dichotomy between the North and the South, which have been unfortunately divided along the lines of religious and ethnic affiliations was most significantly manifested in the disastrous Civil War of 1967 to 1970. It is only obvious that the aftermaths of the war and other religious conflicts have helped to deepen social, economic and political problems and mis-understandings among the people. It is pertinent to mention some of the conspicuous religious issues, or assumed religious issues, that have ignited and still heat up the polity to the discomfort of everyone, including the perpetrators from either side.

3.1 The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC)

The secret inscription of Nigeria into the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in January 1986 by the ruling military dictator, who was also a Muslim – General Ibrahim Babangida–helped to worsen the relationship between the two religions in the country. The circumstances surrounding the death of the able and courageous Journalist, Dele Giwa

(founding editor of NEWSWATCH Magazine) who dared to comment on the negative effect of such an act on a pluralist society like Nigeria still becloud the Nigeria society and her cross-cultural cum religious relationship so many years afterwards. Being a Christian and a southerner, the North has been seen as mapping out a programme of religious intimidation of the rest of the country through a deliberate Islamisation of the polity. The death of Dele Giwa and the ruthless imposition of the OIC on the Nigerian populace have made the name of Ibrahim Babangida a dreaded notice to most Nigerians, especially Christians.

3.2 The Sharia Controversy

The issue of the introduction of the Sharia as a legal code for the entire nation had already been a serious point of debate in the 70's shortly before the handover of military rule to a democratic government in 1979. Precisely stated, the Constitution Drafting Committee of 1976 had to face the hurdle of defining the role of the Sharia Court of appeal as it affected cases concerning Muslims alone (cf. Reports of the Constitution Drafting Committee, 1976; Nwanaju, I.U. 2008:208). Indeed, a strong opposition from so many well-meaning Nigerians helped to avert the intended disruption of transition from military to democratic rule on the camouflage of the Sharia controversy. It was therefore natural for some religious fanatics to use the renewed Organisation for Islamic Conference (OIC) issue some years later as an avenue for re-introducing the question of the Sharia as a formal Code for both Muslims and non-Muslims in the Constitution. The forceful adoption of the Sharia (Islamic law) by most Northern States of Nigeria since October 1999 has heightened suspicions, tensions and confrontations, though presently not as dangerous as it was a decade ago. A good percentage of Muslims themselves have also observed that the so-called protagonists of the Sharia project are not as sincere as they presented themselves at the beginning. A few of the governors who projected the issue of the Sharia as a national programme of Islamization of the country have gone into some dishonorable silence and hiding because of official indictment over corruption and popular disapproval of their heinous intention to set the nation on ethno-religious fire and confusion.

The revised code of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) rightly states in Section 1(3), thus: 'If any other law is inconsistent with the provision of this Constitution, this Constitution shall prevail, and that other law shall to the extent of the inconsistency be void'

The implication is that any attempt to impose any religious law or code of conduct for the generality of the people means an infringement of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and should be discarded. By implication, the desperate move to translate the Sharia or the Islamic legal Code into the compulsory legal code for Nigeria smacks of dissension and should be treated accordingly. Nigeria remains constitutionally a secular state. Thus, the Constitution clearly states that "the Government of the Federation or of State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion" (1999 Constitution Section 1, no. 10).

3.3 Ethno-Religious and Political Quest to dominate the Middle Belt

Apart from the OIC issue which dominated the centre-stage of

religious crisis and political discussions in Nigeria towards the end of the 80's and subsequent years, other instances of misunderstandings and violent conflicts have enveloped Nigeria, especially in the North. The North-Central part of Nigeria, particularly the area called the 'Middle Belt' has had to fight with mutual killings and destructions between Christians and Muslims, as well between the indigenes and the Hausa-Fulani settlers. In May 2004, Plateau State was a beehive of hostilities, which led to the killing of more than 1000 people. Eventually, a state of emergency was declared in the state to quell the pandemonium. Fundamentalists and Fanatics - religious and political - from both ends of the divide, that is, Christians and Muslims have contributed towards the ugly situation in the region and in the country as a whole. By so doing, they have undermined democratic development and interreligious dialogue in Nigeria. There is every indication that the recent disturbances in the state are also aimed at creating another state of emergency. But the resilience of President Goodluck Jonathan has prevented giving credence to such a game of deceit and societal disorder. Rather, his systematic approach to the issue of security and mutual co-existence in the state, irrespective of provocations remains highly commendable. Of course, one cannot forget the Zango-Kataf Crisis of 1992 and Zaki-Biam conflicts of 2001 (Nwanaju, I. 2010:100-102).

3.4 BOKO HARAM and its 'Jihad' against Western influence in Nigeria

Since 2009 when the Boko Haram Islamist Sect launched an open attack on the Nigerian Society, starting from Northern Nigeria, it has remained a nightmare and a continuous threat, both to Muslims and Christians alike. It is a group that cannot be really fixed in its operation. On the political terrain, life has not been very easy for the inhabitants in Northern Nigeria. On January 29, 2011, it claimed responsibility for the killing of the All Nigeria Peoples' Party (ANPP) Gubernatorial Candidate in Borno State, alongside six others in a bloody manner. The most pathetic aspect of it is the killing of innocent and unsuspecting street hawkers. If they claimed that the political aspirants were their enemies, what was the reason for hacking the poor traders down? To underline the political undertone of the killing, Timothy Ola in *Saturday Sun* (2011:9) reported thus, "The Islamic militants (Boko Haram) last year said it would not stop the killings in the state, so long as the governor, Sheriff, remains in power".

We can observe in this threat and subsequent execution of it, a strong political indication of the ideology of the sect. It is using political means to avenge some non-mentioned grievances and possible misunderstanding in the past. The governor's younger brother, Modu Fanami Gubio paid the price with a few others with him on the fateful day.

The consistency in the Boko Haram killings can also be buttressed by the incidence of last year, precisely in October 2010, which also involved the family of the Governor of Borno State, Ali Modu Sheriff. According to Ismail Omipidan (*Saturday Sun*, 2011:9) also, "When Alhaji Awana Ngala, an in-law to the Sheriff's family and then chairman of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) was shot dead last October (2010), allegedly by Boko Haram men, not many believed that his death had anything to do with his political ambition. However, with the killing, yesterday, of Alhaji Modu Fanami Gubio, ANPP's candidate for April polls, people now know

that there is more to Ngala's death than meets the eye". The speculation as to the relatedness of the killings to religious acrimonies – intra or extra.

When one reflects on the real and spiritual meaning of the word, 'Jihad', according to true Muslim understanding as an internal or inner struggle to live according to the mind of Allah for a moral, spiritual, or political goal (and one who struggles is a Mujtahid), one realizes that the Boko Haram sect or any other purported trouble maker in the name of Jihad is false.

3.5 Bombing in the Name of Religion or Religious Politics?

Since the Boko Haram sect officially entered the scene of the religious and political crises of the Nigerian history in August 2009, a new dimension in the disruption of national peace and harmony has also taken place, assuming a different shape and dimension. Apart from the reckless killings spearheaded by the group at its first appearance in the Northern part of Nigeria, there have been a series of bombing blasts, which are associated with it and other Islamic sects. First, there was the Golden Jubilee Independence Celebration bombing at the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja on October 1, 2010. It was an international embarrassment for the whole country. While the government was battling with the real source and cause of the bombing, there was another one on the eve of Christmas, Friday 24, December 2010.

3.6 RITUALISTS' MENACE on All Segments of Society

In the name of religion or religious connotations, many dubious people engage themselves in wicked acts of killing and maiming of human beings in order to satisfy their spiritual or mundane craving for material wealth or allegiance to the devil. By so doing, boundaries are crossed – Muslims, Christians, and African Traditional Worshipers fall victim of human sacrifice or immolation. Sometimes, there arise mutual suspicions as to the perpetrators of such acts, which lead to killings of people of other religions or even tribes, with attendant reprisals. In general, it is innocent citizens who are victims. For instance, in the same *Saturday Sun* quoted, it is reported thus: 'Saturday Sun investigation revealed that Obadore Bridge (in Lagos State) has become a favourite hunting ground for ritualists and sundry criminals. There, evil men ambush unsuspecting members of the public, hack them down and dismember them their bodies. The area is usually littered with corpses that have missing parts, such as private organs, breasts, tongues and eyes' (p.5).

3.7 The Religious Politics for the domination of Abuja

It might not be an exaggeration to claim that the idea of the late Murtala Muhammad to transfer the Federal Capital of Nigeria from the ever busy Lagos – serving then the dual function of state capital and federal capital – to Abuja in 1976 was highly welcome and rational. But the application of that noble idea has shown the resurgence of the religious politics and bias. It did not take long before a Grand Khadi was appointed for a Sharia Court of Appeal in the capital city even before the City started functioning officially as a capital territory. The controversial donation of N10 million by the Alhaji Shehu Shagari regime for the construction of a national Mosque in Abuja drew the attention and anger of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). Although the situation is relatively calm in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, there is

no doubt that activities and events in Abuja portend serious religious, ethnic, and political manipulation of issues and interests. The recent bombings in the City of Abuja: October 1, 2010 and December 24, 2010 cannot be written off as a non-issue. It indicates that Abuja is still a controversial city, not yet acknowledged by all as a truly unifying national capital.

4. Killings and Atrocities in the Name of Religion in Nigeria: Any Justification?

No true Religion makes murder or any type of killing a prerequisite for its adherents. Killing is in fact an aberration. The Abrahamic Religions can be used as veritable examples. In Judaism, it is strictly forbidden to kill. Condemning Homicide, Yahweh reveals through Moses his masterpiece, thus: "Anyone who by violence causes a death must be put to death. If, however, he has not planned to do it but it comes from God by his hand, he can take refuge in a place which I shall appoint for you" (Exodus 20:13).

Continuing, however, the same chapter (Exo.20:14) says, "But should any person dare to kill another with deliberate planning, you will take that person even from my altar to be put to death". Judaism, in the Old Testament, had zero tolerance for any form of human killing. Running to the altar for refuge as a way of asking for forgiveness was customary among the Jews. Adonijah was a typical example of someone who ran to the altar for refuge after failing to take the throne by intrigue and violence (cf. 1Kings 1:50). When he shows signs of remorse, he was forgiven by King Solomon (1Kings1:51-53).

Already in the Book of Genesis (4:8) when Cain killed his brother, Abel out of jealousy, Yahweh was very angry with him. Cain is reminded in the divine rebuke from Yahweh that a brother's blood always cries for revenge (4:9-10); it attracts curse and banishment (4:11). A brother's killer attracts the indelible mark of Cain – the mark of a murderer (4:15-16), though not to be killed by anyone.

Christianity, manifested in the teaching of Jesus Christ went a step further to decry the evil of killing by condemning anger *in toto*. Giving a new standard that is higher than the old one, Jesus taught, "You have heard how it was said to our ancestors, *you shall not kill*; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you, anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it before the court..." (Matthew 5:21-22).

St. Paul the apostle to the Gentiles went even further to elaborate his understanding of the notion of brotherly anger by telling the Ephesians never to allow anger to lead them to sin. He writes, "Even if you are angry, do not sin: never let the sun set on your anger or else you will give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:26). The ability to control one's anger against the other is a sign of *true religion*. St James writes in his admonition, thus: "Remember this, my dear brothers: everyone should be quick to listen but slow to speak and slow to human anger; God's saving justice is never served by human anger" (James 1:19-21).

Islam is very strong in the condemnation of violence. The Qur'an (XLII 39-43) does not support injury but asks for sense of forgiveness and patience in all undertakings. Killing, which some extremist Muslims regard as legitimate for the sake of Allah, is condemned by the Qur'an (cf. 3:183; 4:29; 4:92) etc. In fact, the Qur'an (2:256) warns that there should be no

compulsion in religion. 'Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: who rejects Evil and believes in God hath grasped the most trustworthy Hand hold that never breaks. And God heareth and knoweth all things'.

It has been argued that the three Abrahamic religions have something in common – belief in One God (Surah 55:188; Ex. 3:14; Ex. 20:2; Mk. 12:32). Their Abrahamic monotheism makes them unique and similar in so many things. One can rightly call them 'believers', with the implication that none of the religions should exclude the others in their own manner of manifesting their Abrahamic faith. Surah 4:92 makes it explicit that it does not behoove a believer to kill a believer except by mistake. This Qur'anic verse exposes the absurdity of the reckless spilling of human blood in Nigeria and elsewhere in the name of religion, especially between Christians and Muslims. The verse reads, 'Never should a Believer kill a Believer; but (if it so happens) by mistake, (Compensation is due)'.

Ali A.Yusuf commenting on the sanctity of human life in Islam with regard to the aforementioned Sura writes, "Life is absolutely sacred in the Islamic Brotherhood". (1983:209). It is a pity that some fundamentalist Muslims, just as similar ones in Judaism and Christianity, have given Islam a negative association with violence and murder. Sura 33:61 warns us that it is an anomaly. It reads, 'they shall have a curse on them: wherever they are found, they shall be seized and slain (without mercy)'.

Ali A. Yusuf further explains this text when he writes: "they will be deprived of the blessing and guidance of God. They sought to cause disorder in God's world – moral as well as material; but they will themselves be destroyed by the Law. Capital punishment is the only adequate punishment for treason and crimes of sustained concerted violence – for the protection of the hearths and homes of innocent citizens and the honour of their children" (1983:1127).

We can observe a wonderful correlation between the cited texts in the three Abrahamic religions. It is not only that willful killing is abhorred by them, anger is strictly frowned at. This means that the spirit of brotherhood and mutual acceptance should govern a religious community and the members of other religious communities with whom they constitute a true human society.

Above all, the three religions emphasize the nature and destiny of man as something central and significant (cf. Surah 80:17-22/16-22; 23:12-16; Gen. 1:26-27; Jn.5:29). In other words, not only that the trio uphold the fact and beauty of creation but also the resurrection of man. In summary, Alford T. Welch (1997:175) writes, 'As for our basic nature, whether we are 'born in sin' as a result of the Original Sin of Adam and Eve (essentially a Christian belief) or are intrinsically good, the glory and crown of God's creation (a theme that occurs in the Jewish scriptures), Islam adopts what appears to be a middle view, seen in Sura 91:7-10:...'.

5. Negative Effects of Religious Conflicts and Crises in Nigeria

The unruly relationship between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, especially in the northern part of the country has taken a great toll on the development of the country as a whole. It is almost a sure bet that no month passes in the country without one story of killings or the other in Nigeria.

Human life has become so devalued that people no longer know the difference between the killing of cows and goats for meals and the slaughtering of human lives in the name of ethnic, political, and religious misunderstanding. Sporadic and planned killing of human beings for one kind of provocation or the other has reduced the understanding of the *sanctity* of human life.

Religious Conflicts and Crises in Nigeria constitute more than 80% of the several factors that are making Nigeria a pariah nation. It is a country that has won the acronym of insecurity with the subsequent effect of impacting very negatively on its economic growth and development. A lot of international investors are afraid to commit their money in an unstable economy like the one of Nigeria. It is debatable which is more dangerous to Nigeria's economic growth – the Niger Delta militancy in the Southern part of Nigeria or the religious unrests in the Northern part of the country. In other words, there is inordinate destruction of government property and private investment. Series of religious disturbances, or rather, crises perpetrated in the name of religion have led to capital destruction and economic retrogression. Banks have been destroyed in the wake of religious misunderstandings, for instance. Private or petty shops belonging to self-employed people have been set ablaze and their means of livelihood destroyed without alternative provision for their continued sustenance. With the resultant unemployment associated with such a huge loss, there is subsequent crime, especially by the youth who are rendered idle or disgruntled. There is no doubt that the rapid, regular, and unrestrained violence in Nigeria, under whatever name it is perpetrated, has and can continue to degenerate the country "from a peaceful and secure environment to one marked by fear, criminality, insecurity, violence and tension" (cf. The Leader, Jan 23 – Jan 30, 2011:8).

6. Interreligious Dialogue: A Sine Qua Non In Nigeria

If "religion", as Karl H. Peschke (2009:18) defines it "is essentially an encounter between God and man", whereby God is concerned with man, turning to him and revealing himself to him, then there is an encounter which demands a response and answer in faith, love, and fulfillment of God's will. The encounter takes place in the various religious beliefs: in Christianity in Jesus Christ, and in Islam in submission to the will of Allah. Both encounters involve a deep-rooted moral decision to follow strictly the tenets of the religions concerned. To follow such ways of salvation would entail upholding the spirit of love and fraternal co-existence. But circumstances surrounding the relations between these two great faiths in Nigeria have shown a huge derailment orchestrated by the activities of fundamentalists and fanatics from both ends of the tunnel.

Thus, religious crises and conflicts in Nigeria are no longer issues to be wished away. This is because the question of Christian-Muslim relations remains an on-going debate. This is why many Nigerian scholars have tried to propose solutions based on mutual dialogue as a way out of the cauldron of indiscriminate destruction of life and property. A close watch at, and analysis, of the situation in Nigeria would show that at the *grassroots' level*, one does not really observe the degree of tension conspicuous on the intellectual and political levels of debate between Muslims and Christians, where each side struggles to justify its own religious affiliation. The radical

Muslims, for instance, argue for the *imposition of the Sharia* as the Will of Allah for Nigeria as an Islamic State. Whereas reactions from most Christians and moderate Muslims point to a non-acceptance of such a religious imposition, radical Christians like their counterparts in Islam, defend the *Crusade* of winning the entire nation for Christ. It has become an obvious fact that the mentioned extreme positions neither help the democratic development of the country nor ensure its progress in the area of interreligious dialogue in the 21st Century.

One of the major benefits of interreligious dialogue and interdependence (cf. GS 25-31) for the development of the country, both democratically and economically, is the ability to sensitize and conscientize Nigerians to embrace the spirit of unbiased patriotism, where the *identity-issue* should no longer be marked and distinguished by the prevailing religious extremism and intolerance in the country, especially in Northern Nigeria. It is a step which would help to solve the problem of uncomfortable relationship across the length and breadth of the country; as well as emphasise the 'We' in place of the 'Us' and 'Them' mentality or dichotomy. The 'We' of interreligious Dialogue should be hinged on the philosophical and existential 'We' of 'Being-together', that is, the 'We' of love and progress – 'We' of every true religion. It is the 'We' of universal brotherhood and humanity.

Therefore the critical and tensed state of the country, especially from the point of view of religion and ethno-politics leave us with two fundamental options: either allowing religious conflict to break the unity of the country, or taking radical and vigorous steps to engage in sincere and honest dialogue with one another. Taking the second option is to thread the path of peace (GS 46; 77). It is in view of this reality that certain recommendations and proposals become necessary.

7. Proposals/Recommendations

There is need for a harmonious triangular relationship between the Government, Islamic and Christian leaders in Nigeria. This means the pertinence of evolving a conscientious method of enhancing dialogue, especially through regular meetings and discussions/discourse. In fact, no government in Nigeria should be supportive of any kind of religious preference that would destroy the multi-religious nature of the polity. This suggestion is based on the past experiences of government's support of the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) issue whereby Nigeria was surreptitiously registered as a full member of the organisation in 1986. The stigma of such an act has not left the perpetrators in the history of religious conflicts in Nigeria. This means that the proposed interreligious and intercultural interactions would constitute the bedrock for Nigeria's future as a pluri-religious nations.

Again, good leadership is necessary to check religious menace. This is because a good leader sees things and considers issues objectively, including the need to respect religious pluralism and differences in opinion.

Added to the qualities of good governance and leadership is the need for government to create enabling environment for private entrepreneurship. Such conditions include constant power supply, good roads, potable water supply and security. This is because entrepreneurs can help to change the unemployment level in our society if properly encouraged. Perhaps, some of the mischievous money bags who use their

money perpetrate evil can also build genuine industries that can create lucrative jobs, not dissension in the society.

But the structures for good governance cannot be sustained in an atmosphere of massive corruption and injustice, as is the case in Nigeria. As it is today, there seems to be an indirect acclamation of corruption and corrupt practices, especially ill-gotten wealth. Sometimes, religious conflicts are aggravated by ill-gotten money through the procurement of dangerous weapons and ammunition. This is why corruption should be fought headlong because it is the only way to minimize the use of the name of religion to cause societal havoc. It is even speculated, with some certainty, that some politicians and selfish money-bags sponsor willing idle and unemployed youths to destroy persons and property in the name of religion. But the irony of corruption in Nigeria is that we condemn it, and yet celebrate its perpetrators. For instance, Peter Okorie (The Leader, 2011:9) writes, "Nigerians condemn corruption robustly, yet when the proceeds of corruption are taken home, the perpetrators get a heroic welcome, with earth-shaking, chieftaincy titles. Contradictions galore"!

The re-vitalization of education is very important in the conscientization of the populace, especially the youth on the need to avoid being misled into being tools of religious conflicts and crises in a society where dialogue and mutual encounter should be the norm.

Moreover, there is the urgent need for people of various religious beliefs to develop a deep conviction and commitment to their faith in order to avoid 'crisis of faith', which often lead to disregard for other peoples' faith and belief, manifested in wanton destruction of lives and property. If people do not express 'extreme' doubt with regard to their own faith, then they would appreciate others with love and respect. But when they are confused about their own belief, they are uncertain about what is essential for their spiritual growth. Thus, they feel emotionally insecure and bewildered, and consequently regard others as such.

One of the most important factors to be put into consideration in the strengthening of good governance in the country is the state of its security apparatus. Presently, one can argue without contradiction that the security apparatus or system in Nigeria is very porous. A good and reliable security is not only needed for investment and investors to succeed, it is pertinent for harmony and peaceful co-existence, especially in a diverse society like Nigeria.

The savagery of war (GS 79), as constantly insinuated by some people in the country, especially in the name of religion or ethnic politics, will not bring the citizenry to any reasonable destination. Rather, it will disrupt progress and harmonious co-existence. The current situation in Jos, the capital of Plateau State cannot but compel all and sundry to help in curbing the savagery of war (GS 80-82). Normalcy cannot be restored to Jos and its environs if the issue of justice and injustice is not subjected to an honest and critical scrutiny (GS 83). It would be of immense spiritual and material help if some extreme Muslims who see Jos as a haven to be won for Allah to reconsider the true meaning of Jihad as a 'struggle or striving in the name of Islam for a moral, spiritual, or political goal; and that one who struggles is considered in true Islam as a Mujtahid' (cf. Zepp, I.G. 1992:272).

8. Conclusion

Wherever genuine dialogue (GS 92) is carried out, love (GS

93) is promoted. But it has been demonstrated that the age-long conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria have rendered both essential factors – dialogue and love – very ineffective in the achievement of the desired harmony between the different segments of the society. Frequent crises have retarded religious, economic, political, and social progress. Therefore, there is need for a change of direction, which obviously requires a change of attitude towards religion and religious approach to reality. This situation also requires Islam and Christianity in Nigeria to rethink and cooperate positively for mutual co-existence. On the basis of these observations, the following hypotheses can assist in drawing a workable conclusion for a laudable result in the search for a better Nigeria. Firstly, if religious conflict and fundamentalism are the greatest challenges to good Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria today, which they are, then dialogue becomes an imperative option for mutual co-existence; secondly, a continuation of the existing religious tension, based on the persistent demand by extremist Muslims for the imposition of the Sharia as state law in Nigeria will not help to improve the already strained relations between Christians and Muslims; thirdly, there is need for a correct evaluation of this situation in terms of dialogue carried out so far, as well as the preparedness to continue further genuine dialogues, especially in relation to the present situation in Jos and other northern states of the Federation; fourthly, as already recommended, it should be continuously emphasized that a deepened dialogue between Christians and Muslims remains fundamental to Nigeria's growth and survival. Moreover, the issue of state religion has no proper place in a complex and diverse society like Nigeria in any form whatsoever. Finally, it is the opinion of this paper that love, peace, and mutual understanding should be shown to be the soteriological and the foundational teachings of both Islam and Christianity in Nigeria, as well as in the world as a whole. Perhaps, a proper evaluation and concretization of these basic factors would help to re-focus Nigeria from the dangerous alley of the past fifty years (1960-2010), which has prevented her growth as an independent and God-fearing nation.

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