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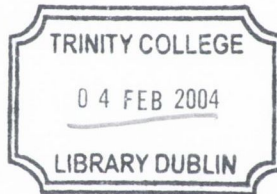
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**INVESTIGATING THE LIBERATION METHOD OF
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AS A COMMON GROUND
FOR MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN NORTHERN
NIGERIA**



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INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AS A COMMON GROUND
FOR MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN NORTHERN
NIGERIA**

**Being a dissertation submitted for the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy in
the University of Dublin**

Salihu Joseph Patrick

January 9, 2004

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my work. I agree that the library may lend or copy the dissertation upon request.

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SUMMARY OF DISSERTATION

This dissertation investigates the relevance of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue as a common ground for Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria. The region of our study is one characterised by the existence of two dominant religions: Islam and Christianity, and also one plagued by poverty. It therefore constitutes a good laboratory for testing the efficacy of the liberation method. This is undertaken to show the dynamics that facilitate interreligious encounter, employing a balance of theoretical and empirical presentations.

Theoretically, I begin by investigating the theology of liberation. Its originating context, Latin America, is closely examined, followed by its formulation in Asia and its presentation by its chief proponent, Paul Knitter. The strengths and weaknesses of liberation are manifested in its various contextual formulations. The body of literature examined reveals that liberation theology in Latin America went into demise due to a lack of integration between the intellectual critical tradition and popular religiosity. The Asian experiment suffers from a lack of structures and an unresolved tension between the proponents of liberation and inculturation. Meanwhile, the existence of two contradictory hermeneutics: those privileging social scientific methods and those privileging the poor. This analysis reveals some potential weaknesses imbued in liberation as a model of interreligious dialogue.

A theoretical analysis of religion in Northern Nigeria, the socio-historical context of the dissertation, follows the theoretical analysis. It is evident that Christianity and Islam have continued to shape the region as parallel sources of civilisation, political identity and as panaceas for socio-economic ills. Consequently, Islam and Christianity have continued to present themselves like parallel lines that

never meet. And since the two religions are intertwined with the significant issues in the region, a myth of Muslim-Christian conflicts has evolved to account for most conflicts, even those of a non-religious nature. It is evident that these conflicts result not only from the political manipulation of religion but also as a result of the significance of the two religions as moulders of the people's identity.

With the aid of my theoretical findings, I undertook an empirical study of a qualitative nature in Northern Nigeria to test the relevance of the liberation method. Due to the region's size (75% of the Nigerian landmass) I decided to focus on three cities: Kaduna, Kano and Jos. This is purposive because of the peculiar nature of these towns. The fieldwork consisted of a survey questionnaire and interviews. The analysis of the data collected revealed that although people have a desire for the liberation method of interreligious dialogue, it is impracticable due to the role that Islam and Christianity play as contradictory meaning-defining agencies in the region.

Northern Nigeria demonstrates the necessity of recognising an 'epistemological crisis' for interreligious dialogue. Muslims and Christians perceive their religious traditions as self-contained. As a result, the liberation method of interreligious dialogue, which takes the postmodern awareness seriously, is not feasible as a common ground for the two religions in the region, despite the existence of issues that make the method relevant. The implication of these findings for global interreligious dialogue is that the acknowledgement of an epistemological crisis is indispensable, and that an essentialist approach, which seeks a neutral common ground, needs to be jettisoned for one that accommodates difference.

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PREFACE

I. THE GENERAL ISSUES

The main concern of this dissertation is to explore the dynamics that enable interreligious dialogue. The transition from modernity to postmodernity¹ constituted a crisis for the field. This crisis is manifest in the vast number of models that were generated to keep the enterprise alive. In the face of these multiple and often conflicting models, comparative theologians arrived on the scene and called for a moratorium on models, and argued instead for an immediate encounter with the religious other. Granted, interreligious dialogue does not depend on the generation of 'appropriate' models. In any case, the acknowledgement of an epistemological crisis is the dynamic that necessitates interreligious dialogue. Without this acknowledgement, even the immediate encounter that the comparative theologians propose would be irrelevant.

To explore the indispensability of acknowledging an epistemological crisis, I decided to explore the relevance of the liberation model of interreligious dialogue, which takes the postmodern awareness seriously, in Northern Nigeria. This region is not only marked by poverty but also the existence of two religious traditions: Islam and Christianity. The research problem was therefore defined as follows:

Is the liberation method of interreligious dialogue relevant as a common ground for Muslim Christian relations in Northern Nigeria? If this model

¹ For the purpose of this work, modernism and postmodernism refer to the ideology of the modernity and postmodernity, the periods. Modern and postmodern, refers to the subjects of the periods while modernists and postmodernists refer to the ideologues of the periods in question.

does not function in a region ridden with poverty and injustice, what is the factor that facilitates interreligious dialogue?

The aim of this study is to find answers to these questions through engaging in theoretical and empirical research.

Theoretically, I investigated the unfolding of liberation in its context of origin, Latin America, its transition through Asia, to Paul Knitter's adoption and presentation of the method on the global level. I explored some of the dynamics that facilitated this theology and those responsible for its demise in Latin America. I did this to see if the proponents of liberation outside Latin America took the reasons for its demise seriously before employing it in other contexts. It became apparent in my examination of Asia and of Knitter's proposal that they did not examine liberation critically before its integration into an interreligious context. After analysing the theory of liberation, I explored the socio-historical context of the dissertation, Northern Nigeria. I investigated the two dominant religions: Islam and Christianity, showing the role they play in shaping the region as two sources of civilisation, political identity and as panacea for socio-economic ills. This triple role has constituted these religions as self-contained traditions, leading their adherents not to acknowledge an epistemological crisis.

Having explored the theory and socio-historical context of the dissertation, I undertook an empirical study of a qualitative nature to investigate liberation in Northern Nigeria. I administered a survey questionnaire to final year sociology students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (Kaduna), Ado Bayero University, Kano and the University of Jos and teachers in two secondary schools in Kano. I also

interviewed 29 people - religious leaders, politicians, academics, conflict resolution experts and human rights activists - from across the religious divide.

II. THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

To present my findings properly, the dissertation is divided into two broad sections. The first deals with the theory of liberation and our socio-historical context, namely Northern Nigeria. The second section provides a detailed discussion of the empirical data collected in the field and the conclusions drawn from them. I analysed the survey questionnaire and the interview data in three broad sections, to enable me explore the issues concerned in this dissertation and also to ground my conclusion on the empirical material. In the course of presenting the interviews, I included many direct quotations in order to present the views of my interviewees as objectively as possible. In addition, direct quotation manifests contrasting viewpoints adequately.

The dissertation is made up of nine chapters. Chapter one critiques the theory of liberation from its unfolding in Latin America, its transition to Asia and its adoption into the field of interreligious dialogue. A background study of the liberation method and the framework of my empirical study precede this chapter. Chapter two describes the relationship of Islam and Christianity in the socio-historical context of our study. It demonstrates that the two religious traditions provide parallel life meanings for their adherents. Chapter three describes the field within which I conducted the empirical study, the methodology adopted and the process of the fieldwork.

Chapter four opens-up the data analysis by examining the findings of the questionnaire that I administered in the field. It concerns itself with establishing the relevance of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue, the cause of Muslim-

Christian conflicts and the level of exclusive commitment of the respondents to their respective faith traditions. Chapter five deals with my analysis of the data relating to the socio-economic situation in Northern Nigeria, while chapter six deals with the impact of this socio-economic situation on religion. Taken together, these chapters strive to establish the relevance of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue for a poverty stricken Northern Nigeria.

Chapter seven deals with data relating to the cause of Muslim-Christian conflicts in Northern Nigeria, seeking to demonstrate the role that Islam and Christianity play in moulding non-religious issues. Chapter eight deals with the feasibility of fashioning a common religious programme of liberation, to deal with the issues of poverty and injustice, from the resources of the two disparate traditions. Drawing from these empirical findings, the conclusion analyses the nature of interreligious dialogue, stressing the indispensability of acknowledging an epistemological crisis and the relevance of the motif of hospitality.

INTRODUCTION

I. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The issue of finding a common ground for interreligious dialogue is an indispensable one. If two or more parties who possess different views of reality, without possessing the fullness of truth, were to interact then a common ground is required. Modernists took the issue for granted because they presuppose the existence of a universal phenomenon that defined every other reality. The task of interreligious dialogue, therefore, was to establish that common reality, which cuts across all the religious traditions. In this case, the different faith traditions were considered expressions, albeit in different ways, of the same reality.

As a result of the above assumption, postmodernity brought a great challenge for interreligious dialogue. Its celebration of difference and its consequent rejection of overarching narratives meant that the issue of a common ground was contested. Each religion was seen to constitute a complete system in itself that did not allow access to those outside its fold. Put simply, since the religions are closed systems, dialogue is unnecessary. Even when required, it must not imply the transformation of the religions, which the universalist, modern worldview presupposed. Taking this postmodern awareness seriously, some theologians continue to argue that, despite the constitution of the religions as holistic systems, there exists in each of them a basis that allows for the transcending of their boundaries.

John D'Arcy May holds that it is the contradiction of isolation and permeability that creates the frustration, which manifests in violence, communalism and false consciousness. He maintains that the schema of permeability is always a

possibility and even the disagreements that exist between the religions indicate that communication is taking place, since these involve interaction. He argues:

It is possible to sustain these differences and yet communicate because of the tacit yet very basic consensus about the myriad unmentioned things we all take for granted and unconsciously hold in common so we can get on with our everyday lives. Even in the worst cases imaginable. ... There is unsuspected common ground so vast as to be indeterminable: all the common places of day-to-day orientation in *lebenswelt* ('the world of everyday life'), what Alfred Shütz called 'the paramount reality' tacitly presupposed in our common sense coping with the physical and social ambience into which we were all socialised, however differently.¹

Sharing this space, therefore, presupposes a common ground, even if this is not consciously articulated. The parameters raised above imply the existence of what Jürgen Habermas describes as 'a paradigm of mutual understanding', which takes into cognisance the perspectives of the speaker and the listener and makes interpersonal communication possible. According to him, in every interaction a given unanalysable background is present, which provides the context and resources for mutual understanding. These 'pre-theoretical' dimensions of interaction nurture converging terms and meanings that facilitate consensual interpretation.²

Significantly, these insights by May and Habermas allow for the possibility of a meta-narrative, no matter how undetermined it may be, that shapes and takes account of our divergent narratives. Modernists were preoccupied with establishing a more determined common ground. Postmodernists, on the other hand, have cast

¹ John D'Arcy May *After Pluralism: Towards an Interreligious Ethic* (Munster: Lit, 2000) pp. 68-69

² Jürgen Habermas, "An Alternative Way out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative Versus Subject-Centred Reason", *From Modernism to Postmodernism*: 589-616. Lawrence Cahoon, Ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996) pp. 592-593.

aspersions on this effort, maintaining that what obtains is the incommensurability of narratives. We shall explore the eras that nurture these tendencies and their divergent influences on dialogical theology. Our approach shall be exploratory, with the aim of providing a basis for understanding the same transition within dialogical theology.

A. MODERNITY

The modernists' project thrives on effacing cultural and historical specificity in favour of a universal operator that is its own referent. This presupposes the existence of a common ground that underlies and shapes the chaotic disparities of reality. Yet the power it gave to the individual to discover certitude, thanks to René Descartes, created an irresolvable tension within modernism.

The term modernity has been variously employed and was in use long before the era which it specifically designates.³ It gained currency in cultural circles roughly around the 16th century when it was used to refer to the period that followed ancient and medieval times. By the 18th century it had evolved from a cultural marker and was associated with dynamism, change and updating. In the 20th century it was used to refer to a diversified cultural tendency between the 1890s and the 1940s.⁴ The period of the Enlightenment is conventionally considered the first phase of modernity. This is an 18th century philosophical movement commonly linked with the 17th century Age of Reason. This period witnessed great advances in science, which was

³ Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven and Yale: Yale University Press, 1993) pp. 146-147.

⁴ Elspeth Graham, "Introduction: The Context and Language of Postmodernism", *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences: 5-23*, Joe Doherty et al, Eds. (London: Macmillan, 1992) p. 7.

identified with increase in knowledge, individual liberty and equality.⁵ It was therefore characterised by optimism in its perspective on human progress. This optimism led the champions of the Enlightenment to challenge traditional authorities, particularly the Church. They emphasised the primacy of unbridled reason in the search for truth and reclaimed the authority of the individual.⁶

After 1948 another strand of modernism emerged and challenged the monolithic view that science and rationality constitute the only route to understanding and truth. Philosophers insisted on the existence of multiple perspectives that allow for diverse ways of reaching eternal truth. This trend is popularly referred to as relativism. Interestingly, it did not challenge the notion that eternal truth is one but only the manner of its search. Aesthetic strategy substituted pure rationality, resulting in the massive production of literary, artistic, philosophical and political works. The outstanding personalities of this era are Nietzsche, Marx, Lenin, Weber, Baudelaire, Joyce, Pound, Manet, Picasso, Saussure, and Einstein. Characteristic of this strand was its protest against the rationalist-instrumental method. This explains its pessimism and scepticism regarding the ability of science, reason and industrial capitalism to realise the Enlightenment project. Yet despite the initial excitement that it generated, eternal truth still proved illusory.

The trauma that attended the First World War brought this era to a close and the efforts towards reconstruction ushered in the myth of the “Hero”. This myth was aimed at ending the ravages of war and enthroning the ideals of progress, which the war had interrupted. The expression of the myth was variegated, in keeping with the

⁵ Elspeth Graham, “Introduction: the Context and Language of Postmodernism”, *Postmodernism and*, p. 9.

⁶ Don Cupitt, *Taking Leave of God* (London: SCM Bookroom, 1993) pp. 18-20.

relativism it had dethroned. This resonates in the eclectic amalgam of the artistic (Picasso and Eliot), the coupling of beauty and rationality (e.g., Bauhaus Movement of the 1920s) and the authoritarianism of Mussolini's Fascism (one hero intent on imposing himself on society to the detriment of the old order or existing alternative ideologies) and social realism.⁷

The emergence of the United States of America (USA) and world capitalism, at the end of the Second World War, prompted a re-orientation in the modernists' project. The Enlightenment project was authoritatively placed on a firm footing this time around, because it was harnessed to the status quo. Planners, artists, architects, and intellectuals took centre stage. But this implied that modernism, which was always revolutionary, was turned against itself in the process of its canonisation. An assertive liberal ideology succeeded in taming the rebellious spirit it embodied, forcing elitist modernism to abdicate its experimental role.⁸

It is necessary to set a given phenomenon within a historical period for the sake of clarity. This, however, has its disadvantages because periodisation serves as a veneer on the rough surface of modernism, concealing its contradictory strands. The two dimensions of modernism, the existence of absolute truth and the ability of the individual to discover it, were in continuous tension and the efforts to find a resolution, ranging from structuralism to realism and behaviourism to humanism,

⁷ Elspeth Graham, "Introduction: The Context and Language of Postmodernism", *Postmodernism and*, p. 9.

⁸ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997) p. 37.

explain the shifts and experimentations we have so far analysed.⁹ One of the difficulties that attended the search for an ultimate foundation is that: “it must probe beyond the more or less coherent but always provisional conceptions through which a particular epoch understands itself in order to find its lasting significance.”¹⁰ For the essentialists and rationalists reality is always a discovery of what is already given as an innate essence, while the constructionists held that reality is always constructed.¹¹

In any case, harnessing the modernists’ project to the establishment led to an unprecedented deception in the movement. Its claim to have discovered the fundamental basis for all reality amounted to adorning the myth with the garb of reality. It declared that the tension has been resolved and that there was no need for further exploration for material or ideological progress. This delusion met with a twin-protest. On the one hand, the *avant garde*/subversive, populist, anti-establishment spirit, characteristic of earlier protest, reasserted itself. The other strand of protest was radical and established a break with modernism by jettisoning the fundamental premise of the exploration of the one truth and the preoccupation with progress, the modernists’ project. In its place a new project, preoccupied with flux and fragmentation, was inaugurated which eventually came to be referred to as

⁹ Elspeth Graham, “Introduction: The Context and Language of Postmodernism”, *Postmodernism and*, p. 11.

¹⁰ Louis Dupré, *Passage to*, pp. 8-9.

¹¹ Douglas Kellner, “Popular Culture and the Construction of Postmodern Identities”, *Modernity and Identity*: 141-175. Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman, Eds. (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) p. 143.

postmodernism.¹² Before turning our attention to postmodernism, it is worthwhile looking at the influence of modernism on interreligious dialogue.

B. MODERNIST THEOLOGIANS OF RELIGIONS

The modernists' mindset that characterised philosophy, the arts and literature also left its marks on theology, and especially in the development of liberal theology. It also provided the impetus for building bridges between the religions and helped a great deal in the evolution of the pluralist school of dialogical theology. An exploration of the works of John Hick and Wilfrid Cantwell Smith reveals this influence. If the philosophers of the Enlightenment and their descendants were searching for eternal truth in the chaos of life, these theologians expressed passion in searching for the same underlying universal truth that cuts across the different religious traditions. It is not surprising, therefore, that instrumental-rationality played a major role in the development of their theology of religions, to which we shall now turn our attention.

1. John Hick

Hick likens his theology of religions to the Copernican Revolution in astronomy. Copernicus was a Polish priest who rejected the theory of Ptolemy that maintained that the earth was the centre of the universe, with all the other planetary bodies, including the sun, revolving around it. Hick argued that traditional theology of religions situates Christianity at the centre of the religious universe. The essence of his revolution is to prove that the centre of the religions is God, around whom all the religions, including Christianity revolve. He further asserts that the efforts of

¹² Barry Smart, "Modernity, Postmodernity and the Present", *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*: 14-30. Bryan Turner, Ed., 4th Edition (London: Sage Publication, 1993) p. 20.

inclusive theologians could be likened to scientists who had to create many epicycles in the solar system to resolve the contradiction in Ptolemy's theory. Inclusive theologians are, in the same fashion, trying to resolve the contradictions that exclusivism generates. As far as Hick is concerned, our pluralistic situation demands a revolutionary conception of the religions. It also demands that Christianity abandon its claim to being the only true religion and allow God, who lies beyond any religion, to come to the centre.¹³

Doing away with the centrality of Christianity, however, still left the christological question that occupies inclusivists, unresolved. Hick employs a revisionist christology to get around this theological obstacle. While Christians must not discard the teaching that God became man in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, they must not take the teaching literally, since this inevitably leads to exclusivism. To imply further that Christianity is the only religion founded by the God-man is to stress its necessity for universal salvation.¹⁴ The incarnation must therefore be considered a Christian myth, albeit a useful one, that affirms humanity's reconciliation with God expressed in Graeco-Roman fashion. Nevertheless, such expression within a cultural category places limitation on the event and blinds Christians to the different expressions of the same reality in other thought categories, thereby impeding genuine encounter with people of other religions.¹⁵

¹³ John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1973) p. 131.

¹⁴ John Hick, *God Has Many Names: Britain's New Religious Pluralism* (London: Macmillan, 1980) p. 58.

¹⁵ John Hick, "Jesus and the World Religions", *The Myth of God Incarnate* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977). John Hick and Paul Knitter, Eds. Pp. 170-171.

After clarifying these christological questions, Hick proceeds to explain how the religions possess divergent perceptions of the same divine reality. Here, he appeals to Kant's theory of knowledge, and in particular the distinction between an object (*noumenon*) and its perception by the human mind (*phenomenon*). Hick emphasised that all our knowledge is to some extent subjective, determined by language, culture and personal presuppositions. Hick employs this subtle distinction in regard to religious experience, insisting that the divine mystery is completely transcendent and removed from our actual experiences. Consequently, our knowledge of the divine will always remain imperfect, as it is shaped and inspired by our cultural and religious experiences and this, Hick believes, accounts for religious diversity.¹⁶

Ingenious as Hick's philosophy is, it leaves a major problem unresolved. He seems to presuppose a personal deity, which alienates adherents of religious traditions that do not subscribe to one. He addresses this problem by expanding the traditional concept of salvation in Christianity (reconciliation with God through the merits of the Christ-event) to embrace the transcending of the ego and getting in touch with the 'real'. If salvation is thus constituted, then it could accommodate those who do not subscribe to a personal God. Hick points to the fact that all religious projects are means of liberation from greed, oppression, obsession and fear, and that they put their adherents in contact with the 'real'. By employing the term real, he believes, he is able to reconcile both the personal and impersonal conceptions of the absolute, since all religions believe in the existence of a transcendent reality that is beyond human articulation, and that is also the source of salvation.¹⁷

¹⁶ John Hick, *Problem of Religious Pluralism* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1985) pp. 24-25.

¹⁷ John Hick, *Problem of*, p. 39.

Notwithstanding this basic unity, Hick allows for the existence of conflicting claims between the religions. He tries to show that his pluralist theology is not meant to domesticate the difference, but rather to demonstrate that conflicting claims could give rise to a complementary view of the religions. Moreover, in the light of their aspiration towards the same goal, these differences fade into irrelevance.¹⁸

In response to his critics, Hick asserts that the conflicting truth claims of the religions could lead to two positions: scepticism, which rules out the truth claims of the religions as illusory; or dogmatism, which leads to retaining truth claims in an exclusive manner. For him, the most realistic position for the religions would be to hold on to a hypothesis that allows for a mutual existence of various truth claims. He refers to this as a hypothesis because the complementary model is not based on any objective reality, yet it is all the same necessary for genuine encounter. Drawing from Kant again, he states that as God is a concept not an experience, so also is the 'real'. Hence, we need the concept of the real to cope with our inevitable pluralism.¹⁹ In Hick's theology, heavily influenced by modernists' categories, we see his efforts against all odds to establish some form of common ground for interreligious encounter.

2. Wilfrid Cantwell Smith

The theology of Wilfrid Cantwell Smith is best understood against his background as a historian of religion. Smith contends that faith is universal and basic to all religions irrespective of its expression in these divergent traditions. Taking note of the limitation of the term 'faith', he gives it a broad definition to mean the serene

¹⁸ John Hick, *Problem of*, pp. 93-95.

¹⁹ John Hick, *Problems of*, pp. 243-244.

'confidence' and 'joy' that equips one and provides a sense of meaning to life. He describes its quality as "...profound and ultimate and ...stable no matter what happens to oneself at the level of immediate event."²⁰ Hence, he believes that his employment of the term will give expression to the experience of the transcendent across the religions. The particular expression of faith in these religions is representative of the basic human potency to open up to the transcendent. Faith, however, must be kept distinct from belief, which constitutes ways of expressing faith that cultures and times determine and shape. These beliefs are usually concretised in religious creeds. Smith refers to beliefs as intellectual constructs amounting to the reduction of the transcendent into terms that are often metaphorical in nature. Beliefs result from the human need to clarify and express faith-experience.²¹

Unfortunately, faith has no concrete form or shape apart from beliefs, which, together with art and ritual, reflect it. Smith sees religious traditions as human constructs that go through the process of development in response to an interaction with the transcendent. Yet while theology constitutes mere human endeavour, religions are more than mere inventions. Beliefs are insufficient to express faith but all the same, they mediate faith. Having established the distinction between faith and beliefs, he then proceeds to invite all the religions to develop a 'world theology'. Smith argues that human beings are unified in their common religious quest for the transcendent. This quest demands that people of diverse religious traditions should reinterpret their beliefs in the light of their shared faith, a truth that has only begun to dawn on humanity.²²

²⁰ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) p. 12.

²¹ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and*, p. 12.

²² Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a World Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979) p. 103.

Smith finds the impetus for his world theology in the borrowing or exchange of elements that has been going on between the religions and which the history of religion has considerably highlighted. He maintains that the religions have only one history, constituting a holistic project, with each of them as a part in the process. The quest for a world theology is only an effort towards making explicit the already existing exchange of beliefs between the religions.²³ The era of in-house theology by the religions is over, so also is theology of religions from the singular perspective of a given religion. The emerging world theology demands that the transcendent is expressed with reference to beliefs held by all religions. Consequently, the religions need to participate concretely in each other's faith. This further requires that we search beyond our particular beliefs to discover the unity of faith in all religions. A discovery will aid every religion to modify itself with reference to the unity of faith, leading to the emergence of a world community of faith, reflecting on a common faith story. Theology then becomes a reference activity in this project and no belief about adherents of another tradition is considered valid without the consent of the adherents themselves. The same applies to the expression of faith by a given religious tradition about itself. It becomes valid only if it is acceptable to others:

At issue here is the momentous distinction between faith and belief... there is probably no statement about my faith that I would wish to make that I could not on principle hope to explain to an intelligent, modern, devout, informed, Muslim or Hindu friend - and explain so that he would understand, and yes, in the end, would accept. Especially I suppose, if he were something of a mystic, as well as a rationalist. Nor should I expect him to turn to "believe" anything, if he were intelligent, that I should not find intelligible and intelligent. (What reason would he have for believing anything that I would not?)²⁴

²³ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a*, p. 6.

²⁴ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a*, pp. 101-102.

Smith's reduction of faith to the intellectual and contemplative tradition is apparent in the above and limits those who are eligible to participate in the conversation he proposes; in this the modernists' mindset comes across clearly.

In respect of absolute truth, Smith speaks of the fundamental error of all religions. This error he identifies as the over-identification of the media of revelation with the forms of revelation (God, truth, finality and transcendence) themselves. He maintains that Western theology is the prime culprit of this practice, which he comes to regard as idolatry. To claim that one possesses absolute truth is to equate belief with faith, which is practically the same as idolatry.²⁵ Smith's theology of religions, like Hick's, is shaped by modernists' tendencies, as we have noted in the parameters he sets above. We shall now turn our attention to postmodernism.

C. POSTMODERNITY

The radical strand of protest to modernism could be traced to the reactionary, counter-cultural and anti-modernist movements that were characteristic of the late 1960s. The proponents of these movements strove to break loose from the stifling effect of scientific rationalism. Though these movements were anti-institutional, stressing the individual's self-realisation, they were fermented in institutions (universities and centres of higher learning) and rippled into the streets to find expression in rebelliousness culminating in the global upheaval of 1968. This specific uprising was

²⁵ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Idolatry in Comparative Perspective", *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Towards a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*: 53-68. John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, Eds. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987) pp. 58-59.

a failure by all standards, but it is commonly accepted as the catalyst of the postmodernism that emerged between 1968 and 1972.²⁶

Postmodernism has a long and varied history. It was first employed in cultural theory to express the various shifts taking place in the arts which suggest a break with modernism's version. The German philosopher, Rudolf Pannwitz is reputed to be the first to refer to the term as a socio-cultural marker in 1917 in expressing the cultural nihilism that he had adopted from Nietzsche. In 1939 Bernard Iddings Bell engaged it to declare the end of secular modernism and the restoration of religion in public discourse. The historian Arnold Toynbee also employed the term in reference to the mass revolution that attempted to end capitalism. Despite all these references, the term became dominant in literary criticism only in the 1950s and the 1960s against aesthetic modernism. It soon filtered into the field of architecture with the same tone of protest. In the 1980s, it gained currency in philosophy in relation to French post-structuralism and as a reaction to modern rationalism, utopianism and subsequently, foundationalism.²⁷

The most glaring presentation of the radical departure of postmodernism from modernism was in the philosophical field. Philosophers began making claims in favour of a new philosophy that parts company with the Cartesian-Lockean-Kantian tradition and its metaphysical search for the foundational guarantee of all philosophical methods.²⁸ Postmodernism soon became a catchall term, with its use in

²⁶ Barry Smart, "Modernity, Postmodernity and the Present", *Theories of*, p. 20.

²⁷ Lawrence Cahoon, "Introduction", *From Modernism to Postmodernism: 1-28*. Lawrence Cahoon, Ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p. 3.

²⁸ Douglas Kellner, "Postmodernism as Social Theory: Some Challenges and Problems", *Postmodernism, Theory, Culture and Society*: 239-270 5(June) 1984, p. 240.

journalism where it was brought into play to describe various events from, "...rock, videos to the demographics of Los Angeles to the whole cultural style and mood of the 1990s."²⁹ Although the discussions on postmodernism began in the USA, the attempt to conceptualise it as a social theory in the 1970s was made in France and drew heavily from French sources.³⁰

The revolution of modernism is the deconstruction of the traditional worldview, informed by the spirit of the Enlightenment. In this sense, postmodernism could be regarded as a second deconstruction, but of a different kind. Unlike modernism, it does not seek order but glories in chaos. James Beckford's characterisation of postmodernism is both incisive and instructive:

1. A refusal to regard positivistic, rationalistic, instrumental criteria as the sole or exclusive standard of worthwhile knowledge.
2. A willingness to combine symbols from disparate codes or frameworks of meaning, even at the cost of disjunction or eclecticism.
3. Celebration of spontaneity, fragmentation, superficiality, irony and playfulness.
4. A willingness to abandon the search for over-arching or triumphalist myths, narratives or frameworks of knowledge.³¹

²⁹ Lawrence Cahoon, "Introduction", *From Modernism*, pp. 3-4.

³⁰ Douglas Kellner, "Postmodernism as Social Theory: Some Challenges and Problems", *Postmodernism, Theory*, p. 242.

³¹ Quoted in Paul Heelas, "Introduction: On Differentiation and Dedifferentiation", *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*: 1-18. Paul Heelas, Ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) p. 4.

Postmodernism strives to shatter all systems of value, of what is true and false, legitimate and illegitimate. It denies the possibility of capturing the origin and source of reality or any deeper reality behind phenomena, and even rejects the existence of such reality. Analysis of representation came to take the place of discussion on reality. As a result, it is deliberately superficial, striving to show that unity is actually plurality and that the human self is a multiplicity of forces or elements and not a united entity. Postmodernism therefore pays more attention to the margin than the text.³²

Postmodernism, as should be expected, does not have a monolithic expression, and lacking a common orientation, it leaves ample room for confusion.³³ Different shades of postmodernism are discernible. Hierarchical postmodernism argues that modernism has been thoroughly transformed in all its ramifications, thus allowing for the emergence of a new social reality, though it stops short at making a normative claim. Methodological postmodernism is the most aggressive form of the trend. It denies the possibility of rational inquiry by subjecting truth, rationality and meaning to severe deconstruction and is negative in its approach. Positive postmodernism is the reconstruction of the methodological deconstruction of modernists' claims through the presentation of a suitable alternative.³⁴ Notwithstanding the differing orientations in postmodernism, there is general agreement in the assertion of pluralism and indeterminacy by the rejection of the search for certainty and completeness, the substitution of representation for reality and the prevalence of playfulness and fiction

³² Paul Heelas, "Introduction: On Differentiation and Dedifferentiation", *Religion, Modernity*, p. 4.

³³ Lawrence Cahoon, "Introduction", *From Modernism* p. 2.

³⁴ Lawrence Cahoon, "Introduction", *From Modernism*, pp. 17-18.

in place of the realist truth.³⁵ Let us examine the impact of this trend on dialogical theology.

D. POSTMODERNIST THEOLOGIANS OF RELIGIONS

Just like modernism before it, postmodernism soon found its way into the theology of religions. The school of thought that emerged, articulated by George Lindbeck and S. Mark Heim, maintains that religions are incommensurable constructs. Because they are founded on different perceptions of the divine, the issue of a common ground between or even within them is not possible. They advise us to shelve our search for the foundational and appreciate each religious tradition in its own right. Anything short of that will amount to imposing our limited perception on other faith traditions. In line with postmodernism, they invite us to celebrate and not to domesticate our differences.

1. George Lindbeck

The pioneer of this postmodern theological school is George Lindbeck, who refers to his perception as a post-liberal one, presupposing the end of liberal or modernist theology. Central to Lindbeck's argument is the implication of anthropological, sociological and philosophical findings on interreligious relations. He distinguishes between the propositional-cognitive, the experiential-expressive and the cultural-linguistic theories of religion. In the first category, propositional-cognitive, religion deals with words and thoughts expressed in the form of propositions like creed and dogmas. Here, the data of revelation is given within the limits of our intelligibility and then expressed in practice. So the presupposition is that the possession of right

³⁵ Lawrence Cahoon, "Introduction", *From Modernism*, p. 4.

dogma leads to right practice. The experiential-expressive perception of religion reverses the propositional-cognitive perception. In this case, experience precedes any articulated knowledge of the divine. This category suggests the possibility of a common divine experience underlying all religious expressions.³⁶

Lindbeck rejects both of these approaches to religion and proposes the cultural-linguistic theory of religion, which is in line with the challenges of postmodernism. According to this model, religion constitutes a cultural or linguistic universe that gives meaning and direction to life. This conclusion is based on Lindbeck's criticism of the first two perceptions. To begin with, divine reality transcends our categories, so that to suggest that it can be packaged in propositions is preposterous. Then, looking at the opposite perception that gives primacy to experience over religious knowledge, Lindbeck maintains that it is impossible to have any religious experience without the possession of thought categories for that experience, since our cultural background supplies us with them, religious experiences are pre-determined and pre-conditioned.³⁷

Religion, therefore, consists of our acquired data, akin to cultural and linguistic data. It is the religious language that we receive from culture that shapes and produces our religious experience. Hence, religion is not a question of a primal experience seeking expression in language. Acknowledging differences in cultures, therefore, Lindbeck maintains that religious experiences are divergent and rules out the possibility of a core religious experience, for that would presuppose the existence of a 'generic language'. Derivatively, religious languages and experiences can be

³⁶ George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984) pp. 16-17.

³⁷ George Lindbeck, *The Nature*, pp. 34-37.

fully understood, only within the comprehensive context of the different religions. The religions constitute themselves as independent, self-sufficient worlds of meanings, and address themselves in this fashion to their adherents. Thus no religion can be understood from the framework of another.³⁸

This model renders the concept of a common ground obsolete, and though Lindbeck admits this to be a weakness, he also sees it as a source of strength for interreligious dialogue:

This lack of a common foundation is a weakness, but also a strength. It means, on the one hand, that the partners in dialogue do not start with the conviction that they really basically agree, but it also means that they are not forced into the dilemma of thinking of themselves as representing a superior (or an inferior) articulation of a common experience of which other religions are inferior (or superior) expressions.³⁹

Lindbeck maintains that the parameters of interreligious dialogue, so far, have been fashioned from the dictates of Christianity, notwithstanding the neutrality of the Bible in relation to the enterprise. So his model gives non-Christian religions the opportunity to engage in the dialogical enterprise on a level playing field by dispensing with the issue of a common ground, which may not be compatible with their theological foundations. Mark Heim takes this postmodern awareness to its logical conclusion.

³⁸ George Lindbeck, *The Nature*, p. 23.

³⁹ George Lindbeck, *The Nature*, p. 55.

2. S. Mark Heim

Steeped in the Evangelical tradition but also with sufficient experience of Asia to appreciate other religious traditions, Heim proposes what he terms 'extended pluralism'. This implies a criticism of pluralism, which according to him will be pluralistic enough only if it allows for different salvations instead of a single salvation or religious end. The key to a genuinely pluralist hypothesis, according to him, lies in the recognition of the existence of more than one religious end.⁴⁰ He sets his argument within the context of the debate in the theology of religions, which focuses almost exclusively on the common core that the religions share, or on their mutual incommensurability and with each side at best trying to make reference to the opposite position. He argues that both positions should be integrated within the same framework since they are not completely incompatible.

The philosopher, Nicholas Rescher, who tries to resolve the scholarly chaos that has marked the chequered history of philosophy since Descartes, influences Heim's approach. Rescher maintains, in the face of the differing schools of thought, that a given position is rational only when it is viewed from a particular perspective. Truth is therefore determined by perspective: "We seek to discover what this is, and in so far as we believe we do we may rightly hold that it is more valid than conclusions reached from other perspectives."⁴¹ This stand goes beyond the assertion that reality is pluriform, to suggest an irreducible plurality, since perspectives mutually exclude each other. While we make our claims to truth, we must recognise the right of other religions to make their absolute claims, because every tradition

⁴⁰ S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995) pp. 129-130.

⁴¹ S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth*, p. 134.

while maintaining the universality of its claims has to admit that it is only partially grasped by those outside it. But this perception does not close the door for discussion and argument among the various perspectives, consequently making dialogue indispensable. It also takes away the poor perceptions and caricatures that are normally associated with those who do not share a particular perspective. What is more, it allows for and also encourages mutual witnessing to the truth claims of the religions.⁴²

This moves the discussion to the issue of religious ends. Heim draws his inspiration for this position from the ‘critical pluralistic’ theory of Michael LaFargue, who argued that religious goods stake a claim on those who hold them, eliciting both response and reverence. Consequently he argues:

“God”, “Nirvana”, “Tao”, etc. have irreducibly different meanings. These are not meanings possessed by realities (or a single reality) that can be defined apart from the meanings. These meanings are the foundation of the valid claims made by these realities on the devotion of the believers. To this extent they are constitutive of the being of God, Nirvana, and Tao as objects deserving religious commitment.⁴³

These aspects of belief are concretely substantial for the believers of a particular tradition who share a common experience. Religious goods are therefore indistinguishable from their media. Heim goes beyond the experiential dimension of LaFargue’s argument into the eschatological realm. The different media of salvation carry on into the afterlife. He asserts the existence of the hierarchy of salvations in the one heaven in a sense that suggests that some are better than others and that the

⁴² S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth*, p. 143.

⁴³ S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth*, p. 150.

Christian fulfilment (full communion) encompasses all the other fulfilments (restricted participation). Yet this does not make them less qualitative for those who subscribe to them in this life.⁴⁴

He finds Biblical support for his position in the doctrine of the Trinity. He reiterates that since God is pluriform, there is the possibility of the existence of multiple and really different ways of relating with him. He boldly maintains that a Christian cannot profess the reality of the Trinity without believing in the reality of differences between religions:

If the Trinity is real, then many of the specific religious claims and ends must also be real. If they were all false then Christianity cannot be true.... The Trinity is the map that finds room for, indeed requires, concrete truth in other religions.⁴⁵

For Heim therefore the religions must not surrender their truth claims because these claims constitute the required muscles for sustained interreligious dialogue. The postmodern awareness is indeed seriously articulated in Heim's dialogical theology, which celebrates the difference of the ultimate in the religions, their ends. What can we make of the postmodern challenges?

E. CONSTRUCTIVE POSTMODERNITY

Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of Language Game (*Sprachspiel*) is popular in the postmodernists' camp and it is variously employed. Jean François Lyotard cites him

⁴⁴ S. Mark Heim, *The Depth of Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids: Eardmans, 2001) pp. 272-273.

⁴⁵ S. Mark Heim, *The Depth of Riches*, p. 167.

extensively, to propose the incommensurability of narratives. Wittgenstein brings to our awareness the fact that every language game has its distinctive characteristics and can be judged only in its own terms. But that is not the final word from him. He warns against the dangers of private language games, stressing the possibility, and even the necessity for the overlapping of language games.⁴⁶ In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein argues against the possibility of a private language, the language of the 'solipsistically closed subject'. Apart from maintaining that one cannot indulge in a thought other than one's own, he also maintains that one cannot indulge solely in one's thought. This means that our language games have meaning only in so far as they are open to the input of other language games.⁴⁷

So, while maintaining that postmodernism abhors metanarratives, Lyotard does not discard them completely. Speaking of justice, he contends that a multiplicity of the notions of justice does not necessarily lead to relativism, to an inability to make judgements. He argues, however, that the idea of justice should be undetermined out of fear that conceiving it as a metanarrative could do damage to those narratives that would be marginalized in the process.⁴⁸ This is in line with his proposal for a universal, admittedly inconsistent, metalanguage that accommodates paradox and paralognism.⁴⁹ It also conforms to Charles Jenck's description of the metanarrative

⁴⁶ Jürgen Habermas, "An Alternative Way out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative Versus Subject-Centred Reason", *From Modernism*, p. 593.

⁴⁷ David Krieger, *The New Universalism: Foundations for a Global Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991) p. 115.

⁴⁸ Barry Smart, *Facing Modernity: Ambivalence, Reflexivity and Morality* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1999) pp. 147-148.

⁴⁹ Jean Francois Lyotard, "The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge", *From Modernism to Postmodernism*: 481-504. Lawrence Cahoon, Ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996) p. 495.

appropriate to the postmodern age, one that conforms to "... relative absolutism or fragmental holism", and makes all truth propositions contextual.⁵⁰

Going by our analysis of the works of the postmodernist theologians of religions, we see that Lindbeck almost throws in the towel on the possibility of interreligious exploration, appealing to the incommensurability of the religions. Heim, though allowing for the same incommensurability, does not foreclose dialogue but sees in the mutual exclusivity the very motivation and impetus for encounter. In relation to interreligious dialogue, we could refer to Lindbeck as a deconstructionist, thanks to his cultural-linguistic model and qualify Heim as a positivist (or constructionist) due to his Trinitarian approach to difference. The postmodern challenge is clear: a pluralistic worldview does not exist, what obtains is incompatible worldviews.⁵¹ So, while rejecting the search for a universal theology of religions, Panikkar proposes an alternative dialogical theory in which:

...the polarities remain and the ideal is not seen in a universal theory, but in an ever emerging and ever elusive myth that makes communication, and thus mutual fecundation, possible without reducing everything to a single source of intelligibility or to mere intelligibility. Agreement means convergence of hearts, not just coalescence of minds. There is always place for diversity of opinions and multiplicity of mental schemes of intelligibility.⁵²

⁵⁰ Charles Jencks, "The Death of Modern Architecture", *From Modernism to Postmodernism*: 471-480. Lawrence Cahoon, Ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996) p. 478.

⁵¹ Raimundo Pannikar, "A Universal Theory or a Cosmic Confidence?", *Towards a Universal Theology of Religions*: 153-228, Leonard Swidler, Ed. (New York: Orbis Books, 1987) p. 127.

⁵² Raimundo Pannikar, "A Universal Theory or a Cosmic Confidence?", *Towards a*, pp.141-142.

This admonition is relevant in our global age where incommensurable worldviews sometimes have to co-exist as a matter of necessity.

F. THE REALITY OF GLOBALISATION

The search for a common ground for interreligious dialogue is still ongoing and becomes even more intense in the face of globalisation. The most impressive feature of globalisation is the increased interconnectivity between different parts of the world in such a way that there is a remarkable compression in time and space. Consequently, events taking place in one part of the world have a telling impact on areas far removed from it. This “complex interconnectivity” has become all the more familiar:

Nowadays, goods, capital, people, knowledge, images, crimes, pollutants, drugs, fashion and beliefs all readily flow across territorial boundaries. Transactional networks, social movements and relationships are extensive in virtually all areas from the academic to the social.⁵³

The world is accordingly reduced to Marshall McLuhan’s vision of the “Global Village” or the “Global Neighbourhood” of the United Nations.⁵⁴ Globalisation, thus conceived, has implications for economic, social, cultural and political aspects of life. It is therefore an all-embracing phenomenon and provides the context for contemporary world events. The interconnectivity that is central to it has serious implications, even if it is not as far reaching as it is often suggested.

⁵³ John Tomlinson, *Globalisation and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers, 1999)

p. 2.

⁵⁴ John Tomlinson, *Globalisation and*, p.3.

Despite the seeming dominance of Western influence on the global scene, cultural exchange is not a one-way traffic. The tendency of reverse colonialism, which means the dominance of non-Western cultural motifs on some Western facets of life, is increasingly being experienced. Some examples of these are the Latinisation of Los Angeles, the development of classical Indian music and the increasing demand for Brazilian films in Portugal. The main catalysts of multiculturalism are immigrants and tourists. Immigrants are not always integrated into the mainstream of their host society and usually constitute themselves as a subculture. This has become an increasing source of conflict in Britain. The recent appeal made by the British Home Secretary, David Blunket, to immigrants to integrate into the cultural mainstream of the British society was met with a fierce reaction. The fluid nature of tourism defies concrete evaluation because tourists by nature are extra-territorial. They purchase their liberty by means of the contract that allows them to be in the territory of their choice: the right to ignore native concerns and feelings and to restructure the world to fit their wishes or to depart if this is not possible.⁵⁵

Globalisation is still unravelling and constitutes not only a mind teaser but also a call to greater responsibility in the world as it gathers momentum and leaves in its wake:

...something that has never existed before, a global cosmopolitan society. We are the first generation to live in this society, whose contours we can as yet only dimly see. It is shaking up our existing ways of life, no matter where we happen to be. This is not - at least at the moment - a global order driven by collective human will. Instead, it is emerging in an

⁵⁵ Zygmunt Bauman, "Morality in the Age of Contingency", *Detraditionalization*: 49-58. Paul Heelas, et al, Eds. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999) p. 53.

anarchic, haphazard fashion, carried along by a mixture of economic, technological and cultural imperatives. It is not settled or secure, but fraught with anxieties, as well as scarred by deep divisions. Many of us feel in grip of forces over which we have no control. Can we re-impose our will upon them? I believe we can. The powerlessness we experience is not a sign of personal failings, but reflects the incapacities of our institutions. We need to reconstruct those we have, or create new ones, in ways appropriate to the global age.⁵⁶

The reality of globalisation challenges every life-defining institution; cultures and religions especially. Any orientation that is founded on deliberate isolationism is decisively questioned.

The context in which we live today is multicultural, with other meaning systems infringing on our experiences. We are witnessing the emergence of a global form of life that demands communication across meaning systems and has therefore come to unseat "...subjective experiences of insight, revelatory events and monological procedures of reality testing."⁵⁷ In face of the seeming failure of dialogue as conversation, the growing consensus among theologians of religions seems to be pointing towards global praxis as being capable of providing us with a universal context for encounter and therefore establishing the common ground that has so far eluded interreligious dialogue. Its growing acceptance is echoed in the movement towards an interreligious formation of a global ethic, championed by Hans Küng, and which preoccupied the discussions of the World Parliament of Religions in 1993 (the centenary celebration of the first parliament) and again in 1999. This

⁵⁶ Anthony Giddens, "Globalization"; available from

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/events/reith_99/week1/week1.htm, Internet; accessed 25th September 2001.

⁵⁷ David J. Krieger, *The New*, p. 125.

concern with global praxis provides the launching pad for the liberation method of dialogue.

G. THE LIBERATION METHOD OF DIALOGUE

Liberation theologians of religions are pluralist in orientation and presuppose a common mystical thread that runs through all the accidentals of various religious beliefs. But because of global injustices and ecological devastation, both pressing issues, they have switched their focus from what obtains within the religions to what obtains around them. They refer to this approach as global responsibility; thus creating the impression that understanding between the various religious traditions is possible only if their adherents take responsibility for global well-being. This ethical-practical tradition has for its measuring yard the Biblical phrase: "By their fruits you will know them."

Put simply, doctrine or beliefs must be judged by their ethical implications. The orthodoxy of a doctrine is not determined solely by Scriptures and Tradition but by its capacity to reflect the law of love. Judged by this criterion, the proponents of this school insist that Christianity has obtained a low mark so far in history because it encouraged cultural imperialism in parts of the world and nurtured anti-Semitism, which consumed Europe in the 20th Century. This is, however, not an invitation to Christianity to jettison its cherished beliefs but to re-examine and re-interpret them in the light of love.⁵⁸

How does this fit into our postliberal theological schema? One of the postmodern challenges to interreligious dialogue is the suspicion that one religion

⁵⁸ Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002)

may impose its meaning system on another in the name of genuine pluralism, akin to sophisticated particularism. Since there is no neutral standpoint within the religions the only opening for dialogue will be to refer to a meaning system that concerns all the religions, not instead of but in addition to the ones to which they differently subscribe.⁵⁹ The proponents of liberation maintain that there is a reality that undeniably faces us all, which is “much more identifiable and immediate and pressing than Hick’s ‘really real’ or Pannikar’s ‘one religious fact’.... This universal reality impinging on all religions can be pointed to with one word: suffering.”⁶⁰ Suffering is divided into two broad categories: injustice, which includes poverty, victimisation, violence, patriarchy, and ecological devastation. It is easy to deny the existence of a common mystical experience, but not the common human experience of suffering. And the challenge it poses is so immediate and urgent that any religion that ignores the call to act in the face of its harsh reality passes a vote of no confidence on itself. This context, for liberationists, constitutes a common context in which all the religions can stand and act together.

The basic claim of liberation is that its method surpasses the insistence on the incommensurability of all religions. Liberation theologians of religions are also eager to point out that the issues that preoccupy them are not only on the agenda of theologians but also on those of statesmen and politicians who are insisting that our continual existence depends on our willingness to act together to overcome the global threats that confront us all. This awareness has already brought to the forefront the discussion on the formulation of a global ethic, mentioned above, to give direction to our global co-existence. Since the global ethics envisioned will constitute a

⁵⁹ David J. Krieger, *The New*, p. 125.

⁶⁰ Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies*, pp.136-137.

consensus on values, it follows then that no other agency is better qualified to formulate it than the religions, specialists in the field of ethics. Hans Küng articulates the necessity for the input of the religions in the global ethics thus:

There can be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions.

There can be no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.

There can be no dialogue between the religions without research into theological foundations.⁶¹

Interreligious liberationists claim that this dialogue is not only possible but it is already taking place in reality, and, unlike other forms of dialogues in the past, it is being manifested at the grassroots with the poor taking the lead in many situations and forcing everyone to listen.

II. FRAMEWORK

In this dissertation, I shall investigate the relevance of the liberation method of dialogue as a common ground for Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria. On the one hand, the situation of injustice and poverty in the region renders the method relevant. On the other hand, it does not suffice as a common ground because Islam and Christianity, the two dominant religions in the region, constitute themselves as self-contained traditions. The refusal of their adherents to acknowledge an epistemological crisis, which facilitates genuine pluralism, forestalls genuine

⁶¹ Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (London: SCM Press, 1991) p.

encounter leading to interreligious conflicts. To present this hypothesis adequately, I will deal with the following sub-problems:

1. The first sub-problem is to determine whether the liberation method of dialogue is relevant to Northern Nigeria.
2. The second sub-problem is to investigate the factors engineering Muslim-Christian conflicts in Northern Nigeria.
3. The third sub-problem is to inquire into the possibility of establishing a common ground for Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria.

Hypotheses:

1. The liberation method of dialogue is relevant to Northern Nigeria because the issues of injustice and poverty that it deals with are prevalent in the region and religion is not divorced from these issues.
2. Muslim-Christian conflicts are prevalent in Northern Nigeria because the two religions have endowed the region with a triple, conflicting heritage: civilisation, political identity and socio-economic panacea. Their adherents presuppose that their respective traditions have adequate resources to deal with all the exigencies of life.

3. Since Muslims and Christians do not acknowledge an epistemological crisis, the possibility of establishing a common ground for interreligious dialogue is not feasible. Hence, even issues of injustice and poverty, instead of constituting a bridge, only serve further to polarise them.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

In this study, I intend to use Northern Nigeria as a laboratory for teasing out the liberation method of dialogue and establishing the indispensability of acknowledging an epistemological crisis for interreligious dialogue. The interaction of Islam and Christianity in the region is akin to Samuel Huntington's concept of the clashes of civilisations.⁶² Islam and Christianity claim the unquestioned allegiance of their adherents and in times of stress, they draw from the wellspring of their respective traditions, hence further exacerbating the circle of conflicts. Therefore, the acknowledgement of an epistemological crisis would render each of these religious traditions inadequate and force them to seek mutual enrichment, which is required to engineer genuine pluralism. The situation in Northern Nigeria typifies our global existence, where people of different religions share the same constricted space yet claiming self-sufficiency, as they offer different universes of meaning to their adherents. It is constantly becoming obvious that multiculturalism does not necessarily lead to genuine pluralism. The continual reaffirmation of these differences, celebrated in the postmodern awareness, rather constitutes a clog in the wheel of interreligious dialogue as it is presently conceived. This situation has led to the generation of numerous and conflicting models of dialogue.

⁶² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of the World Order* (London: Touchstone Books, 1996).

As a matter of interest, this research is coming at a time when some theologians are calling for a moratorium on the theologies of religion. They conclude that since the theology of religions has come full circle without producing any significant fruits apart from the multiplicity of conflicting models, it is time to reverse the method. Instead of waiting to craft a theology of religions before engaging in dialogue, these theologians argue that we should dialogue comparatively and in the process a theology will emerge. The articulators of this school are Francis X. Clooney and James L. Fredericks.⁶³ My position, judging from my observation of Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria, is that a comparative approach is only possible when those engaged believe that another religious tradition could enrich theirs. In Northern Nigeria the reverse is the case, as Muslims and Christians believe that all the resources they need for life exist solely in their tradition, with the other tradition either significantly deficient or satanic. The theology of religions has failed, so far not because of the want of an adequate model, as the comparative theologians seem to presuppose, but because the different religious traditions continue to see themselves as self-sufficient systems that do not stand to gain from other traditions, which they consider deficient.

Another factor that continues to cripple interreligious dialogue is the failure to take the postmodern challenge seriously enough. Even dialogical theologians who claim to do so continue to carry with them the essentialist baggage of presupposing that a common context for dialogue is discernible. In the case of the liberation method, this is situated in eco-social issues. As we shall discover in our study of the Northern Nigerian scenario, these issues could constitute a basis for polarisation instead of constituting building blocks for a common context. I think interreligious

⁶³ Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies*, pp. 203-215.

dialogue would make ample progress if the existence of a network of common grounds, which we shall tease out with Jacques Derrida's concept of 'hospitality', were taken seriously rather than some fictitious common ground. Since we are not striving for syncretism in interreligious dialogue, the various religions would not be outmoded; rather, acknowledging an epistemological crisis would expand the grounds they possess for transcending themselves. This would facilitate their ability to encounter each other on their own respective sacred space in order to receive mutual enrichment.

IV. DEFINITION OF TERMS

A. COMMON GROUND

Since interreligious dialogue refers to the encounter between two and more religious traditions or their adherents, it requires a horizon of encounter. Conventionally, the type of dialogue that is employed usually determines this context. Some focus on religious experience as the foundation on which to build conversation. Others focus on the history of religious founders, while others dwell on the comparison of sacred texts. Without a common reference point, it is difficult to begin or even sustain dialogue. This makes the establishment of a common ground necessary to the process. The modernists' mindset defines religion in terms of universal ideas that are common to them all and argues for the possibility of discerning these common threads. But postmodernism deals the whole project of a common ground a grievous blow and rather celebrates the essential differences of all religious traditions. Its proponents insist that searching for a metanarrative does violence to individual

narratives.⁶⁴ In an age that celebrates difference, but is also experiencing intense multiculturalism and pluralism, encounter between the different religious traditions can no longer be avoided. In this study, we shall explore the possibility not of a neutral common ground but of a network of common grounds, existing within the religious traditions themselves. Derrida's concept of hospitality inspires this proposal, which seek to demonstrate that the existence of a neutral common ground is unrealistic.

B. LIBERATION METHOD

The liberation method of dialogue emerged within the context of the search for a common ground for interreligious dialogue. Liberation theology, from which it is largely cloned, was groomed in the context of Latin American Christianity. This theology seeks to make an option for the poor and therefore to take up the issues of injustice within the framework of Christian spirituality. Here the Bible is approached with the hermeneutic of suspicion and is subjected to reinterpretation in the light of the circumstances, and vice versa.⁶⁵ Due to the level of poverty in Asia and its multi-religiosity, Asian theologians particularly Aloysius Pieris began to establish the relationship between liberation and interreligious dialogue. Paul Knitter gives explicit expression to their ideas and maintains that focusing on the issues of injustice and ecological devastation will provide a common context for global interreligious dialogue. The religious traditions themselves will be approached with a hermeneutic of suspicion and would be integrated into the process only to the measure by which they enhance justice and ecological integrity.

⁶⁴ Barry Smart, *Facing Modernity*, p. 148.

⁶⁵ Juan L. Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Dublin: Gills and Macmillan, 1977) p. 8.

C. EPISTEMOLOGICAL CRISIS

Alisdair MacIntyre, dealing with the incommensurability of traditions of inquiry, refers to the necessity for acknowledging an epistemological crisis.⁶⁶ Simply put, this is a situation in which a given tradition realises its incoherence and sterility in certain aspects and explores its latent resources or those of another tradition, for enrichment. The “dissolution of historically founded certitudes” is indicative of this crisis. It is the second stage in the process of the development of a tradition. The first stage consists of the acceptance of key beliefs, texts and authorities without question; the second stage is the identification of inadequacies within the tradition hitherto taken for granted as being self-sufficient and the third stage is the reformulation and re-evaluation of the tradition in response to the inadequacies identified. This third stage implies the transformation of the tradition to overcome the sterility resulting from its inadequacies, possibly by appealing to the resources of an alien tradition, if one exists.

MacIntyre’s three stages of the development of tradition reflects Raimundo Panikkar’s three levels of discourse or *kairological* moments, which further aid us to understand the process that leads to genuine pluralism. The first level he refers to as argumentative discourse or morphological hermeneutics. This takes place within a particular culture, religion or worldview. Here, a common ground exists founded on taken-for-granted truths. The method involved in discourse is that of verification and argumentation with reference to an established set of rules. Meaning is determined by

⁶⁶ Alisdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) pp. 361-363. Peter Berger refers to this as a crisis of credibility and makes the case that structural secularisation, the existence of multiple religions in a given context does not necessarily lead to pluralism, if this crisis, which he refers to as subjective secularisation, does not take place. Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (London: Penguin University Books, 1973), p. 131.

what is true or false. It is by means of this form of discourse that we are separated from what is strange or unknown.

There is an opening, however, at the second level, which he calls diachronic hermeneutics or boundary discourse. It comes into play when we are dealing with a culture or historical period removed from our own. Since this discourse cannot appeal to common criteria in respect of truth and meaning, it sets its criteria for those within it and so demarcates its worldview from those outside. It then seeks to exclude or assimilate them in an inclusive manner. The problem is that this hermeneutic remains within a given cultural tradition and is limited by a desire to establish the historical and cultural continuity of the tradition concerned. Consequently, it is equally inward looking despite its recognition of a different worldview.

To transcend the radical distance that exists between divergent worldviews, another level of discourse is required. This Panikkar refers to as disclosive discourse or diatopical hermeneutics. This level of discourse transcends the narrow confines of a particular worldview and creates a "horizon of encounter" within which the different worldviews could "co-respond" with each other, acknowledging their diversity. This is the level of discourse that engineers genuine pluralism.⁶⁷ Derivatively, a multi-religious environment does not necessarily move a religious tradition to the third stage. The acknowledgement of an epistemological crisis or crisis of credibility is required within the different religions that share the multi-religious context. If this crisis is acknowledged, then the shift from argumentative discourse, through boundary discourse to disclosive discourse becomes a possibility.

⁶⁷ R. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-Cultural Studies* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979) pp. 8-10.

PART ONE

THEORY AND SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

CHAPTER ONE

THE LIBERATION METHOD OF DIALOGUE

The emergence of liberation theologies in the mid-60s disturbed the theological scene. These theologies - feminist liberation theology, black liberation theology and Latin American liberation theology - challenged all those who take the theological enterprise seriously. Of them all, Latin American liberation theology remains probably the most profound, the most articulate and the most challenging.¹ It was so far reaching in its radicalism that it eclipsed the political theologies of the first world. Apart from its distinctive methodology, which constitutes it as a new theological paradigm, it evolved within the collective pastoral vision of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin American. That being the case, the structures of the church were readjusted to accommodate the new theology. Many third world theologians see in this liberation theology a new hope for making theology relevant in their continents, especially Asia and Africa.

Experimenting with liberation theology in Asia, however, introduced a new dimension to it. Its evolution in Latin America has been within one religious tradition, Roman Catholic Christianity. Unlike Latin America, where Christianity

¹ Liberation theology motivated the revolt that brought the Sandinistas into power in Nicaragua, where it met its first contradiction: whether to continue its revolutionary stand or to support the Sandinistan anti-popular measures. Nevertheless one also has to remember that its failure in Guatemala brought about an untold repression from the government, one that the Catholic Church is yet to recover. David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Oxford: University of California Press, 1990) pp. 312 and 314.

predominates, the key to Asia lies in the twin issues of poverty and religious pluralism. Any genuinely Asian liberation theology, therefore could not afford the luxury of avoiding religious pluralism. This has necessitated the integration of liberation theology with interreligious dialogue to give it a truly Asian character. That the development of liberation theology in Asia has been painfully slow is due to the failure of its being universally accepted by its theologians who are still divided over the issues of liberation and inculturation, which theology seeks to integrate. In addition, the Church in Asia did not adopt it as a pastoral vision as it did in Latin America, nor is there any indication that other religious traditions have done so. So the liberation theology of religions remains an orphan seeking a foster home. This notwithstanding, there are reports of groups at the grassroots operating in the manner of the Basic Christian Communities (BCC).

Globally the emergence of postmodernism shattered most of the presuppositions of interreligious dialogue and questions radically the possibility or even the need for a common ground. In response to this challenge, Knitter proposes the liberation method of dialogue, still incubating in Asia, as a model that secures at least a common context for encounter. From its original presentation in an essay, he has since developed his ideas into a book, where he spells out the method and presupposition of this theology. He also embarked on a field trip to India and Sri Lanka to acquire a first hand experience of the unfolding of this form of interreligious dialogue. In one case, Knitter engages the participant-observer research method. He reports that even though this form of dialogue is yet to mature, there are indications of its viability in the Asian continent. We shall trace the unfolding of liberation theology in Latin America, taking note of the reasons for its success and also the reasons for its demise. We shall then see how Asia serves as point of transition from

working for liberation in one tradition to engaging it in global interreligious dialogue. Finally, we shall see how Knitter develops and proposes it as a context for interreligious dialogue in a world coloured with the presuppositions of postmodernism. We shall then undertake a general critique of the liberation method of global interreligious dialogue as formulated by Knitter formulates.

I. LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Latin American liberation theology, like other liberation theologies, is a contextual phenomenon. Consequently, an appreciation of that context is relevant to understanding the evolution of the theology. In the 5th centenary celebration of the Latin American continent, what came across is a picture of a continent that has undergone a long history of plunder, exploitation and oppression.² The Spanish conquest and Christianisation were followed by capitalistic British neo-colonisation. The dependency created by the patronage of the United States of America followed in its wake and finally, the exploitative “development” of the multinational corporations took centre stage. The so-called development was initiated in line with the United Nation’s Decade of Development of the 1950s and early 1960s. It was the general assumption at the time that with proper assistance and some slight adjustments, within, the underdeveloped nations would metamorphose into the status of the First World countries. But the result of this effort in Latin America was catastrophic and what materialised was political instability, characterised by military dictatorships that

² The special edition of Concilium dedicated to Latin America presents the ethnic diversity characteristic of the continent, maintaining at the same time that poverty and exploitation serve as homogenising factors. Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo, Eds. *Concilium Special: The Voice of the Victims: 1492-1992* (London: SCM Press, 1991).

deprived the people of their basic rights and an ever-increasing gap between the poor and the rich. In the face of a complete breakdown of development, the militarisation of the continent, guaranteed the interest of the multinational corporations, foreign governments and tiny elites in Latin America. Prior to the articulation of liberation theology, Christianity had played a dual role in the continent, siding with the powerful on the one hand and providing succour for the poor mainly through popular religiosity on the other hand.³

Those outside the power bloc became marginalized people in all respects. Poverty became the common denominator of this class of people, which needs to be appreciated by more simple socio-economic indices. Its poverty was chronic:

Poverty means death: lack of food and housing, the inability to attend properly to health and education needs, the exploitation of workers, permanent unemployment, the lack of respect for one's dignity, and unjust limitations placed on personal freedom in areas of self-expression, politics and religion. Poverty is a situation that destroys peoples, families, and individuals; Medellín and Puebla called it 'institutionalised violence'.⁴

The last phase of exploitation, which disguised itself in the name of development, provided the immediate context for the germination of liberation theology in the continent.

³ Rebecca S. Chop, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992) pp. 7-14.

⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1988) p. xxi. Going by Jon Sobrino's estimation, over 170 million people are living in grave poverty, Jon Sobrino, "The Crucified People: Yahweh's Suffering Servants Today", *Concilium Special: The Voice of the Victims: 1492-1992*: 120-129. Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo, Eds. (London: SCM Press, 1991) p. 120.

The emergence of liberation theology was not spontaneous in spite of the dynamics that were already present in the continent and it is difficult to establish the single factor that determined its development and the proportion it eventually took. It is sometimes attributed to the autonomy of universities in Latin America, which rendered them alternatives to the militarised states. Armed with this intellectual freedom, students started employing intellectual and political ideas that would enable them to unmask the ideological basis for the exploitation that was deeply entrenched in the continent. Owing to the influence of Christianity in their culture, Christian students had no option but to include their religion within the sphere of ideology.⁵ This intellectual development notwithstanding, it is safe to say that the renewal in the Roman Catholic Church and a growing concern for issues of justice and peace in the Protestant tradition groomed this trend of liberation into a fully-fledged theology. This is a fact that is often blurred by the continuous attribution of Latin American liberation theology to its intellectual Marxist framework. Despite the Marxist influence, the theology would not have impacted so strongly on the continent if the Church had not adopted it officially.

The issue of liberation came into theological discussion under the umbrella of development. John XXIII, who convoked the Second Vatican Council, was steeped in Catholic Social Teaching and engaged the issue of 'development' in his encyclicals, *Mater et Magister* and *Pacem in Terris*. But more importantly, his vision for the Church was one of engagement with the modern world and demanded a complete renewal of the Church, termed *aggiornamento*. In one of his statements

⁵ For a more elaborate treatment of the evolution of liberation theology within the intellectual ambient confer. Juan Luis Segundo, "Shift within Latin American Theology", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*: 17-29, 52 (1985) pp. 18-19.

before the council, on September 11, 1962, he proclaimed the solidarity of the Church with the poor: "In face of the underdeveloped countries, the Church is, and wants to be, the Church of all and especially the Church of the poor."⁶ Perhaps the most remarkable teaching of the council in the direction of liberation is *Gaudium et spes*. Paul VI, who presided over the session that produced the document, set up an International Commission for Justice and Peace shortly afterwards and published his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, which radically articulates the issue of development.⁷ Some theologians are of the view that the pope did not go far enough in tackling the issue of development⁸ but others are of the view that it contained the kernel of social revolution. Definitely, the value judgement it makes on private property had biblical basis but certain Marxist tools of social analysis seem evident and may have provided the stimulus for the eventual engagement of Marxism in the articulation of Latin American liberation theology.⁹

With the benefit of hindsight, the weakness of the encyclical is that it makes the powerful countries of the world its subject instead of calling on the countries on the periphery to take their destiny into their hands. This shortcoming was balanced by the outcome of the response to the encyclical by a commission of 18 bishops and also by the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM II) held in Medellín, Columbia in 1968. The subsequent conference (CELAM III), held in Puebla, Mexico maintained the position of Medellín, although its conservative

⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology*, p. xxv.

⁷ Alistair Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology* (London: SCM Press and Philadelphia: Trinity International Press, 1990) pp. 160-161.

⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology*, p. 23.

⁹ Alistair Kee, *Marx and*, p. 162.

elements warned that the emerging popular movements in the church should be curtailed.

Parallel developments in the Protestant Churches are indicated in the Third Latin American Evangelical Conference (CELA), which addressed the issues of oppression and liberation. The response generated at the conference was as conflict-ridden as that of Puebla: some participants called for an engagement with the situation, while others adopted a hands-off attitude towards politics. Ten years later, the conference met in Oaxtapec, Mexico focusing on the issues of power structures, indigenous communities and human rights.¹⁰ This trend in the churches of Latin America evolved into a movement - both in theology and institutions - towards the poor and the struggle against injustice.

Establishing the background of Latin American liberation theology within the framework of Christian social teaching is important both in explaining its eventual failure and the extent to which it can be expropriated by interreligious dialogue. Gutiérrez's thesis of the irruption of the poor,¹¹ though well articulated, is forced and, without the transformation of Christian spirituality in the continent from one that separates the spiritual from the temporal to the one that engages society, it would have been difficult for the poor to discover their theological potential. In a way, Latin American liberation theology could be said to belong to the poor but that is after it was adopted at Medellín and subsequently in Puebla as the Church's pastoral vision

¹⁰ Rebecca S. Chop, *The Praxis*, pp. 15-16.

¹¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (London: SCM Press, 1983).

for the continent.¹² Even then, it would become clear that the poor soon evolved a rival programme of liberation steeped in popular religiosity.

B. THEMES IN LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

The option for the poor and the metaphor of God as liberator articulated in Latin American liberation theology demanded a new way of doing theology that is experiential, particularly due to the influence of BCCs. Here faith is perceived and experienced not as an abstract reality but as praxis, with theology as a reflection on this praxis. This method of theology demanded the use of the social sciences besides philosophy, and a sprinkling of symbols and rituals from popular religion. Theology is considered secondary to praxis and it is therefore regarded as a practical reflection, a coming to grips with Christian practice. The bias of Latin American liberation theology is that theology must be grounded in the actual experience of the particular community, which it addresses. In the words of Miguez Bonino: "... there is no possibility of invoking or availing oneself of a norm outside of praxis itself."¹³ Otherwise, theology is reduced to a mere theory and consequently functions as an ideology for the bourgeois.

The underlying presupposition of this theology is that it must always be self-critical and located within its social context. This makes theology not only temporal

¹² For a full treatment of the evolution of Latin American liberation theology within the tradition of Catholic social teaching confer Tony Misfud, "The Development of a Liberation Ethic in the Documents of the Church since Vatican II", *Concilium: The Ethics of Liberation - The Liberation of Ethics*: 48-53. Dietmar Mieth and Jacques Pohier, Eds. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd, 1984).

¹³ Jose Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) p. 81.

but also transformative. Jon Sobrino stresses the difference between European theology and liberation theology, with reference to the Enlightenment. He maintains that while European theology sought to establish validity and meaningfulness of religious claims within the boundaries of reason, Latin American liberation theology is a response to the second phase of the Enlightenment and seeks to transform a particular historical context. It is not simply concerned with establishing meaning but with transformation, which allows for the growth of new faith.¹⁴ Latin American liberation theology distinguishes itself, even from political theology, in the sense that it is not merely concerned with establishing meaning, no matter how critical, but with bringing about transformation. This theological paradigm finds expression in its various themes. We shall consider three of these themes that are directly relevant to the adoption of this theology in interreligious dialogue.

1. Option for the Poor

The tempo of theology in Latin America changed radically when the Church decided to take the ‘inhuman misery’ of poverty seriously. The ‘irruption of the poor’ on the theological scene enabled an engagement with their energies and values. It is significant that these poor are also Christians; consequently, their faith had a bearing on their poverty, and vice versa.¹⁵ Liberation theology attempts a re-appropriation of

¹⁴ Jan Sobrino, “Theological Understanding in European and Latin American Theology”, *The True Church and the Poor*: 8-19. Matthew J. O’Connell, Trans. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984) p. 12.

¹⁵ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “The Task and Content of Liberation Theology”, *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*: 19-38. Christopher Rowland, Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) pp. 20-21.

the status of the poor, seeing them not merely as carriers of deficiencies. The poor are seen as:

... brimming over with capabilities and possibilities, whose culture has its own values, derived from racial background, history and language.... We are talking about poor people who, despite the way they have been affected by circumstances (often seriously), resist all attempts to mutilate or manipulate their hopes for the future.¹⁶

This positive and active definition of the poor led to commitment of the Church to them, couched in the expression, 'preferential option for the poor'.

The option for the poor implies a shift in the interlocutor of theology from the educated non-believer (Schleiermacher's cultured despisers of Christianity) to the poor. The place of the poor is no longer merely an ethical question but an epistemological question. The option colours the theologian's perception of social reality and implies the epistemological privilege of the poor. Their experience therefore becomes a precondition for theology, which now "... begins with the reality, experience, needs, interests, questions and resources of the poor and marginalized." The poor becomes its partner in dialogue.¹⁷

The concept of option for the poor was hinted at in the Medellín documents: "... preferences to the poorest and most needy sectors and to those segregated for any cause whatsoever."¹⁸ Yet its proper articulation metamorphosed in the period

¹⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology", *The Cambridge*, p. 25.

¹⁷ Gerald West, "The Bible and the Poor: A New Way of Doing Theology", *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*: 129-152. Christopher Rowland, Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) pp. 130-131.

¹⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology*, p. xxv.

between Medellín and Puebla in the reflection within the BCCs. It takes together the three strands of poverty articulated at Medellín: actual poverty, lack of material possession; spiritual poverty, an attitude that could lead to the forsaking of material goods; committed poverty, a protest against poverty, and weaves the previous strands into one. Puebla, amidst the agitations of conservatives, received the expression as the motto of liberation theology and it was further endorsed in Santo Domingo in 1992. The expression became the pivot around which the pastoral activities of the Latin American Church rotate and it was even instituted as the litmus test for genuine Christianity, with a great emphasis on Matthew 25.¹⁹

The phrase looks deceptively simple but it needs further exposition if it is not to be misleading. ‘Preference’ implies that the Church’s solidarity is all-embracing but at the same time suggesting a primary solidarity with the poor. ‘Option’ does not imply choice as it appears at first glance. It is required by God’s providential love, and even the poor themselves are called to make the option.²⁰ The Church begins with the premise that she is the sacrament of God’s universal love but it is the implication of this same love that places her on the side of the poor. This option provides the framework for liberation theology and shapes its use of terms, even terms borrowed from Western theology.

¹⁹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “The Task and Content of Liberation Theology”, *The Cambridge*, p. 27.

²⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology*, pp. xxv-xxvi.

2. Hermeneutic Circle

Among the various sources of theology, the Bible ranks first in importance.²¹ One of the reasons is that the style of liberation theology is narrative; so biblical stories readily address the situations that the people deal with in the BCCs. To understand the use of Scripture in the BCC we need to understand its use in Western theology. The latter engages with studies in antiquity: history, language, culture, biblical forms and redaction but completely ignores the challenges of those sciences that deal with the present. This method springs from the presupposition that theology is immune from the ideological leanings prevalent in society. But liberation theologians insist that theology is ideological, even if unconsciously. So they strive to combine the disciplines that portray the past with those that disclose the present in exegesis to discern the right application for the present in a manner so critical as to avoid its cooption into the agenda of the status quo. This method is referred to as 'the hermeneutic circle'.²²

Juan Luis Segundo defines the circle as follows:

It is the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by the continuing changes in our present-day reality, both individual and societal. 'Hermeneutics' means 'having to do with

²¹ The Bible is appreciated not merely as a 'strategic tool' for revolution but as the source of 'God's project', which is liberation. There is this popular South African anecdote that exposes the Bible both as an instrument of oppression and one of liberation: "When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us 'Let us pray.' After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible." Reacting to one of its tellings, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the renowned South African theologian, remarked: "And we got the better deal." Gerald West, "The Bible and the Poor: A New Way of Doing Theology", *The Cambridge*, pp. 131-132.

²² Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, John Drury, Trans. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977) pp. 7-8.

interpretation.’ And the circular nature of this interpretation stems from the fact that each new reality obliges us to interpret the word of God afresh, to change reality accordingly, and then to go back and reinterpret the word of God again, and so on.²³

The term was originally inspired by the scriptural interpretation of Rudolf Bultmann, who advocated a demythologisation of the gospel stories. In liberation theology, it depends on two presuppositions: the present must pose questions adequate enough to challenge our conventional perceptions and only such a change or ‘pervasive’ suspicion will enable us to confront theology and force it to encounter reality with fresh and decisive questions. This entails that the circle is aborted immediately theology pretends to encounter the disturbing situation with prefabricated answers. Hence, without a due hermeneutical process, theology becomes ideological.²⁴ If Bultmann called for a demythologisation of the gospels, liberation theologians called for the deideologisation of the Bible, both in substance and in interpretation. The challenges of faith to the experiences of the poor colours the window and centres on salvation history, faith and the life of the people, eschatology and praxis.²⁵ The interpretation that emerges is, therefore, a highly critical one even in its appropriation of the present situation.

As to be expected with a highly critical process like the hermeneutic circle, friction soon developed between the theologian, who doubled as the expert and biblical scholar, and the ordinary reader in the BCCs. Initially, the experience of the poor was subsumed into the categories of the theologian who wields the tools of social analysis. Later popular movements, however, negated this approach, which

²³ Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation*, p. 8.

²⁴ Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation*, p. 9.

²⁵ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology*, p. xxxiii.

seems to translate elements of popular religion as ideologically laden and oppressive. So the theologian is caught up in the dilemma of critically articulating the experiences of the poor and also grounding and preserving them. Yet many theologians were reluctant to give up the critical function that is nurtured by the 'suspicion' central to the hermeneutic circle. Gerald West is of the opinion that the theologian must always engage in the process with the poor reader. This could imply sometimes shelving the theological 'suspicion'.²⁶ It can be surmised that the consequences of this hermeneutics led to a friction in Latin American liberation theology, which Segundo refers to as a shift in theology. He speaks of two liberation theologies emerging as a consequence:

No doubt, both share the same global intention of liberating and humanizing those who suffer the most from unjust structures on our continent; but this cannot conceal the fact that we are faced here with two different theologies under the same name: different in scope, different in method, different in presupposition and different in consequence.²⁷

The implication of poor people's suspicion of the criticality of intellectual liberation for interreligious dialogue can only be imagined by taking into account their hermeneutical privilege.

3. *Locus Theologicus*

Like other liberation theologies, Latin American liberation theology is contextual but it is more contextual in the sense that it is not engaged in institutions or seminaries but in the BCCs. As a result, the theology, despite its articulation in the works of

²⁶ Gerald West, "The Bible and the Poor: A New Way of Doing Theology", *The Cambridge*, p. 129.

²⁷ Juan Luis Segundo, "Shift within Latin American Theology", *Journal of*, p. 24.

prominent liberation theologians, is largely non-academic in orientation but focuses rather on the transformation of the situations that oppress the people. In these communities, faith becomes praxis by engaging with the experiences of the poor and theology then becomes a practical and critical reflection on this praxis. Since liberation theology draws on the social sciences, philosophy and even on modern theology, trained theologians have a role to play in the BCCs. Their role is supposed to be purely consultative, because theology is a communal activity and as we saw above, the symbols and rituals of popular religion, though heavily criticised, ought not to be discarded in the process. Theology, therefore, is secondary to the commitment to praxis, being a reflection on it.²⁸ With due respect to praxis, the activities of these loosely structured communities are not restricted to Bible studies but embrace political action. They are places where a special kind of education takes place; one geared towards conscientization. The focus is usually on improving some local infrastructure that bears on the lives of the people. The project usually makes clear the need for the people to be educated in their rights and duties and also to understand the workings of the political machinery in society for its realisation. Paulo Freire's educational methodology, articulated in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, serves this need and it is widely used.

In the BCCs, the pastoral vision of the Church as belonging to the people and involved with the world is clearly articulated and provides theologians with a context of reflection in line with this vision.²⁹ The BCCs are not immune to the secular

²⁸ Rebecca Chop, *The Praxis*, pp. 25-27.

²⁹ For a comprehensive treatment of the Basic Christian Communities, see Andrew Dawson, "The Origins and Character of the Base Ecclesial Community: a Brazilian Perspective", *The Cambridge*

communities within which they are situated due to the nature of the projects they embark upon. They are therefore able to influence these communities and also allow themselves to be influenced by them. According to Gutiérrez:

These communities are a major source of vitality within the larger Christian community and have brought the gospel closer to the poor and the poor closer to the gospel - and not only the poor but, through them, all who are touched by the church's action, including those outside its boundaries.³⁰

The BCCs therefore perform a dual action of transformation, engaging both the Church and the secular world with the agenda of the poor, who are now the subject and not mere objects of their history. The church finds in these communities a realisation of her dream to be a catalyst for the transformation of the modern world. Having explored some key themes in liberation theology, which represent its essential operation, we shall look at some of the critiques levelled against it.

II. CRITIQUE OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Latin American liberation theology took the theological world by storm and challenged all existing theological assumptions, stressing the particularity of all European theology and advocating for the engagement of context in the theological enterprise. For over three decades, it was the subject of textbooks and the reflections of theological institutes. Incidentally, it has since assumed a declining profile on the

Companion to Liberation Theology: 109-128. Christopher Rowland, Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

³⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Theology*, p. xli.

theological scene. Many reasons account for the failure of liberation theology to achieve the revolution it set out initially to achieve. We shall now look at some of these factors.

A. ROMAN CATHOLIC MAGISTERIUM

It will be safe enough to assert that the full development of Latin American liberation theology to its revolutionary proportions would have been impossible without the pastoral vision of Paul VI, put forth in *Octogesima Adveniens* published in 1971, to mark the eightieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. The pope makes it explicit that: "In the face of such widely varied situations it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission."³¹ This papal position reposed great confidence in the local Churches to manage their affairs in response to the signs of the times. Undoubtedly, this gave rise to the mushrooming of contextual theologies and the one that manifested in Latin America was liberation theology. Things, however, were to take a different turn with the accession of John Paul II to the papacy. Two points are significant in understanding the pope's position in respect of liberation theology, which seems to reverse the fortune Paul VI bestowed on it.

If the liberation theologians had a positive approach to Marxism and believed that they could separate Karl Marx's tools of analysis without incorporating his atheistic worldview into their theology, the pope had had a different taste of Marx in his native Poland. His first encounter with liberation theology was at CELAM III

³¹ Peter Hebblethwaite, "Liberation Theology and the Roman Catholic Church", *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*: 179-198. Christopher Rowland, Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p. 191.

held at Puebla. In his intervention at the conference, the pope revealed the shortcomings of liberation theology as it has been so far articulated. He rejected the position that maintains that there is no non-ideological truth that is always neutral of historical or political contexts, maintaining the primacy of truth over love. He also took liberation theology to task over its Marxist overtone and rejected the emerging ecclesiology that divides the church into 'institutional' or 'official' Church and the 'new Church'. But instead of throwing the baby out with the bath water, he affirmed and proclaimed the concern of liberation theology with issues of social justice. He allowed that these issues may necessitate a revolution in the continent but such an uprising must be undoubtedly Christian in its articulation. The basis of such a revolution would be in an authentic Christian humanism and not in the one Karl Marx articulated.³²

This criticism of liberation theology may well be regarded as a preamble. The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith started paying keen interest in the teachings of particular theologians. In 1984, Gustavo Gutiérrez became the subject of a special assembly of Peruvian bishops that met in Rome but the bishops stood behind him. Religious theologians were called to account for their position through their superiors, a process that led to the summoning of Leonardo Boff, a Brazilian Franciscan to Rome and culminated in the imposition of the one-year silence on him. The congregation then decided to articulate its position in respect of liberation theology in two documents: one in 1984, considered to be a disclaimer of the theology and another in 1986, considered to be an affirmation of the true nature of liberation theology.

³² Peter Hebblethwaite, "Liberation Theology and the Roman Catholic Church", *The Cambridge*, pp. 182-186.

The first document is entitled, *Instruction on Certain Aspects of 'Liberation Theology'*. It shows a great appreciation of liberation theology just as the pope did at Puebla. It also reveals the background of the theology in issues of grave poverty, the scandal of inequality and the conscientisation of the poor. It further reaffirms the commitment of the Church to the struggle of the poor and makes it plain that the universal Church has received the message of liberation theology. But then it notes that certain deviations have crept into the theology that needed to be pruned out. These deviations dwell much on the uncritical engagement with Marxism and the secularisation of Christian concepts and sacraments in that regard.³³

The second instruction, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, published two years later, proposed a proper definition of liberation theology. It could be interpreted as a reclaiming of the position to give a universal interpretation on contextual issues, which Paul VI abdicated to the local churches in the realm of Catholic social teaching. The instruction pointed out that Marxism is deliberately atheistic and considers the human person as the Supreme Being of humanity. Consequently, the liberation flowing from it does not produce true human freedom. It also embraced the message of Medellín, but gave it a broader spiritual interpretation and categorically condemned the Marxist inclination to violence. Even the Exodus event so central to liberation theology was reinterpreted and related to the Covenant. Whatever the misgivings of the Church might be with liberation theology, the engagement with Marxism was officially put forth as the reason for its rejection.³⁴

³³ Peter Hebblethwaite, "Liberation Theology and the Roman Catholic Church", *The Cambridge*, pp.186-190.

³⁴ Peter Hebblethwaite, "Liberation Theology and the Roman Catholic Church", *The Cambridge*, pp. 190-195.

Having articulated its position with respect to liberation theology, Rome began a restructuring of the Latin American Church to bring it in line with this vision. This restructuring became apparent in the appointment of bishops, the closing down of seminaries, pressure on religious superiors to deal decisively with liberation theologians who were religious, the dissolution of the Latin American Conference of Religious and the nurturing of right wing movements hostile to the leftist leanings of the liberation movement. CELAM IV, convoked to mark the fifth centenary of the colonisation of Latin America, at San Domingo in 1992, showed signs of ecclesiastical censorship in the papers that were presented and the vetting of the conference's participants. The themes of liberation theology were in any case reaffirmed at the conference, but within the framework that Rome had provided.

Liberation theology might have emerged within the intellectual environment of Latin America, but its adoption as a pastoral programme is best understood within the tradition of Catholic social teaching. Consequently, its proper evaluation must be carried out in its relation to the Church that nurtured it. Alistair Kee is of the opinion that liberation theology failed not because it engaged with Karl Marx but because it did not take him seriously enough. He notes in particular that none of the liberation theologians took Marx's critique of religion seriously. He accounts for this failure by noting that liberation theology in Latin America has been more influenced by the revolutionary, Che Guevara, than by Marx. And Guevara did not critique religion but even sometimes expresses himself in religious terms.³⁵ We do not need to over-flog

³⁵ Alistair Kee is of the view that the reality of the Cuban revolution, rather than Marxist philosophical theory, motivated liberation theology alongside the tempo of *aggiornamento* initiated by Vatican II, coupled with similar developments in the Protestant tradition. He holds that even though Che Guevara, the ideologist of the revolution subsequently styled himself a Marxist, he did not engage Marx

the issue that the adoption of Marxism by liberation theology was a critical one and that the theologians always strove to make a distinction between its science of analysis and its atheistic worldview. All the same Kee's observation is necessary for our appreciation of the contribution that dialogical theologians have made in their adoption of liberation theology by making the critique of the religions a central issue.

Mutatis mutandis, liberation theology is basically an ecclesial theology, its employment of Marxism notwithstanding. Within the parameters that Paul VI provided, contextual theologies flourished unabated due to the power reposed on the local churches to read the signs of the time and contextualise the gospel message. But John Paul II has since reversed this position and has remarked from the start of his pontificate that concern for sound ecclesiology is central to his papacy. It is a journey back to Rome, and the local Churches can enjoy their freedom only with reference to the Vatican. Liberation theology in its revolutionary character may continue in the BCCs, but they no longer embrace it with reference to the official pastoral vision of the Latin American Church, a vision that has been completely spiritualised and emptied of its political contents long before San Domingo.

holistically in his philosophy and even gives Marxist themes religious expressions. Marx is clear in his negative assessment of religion and sees it as the symbol of all that is evil in other institutions.

Guevera does not engage religion in any way nor does he identify it as the ideological base of the ruling class. Surprisingly, he uses religious terminologies in his description of a revolutionary: 'a true priest of reform', 'guiding angel' and 'ascetic'. Moreover, there was a positive interaction between Guevera and the clergy like Fr. Sardinas who was himself, a revolutionary. Alistair Kee, *Marx and*, pp. 135-136.

B. LATIN AMERICAN NEO-PENTECOSTALISM

Rome cannot be blamed entirely for the failure of liberation theology in Latin America. A contextual factor is equally responsible for its decline and this is accounted for in the rise of neo-Pentecostalism. Its influence on the poverty stricken population of Latin America cannot be adequately expressed in words but the disclaimer of a historian says it all: "The Catholic bishops may want to encourage a preferential option for the poor but the poor seem to have a preference for the Pentecostals."³⁶ The Central Intelligence of America (CIA) is sometimes blamed for the demise of liberation theology.³⁷ Yet one could safely allude to a conspiracy between the Vatican and Neo-Pentecostals because the message of the latter is adequately captured in one of statements of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith as it attempts to redefine liberation:

The 'poor of Yahweh' know that communion with God is the most precious treasure and the one in which men and women find their true freedom. For them, the most tragic misfortune is the loss of this communion. Hence their fight against injustice finds its deepest meaning and its effectiveness in their desire to be free from the slavery of sin.³⁸

The Neo-Pentecostals put more emphasis on spiritual liberation than on liberation from unjust socio-political structures. For this reason, in their anti-intellectual programme, they find a kin in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

³⁶ Cited in Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Cassell, 1996) p. 176.

³⁷ Harvey Cox, *Fire From*, p. 176.

³⁸ Peter Hebblethwaite, "Liberation Theology and the Roman Catholic Church", *The Cambridge*, p. 193.

While liberation theologians continue to insist on the impact of unjust structures on the lives of the poor and the inability of people to change without concurrent changes in these structures, the “Pentecostals tell people they need to change and that they can change.”³⁹ Moreover, Pentecostal groups offer them entertainment and mass consolation. The popular slogan of one of these groups is: “*Pare de sufrir*”, which means, “Stop suffering”. This contrasts sharply with one of central themes of liberation theology: “*Pueblo oprimido, señor de la historia*”, meaning “The oppressed people, lord of history.” The stress of Pentecostalist groups was on “divine healing, personal prosperity, spiritual welfare, ecstatic trances accomplished by speaking in tongues, laughing and fainting and liberation from evil spirits.”⁴⁰ The poor and the powerless find in these spiritual phenomena sources of empowerment and also pathways to their lost dignity.

Probably liberation theology would have continued to thrive despite opposition from Rome, but it finds in the neo-Pentecostal spirituality a seemingly insurmountable opposition. The success of the Pentecostals stems not only from the strategy they employ but also from the fact that their strategy underpins the conflict between liberation theology and popular religiosity that led to the emergence of two liberation theologies. We have hinted at these differences in our treatment of the hermeneutic circle. It is appropriate to give it more attention here. The formulation of the intellectual liberation theology undoubtedly revolves around the poor, yet it was not the poor but the middle class, beginning with university students, who

³⁹ Harvey Cox, *Fire From*, p. 166.

⁴⁰ Nancy Bedford, “Whatever Happened to Liberation Theology?”; available from http://www.religion-online.org/cgi-bin/researchd.dll/showarticle?item_id=820. Internet; accessed on January 23, 2003.

embraced it. The hope was that the poor would eventually be converted to it. This was not to be the case. According to Segundo:

Something was obvious: the rise of popular or populist movements either outside or inside the Church had shown that common people had neither understood nor welcomed anything from the first theology of liberation, and had actually reacted against its criticism of the supposed oppressive elements of popular religion. The first theology of liberation had raised hopes, enthusiasm and conversion only among the middle classes which were integrated into a European culture... the persecution of middle class leftists all over Latin America did not fill the gap between them and the grass-roots people.⁴¹

The conversion of the middle class to liberation theology was obvious in the persecution they suffered at the hands of the status quo, which considered them subversive and dangerous. But their witnessing, strong as it is, did not effect the hoped for conversion of the poor whose cause they were fighting.

Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, in their account of the formulation of liberation theology, give us the impression of an integrated theology.⁴² It is the “rich and fruitful thinking at the ‘base’ level that feeds the professional work....”⁴³ The above statement by Segundo seems to contradict the claim that the theologian comes in without any set agenda of his own and is completely open to the spontaneous religious experience of the poor in the BCCs. Liberation theology did influence popular devotions and brought a renewed perception of devotion to the saints, which is strong in Latin America. So people tend to ask the saints less for intervention to alleviate the

⁴¹ Juan Luis Segundo, “Shift within Latin American Theology”, *Journal of*, p. 23.

⁴² Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994) p. 11-19.

⁴³ Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation*, p. 14.

problems of their lives: illness, unhappiness and family problems. They ask for their intercession to overcome the unjust structures, for courage and faith. But this change in orientation was limited only to the middle class and was not sufficient to blur the identity of popular devotion, which continues to set itself against the intellectual liberation theology.⁴⁴

Pablo Richard defines the alternative liberation theology as:

... a combination of many things: popular religiosity, indigenous religions, Afro-American religions, animistic traditions, magic.... The religious world of the people is an ocean too vast for anthropologists, sociologists, and theologians to plumb. For us it bears two important characteristics: it is an *alternative* religious awareness and in a certain sense it is an awareness *informed by the gospel and asserting the gospel*.⁴⁵

He warns that since liberation theology is rooted in popular religion, it will not continue to be an alternative to the religious system of domination nor an effective means of evangelisation if it severs itself from this root. Integration with popular religion is a precondition for its continual survival and a basis for its identity.⁴⁶

It goes without saying that liberation theologians were unable to cope with the dilemma they encountered in popular religiosity, for instance the exploitation it seems

⁴⁴ A group of faithful at a procession told placard bearing members that: "A procession should not be confused with a political march." Francisco Cartaxo Rolim, "Popular Religion and Pentecostalism", *Popular Religion, Liberation and Contextual Theology*: 126-140. Jacques Van Nieuwenhove and Berma Klein Goldewijk, Eds., (Kok-Kampen: Uitgenversmaatschappij, 1991) p. 133.

⁴⁵ Pablo Richard, "Liberation Theology: A difficult but Possible Future", *The Future of Liberation Theology*: 502-510. Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, Eds, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989) p. 503.

⁴⁶ Pablo Richard, "Liberation Theology: A difficult but Possible Future", *The Future*, p. 504.

to breed, indicated in its patron-client orientation. Their strategy usually entails “undermining such traditions, for representing a religion of domination, with the result that they alienated the people they were trying to organize.”⁴⁷ Religion was usually for the poor a protective cloak, a sanctuary against the ravages of oppression. The poor in most cases were not willing to give up their last resort and be converted to the exposures and risks that the living out of liberation theology entails. In their own way their devotion to popular religiosity nurtured a tradition of resistance and not just mere resignation to the situation, as outsiders may surmise.⁴⁸ Apparently, many liberation theologians prefer to keep to their system of analysis even if it hurts this popular religiosity. The Pentecostals, on the other hand, tapped into this ocean of popular religiosity. This has led David Stoll to conclude:

Evangelical Protestantism is so successful that it calls into question the claims made for its great rival, liberation theology. However much has been made of the ecclesiastical base communities of liberation theology, the corresponding house churches and home Bible studies of evangelical Protestantism may be far more widespread and incorporate many more people. From what I have seen of the contest between the two, born-again religion has the upper hand.⁴⁹

Stoll’s observation is true of the situation not only in Latin America but also in other contexts where poverty reduces the ability of the poor to delay gratification.

Another reason for the failure of liberation praxis is that the poor are politically weak no matter how adequately mobilised. Moreover, their daily struggle for survival does not nurture the organisation and the mobility required for adequate

⁴⁷ David Stoll, *Is Latin*, p. 313.

⁴⁸ David Stoll, *Is Latin*, p. 313.

⁴⁹ David Stoll, *Is Latin*, p. 308.

social action. The promises of liberation theology, as we have indicated, lie in a utopian future, but the poor want to stop suffering now. As a result, liberation from unjust socio-political structures seems more remote to the people than liberation from evil spirits.⁵⁰ Indeed, since the impact of their spiritual liberation is felt in their mundane lives, it becomes more appealing to them. Emilio Williems notes that those who are attracted to Pentecostalism are not merely offered a psychological substitute for what they lack here on earth, but they are also able to better their lot in the society through the agency of their new faith:

The Pentecostal faith strictly forbids drunkenness, carousing, and infidelity. Consequently Pentecostals have gained a reputation for sobriety, punctuality, and honesty. They are sought after as employees even by people who find their religion peculiar. Thus not only do Pentecostals replace the *anomie* with a new community, one with explicit codes of behaviour and moral rules, they are... without really knowing it producing something the continent had always lacked, a middle class.⁵¹

It is intriguing to note that the poor do not have to wait for the transformation of the unjust social structures, since the transformation of their lives could aid them to reap the fruits of the system. If a man acquires self-discipline and does not waste his resources on self-destructive habits, he has enough no matter how little he earns to better the lot of his family. Instead of burning their energy struggling against a system that seems beyond them, the poor are encouraged to focus their energy on personal transformation and thus enhance their status. I think if the liberation theologians had been able to integrate their 'intellectual liberation' with the 'spiritual

⁵⁰ Nancy Bedford, "Whatever Happened to Liberation Theology?"; available from http://www.religion-online.org/cgi-bin/relsearchd.dll/showarticle?item_id=820. Accessed January 23, 2003.

⁵¹ Harvey Cox, *Fire From*, p. 171.

liberation' they were somewhat critical about, their approach would have been more endearing to poor.

For Kee, the resurgence of capitalism and the spreading of its tentacles to traditional Marxist strongholds call for a fresh encounter by Christian theology with the philosophy of Karl Marx. He asserts:

I believe that Christian theology needs to attend to Marx's philosophy to an extent which it has never done before. But we must be clear that in this liberation theology would be a completely inadequate and misleading guide.⁵²

This is a value judgement on liberation theology from a Marxist sympathiser. Even though we have evaluated the causes for the failure of this theology from a different perspective, should we not take his warning about the inadequacies of liberation theology seriously? In adopting the theological framework of liberation for, interreligious dialogue did its proponents take some of the challenges raised above seriously or did they just naïvely subsume it into their agenda? We shall examine this closely at the end of this chapter, but let us now turn our attention to the articulation of liberation in dialogical theology beginning with Asia the point of transition.

III. ASIAN LIBERATION METHOD

Speaking at the 60th birthday anniversary of Gustavo Gutiérrez, Cardinal Stephen Kim of Korea made some remarkable observations. He maintained that despite the appearance of seeds of liberation movements in Korea almost at the same time as

⁵² Alisair Kee, *Marx and*, p. xii.

those of Latin America, the phenomenon still remains distinctively Latin American. Pointing out many reasons that could be responsible for the lack of a similar development in Asia, he asked if this lack of progress was due to the absence of a theologian like Gutiérrez to "... be a catalyst for these groups, to foster and nourish their growth as communities, to synthesize and articulate their liberation?"⁵³ Aloysius Pieris, the Sri Lankan Jesuit, is a theologian of this stature. Within the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) he has continued to insist on the need to integrate liberation with interreligious dialogue. Suffice it to say that some Asian theologians have always been fascinated with liberation theology because if there is any relationship between Asia and Latin America then it is the gross manifestation of poverty.

It is interesting to note that while Latin America opted for liberation theology with the prompting of Paul VI for the development of local theologies, Asia opted for inculturation theology. Despite the official option, however, there were dissenting voices opting for liberation. In these options one begins to glimpse the twin issues in Asia: poverty and multiculturalism (religious pluralism). Pieris does not see these issues as irreconcilable parallels and believes that the Christian faith in Asia will only become meaningful if it allows itself to be influenced by the socio-economic situation, characterised by poverty and injustice and also the multiple religions existing in the continent. These twin issues constitute the Asian context. He articulates this beautifully:

⁵³ Cardinal Stephen Kim, "Greetings", *The Future of Liberation Theology*: 19-22. Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, Eds, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989) pp. 20-21.

We must immediately warn ourselves that Asian poverty cannot be reduced to purely 'economic' categories, just as Asian religiousness cannot be defined merely in 'cultural' terms. They are both interwoven culturally and economically to constitute the vast socio-political reality that is Asia. Hence an Asian theologian can hardly ignore Roy Preiswerk's appeal that the 'dependency theories' of the Latin Americans (Cardos, Frank, Furtado, and others), which offer valid explanations of and useful strategies against the increasing poverty in the Third World, ought to be complemented (and I would add, even corrected) by the 'cultural approaches' of social scientists.⁵⁴

Since the issues are so intertwined and together provide the opening into the heart of Asia, the competing programmes of liberation and inculturation will severely fall short of achieving any good unless they are integrated, as the issues they seek to address are inseparable.

He admits that the existence of a single religious tradition, Christianity, facilitated the evolution of liberation theology in Latin America. Asia has an imposed limitation because of its many religions and their divergent soteriologies. The distinctiveness of Asia is that it will always remain a non-Christian continent but this also "creates enormous opportunities for more creative modes of Christian presence in Asia by humble participation in the non-Christian experience of liberation..."⁵⁵ Pieris also notes some other areas of incommensurability between Asia and Latin America.

The first area has to do with the perception of poverty in Asia and in Latin America. He notes that the difference could be best appreciated when compared to that between the psychological and sociological methods. In Asia voluntary poverty is viewed as a spiritual antidote, while in Latin America it is viewed as a political

⁵⁴ This thesis sparked renewed controversy between inculturation theologians and liberation theologians of Asia. Aloysius Pieris, SJ, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988) p. 69.

⁵⁵ Aloysius Pieris, SJ, *An Asian*, p. 74.

strategy. Moreover, the tool for social analysis that focuses almost solely on Marxism will be problematic and ineffective because it will always remain removed from the Asian worldview. The Marxist tool must be complemented with the wisdom of Asia. His contrast of Che Guevera and Ho Chi Minh brings home the underlying differences.⁵⁶

Having taken account of these contextual differences, he makes the point that liberation is not exclusively Christian, and that other religions in Asia also have strong liberation traditions. But these, like the Roman Catholic liberation perspectives, influenced by stoic ethics, are passive. He acknowledges that theologians in Asia have been stressing the issue of liberation but it is a kind of liberation that is passive and belongs only to one of the two traditions of liberation in Christianity. This kind of liberation is not far from the one that obtains in the other religious traditions. He further stresses that for Christianity to play a prophetic role and offer something unique to Asia, it needs to recover the more radical tradition of liberation in the Bible, as has been done in Latin America. This, for him, would be the distinctive contribution of Christianity to inter-religious dialogue in Asia.

Contrasting Roman theology, Marxism, Buddhism and the biblical view of liberation, he maintains that the biblical view is all embracing. First of all it is holistic, allowing for a tension between the personal and the social, the spiritual and the material, the internal and the structural. Secondly, in the Bible liberation surpasses class struggle and denotes the encounter between God and the poor (designated by a voluntary or forced poverty). Indeed, liberation is a partnership between human beings and God; hence the human effort required in the work of liberation does not stop it from being gratuitous. The liberation envisaged in the

⁵⁶ Aloysius Pieris, SJ, *An Asian*, pp. 80-81.

Bible also cuts across races and cultures (as in Matthew 25:31f). The Asian Churches have a duty to universalise this version of liberation and this becomes possible only if “Christians judiciously appropriate the religiousness of the poor as our own spirituality, for it is the locus for a theology of liberation in Asia.”⁵⁷

He idiomatically stresses the need for the Church to take the Asian context, described above, seriously. He maintains that giving Western Christianity a face-lift in the name of inculturation and presenting it to Asia is not likely to bear fruits unless it is first of all liberated:

Hence, my final appeal to the local churches *in Asia*: Harden not your heart; enter into the stream at the point where the *religiousness of the Asian poor* (represented by the masses) and the *poverty of religious Asians* (reflected in our monks) meet to form the ideal community of total sharing, the “religious socialism” that, like the early Christian communism, can be swallowed up in the jungle of Asian feudalism as well as Western ideologies and theologies.⁵⁸

He alludes to the need for the Church to take the local context seriously if it is to bear fruit. Pieris points out that some scattered communities who have acted in this spirit have since exhibited signs of success and have become instruments of liberation in the continent.⁵⁹

Pieris is not the only theologian who continues to point out the implications of the religiously pluralistic nature of the Asian context. Tissa Balasuriya makes a strong contention that Christians and non-Christians inhabit the realm of action. Therefore any meaningful reflection has to take the two groups on board. Failure to

⁵⁷ Aloysius Pieris, SJ, *An Asian*, pp. 120-124.

⁵⁸ Aloysius Pieris, SJ, *An Asian*, p. 50.

⁵⁹ Aloysius Pieris, SJ, *An Asian*, p. 50.

do so will weaken both activities (action and reflection) and whatever cause is pursued will be lost. He concludes:

Hence, we need in Asia and Africa action-reflection interreligious groups. This is one of the inadequacies of the exclusively Christian movements, many of which are imported from the West – for example, lay apostolate movements, charismatic prayer groups, even the Latin American emphasis on Christianity in their theology of the praxis of liberation.⁶⁰

Balasuriya's contention is simple. No manifestation of Christianity in Asia or Africa can ignore the presence of other religious traditions.

Michael Amaladoss notes the mushrooming of such interreligious groups now termed the Base Human Communities (BHCs) because of their constitution by people from different religious traditions. He has exhibited how the liberation method of dialogue is serving as a principle of unity for the adherents of divergent and often conflicting faiths. He maintains that these people are able to draw from the resources of their traditions and jointly challenge the unjust social structures that obtain in India. He further notes that there is also a growing awareness that this sharing has implications for the spirituality of those involved in the joint venture. He states that this approach to dialogue has effected a change in the participants and the venue of the exercise. The poor themselves are the protagonists because of their privileged place in the scheme of oppression. This implies that the traditional participants, theologians and religious, become observer-participants (or at best consultants) open to the result of the encounter. The subject of the dialogue is also transformed and

⁶⁰ Tissi Balasuriya, *The Eucharist and Human Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979)

centres on the burning issues in the lives of the poor thus, substituting the usual squabbling over the superiority of doctrinal expressions.

He is quick to note that these centres are not immune from theological controversies but when they arise, it is the poor who act as arbiters because wearing the shoe, they know where it pinches. This constitutes their privilege. Joint action eventually leads to explicit dialogue where members of a BHC seek to know from each other the source of their motivation to collaborate. They may also go into prayer together in order to share the inspiration that moves them to action with each other. This mystical bond is formed and nurtured in ethical action. He claims that BHCs, akin to the BCCs, have mushroomed all over Asia, as a consequence of the method of liberation. Here they are able to initiate common projects and share their faith with each other.⁶¹

Asian theological conferences have also given the liberation method of dialogue due concern since 1979. At its 13th Annual Meeting, the Indian Theological Association issued a statement entitled: "Liberative Praxis and Theology of Religious Pluralism". The position they took at the conference reflects the spirit of Pieris' assumptions:

In a situation of imposed poverty of the masses and of pluralism of religions and humanist ideologies, the combined struggles of the peoples of different faiths and ideologies for liberation, especially those of awakened poor and marginalized, become the significant *locus theologicus* and term of reference for a theology of religions from a liberative perspective.... Underlying [the] pluralism of liberation experiences, there is an implicit transformative understanding of religions. Such an understanding seems to be operative in all critical inter-human and inter-religious action and struggles for liberation....

⁶¹ Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies*, pp. 139-142

The primacy of orthopraxis over orthodoxy brings sensitivity and attunement to the recovery of the liberative core of religions manifesting itself as liberation-salvation process. We are, thereby, called to a rereading and a re-articulating of the fundamental faith-affirmations for a liberating inter-human and inter-religious fellowship of peoples. In this hermeneutic, liberation is understood in terms of a wholeness of humans, nature, cosmos and the Ultimate. In a world divided between the powerful and the powerless, wholeness of liberation always includes a preferential option for the powerless and marginalized.⁶²

The statement of this association strongly argues the case for the integration of liberation within the scope of religious pluralism.

By the middle eighties, some bishops in Asia started integrating the 'religiousness of the poor' into their pastoral programmes. In 1985, some of these bishops took part in 'exposure-immersion programs' to experience concretely the implications of the theological ideal of liberation.⁶³ It is imperative to note, however, that unlike the experience in Latin America the Church in Asia has not adopted this pastoral vision on the continental level. Nor has it provided adequate structures to ensure its widespread implementation. Our investigation of the Latin American situation revealed not only the necessity of adopting liberation as a pastoral vision but also the setting up of adequate structures to facilitate its implementation. It is also interesting to note that not all Asian theologians are, as yet, converted to this integration of liberation and dialogue.⁶⁴ If liberation theology is problematic within

⁶² Quoted in Jacques Dupuis, SJ, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997) pp. 375-376.

⁶³ Aloysius Pieris, SJ, *The Asian*, p. 124.

⁶⁴ Pieris notes that the liberation/inculturation divide actually blurred the vision of most of the EATWOT theologians to his call for the liberation method of interreligious dialogue. Even after trying to clarify the issue by insisting that theology is a discovery and not an invention, the division still persists. Aloysius Pieris, SJ, *The Asian*, p. 88.

one religious tradition, as is evident in the case of Latin America, then it becomes even more complicated when it is fashioned across multiple religious traditions. Asia bears witness to the difficulties involved with such a project.

IV. GLOBAL LIBERATION METHOD

A. GENERAL BACKGROUND

No doubt the development of the liberation method of dialogue in Asia is still in its embryonic stage and nowhere rivals the Latin American experiment that overturned the apple cart of global theology. Notwithstanding this fact, it served as a model for experimenting with liberation theology on a global level, involving the different religious traditions. Liberation theology is no longer the prerogative of the Latin American continent. The theologian responsible for this transition is Paul Knitter. The forcefulness with which he presents this theology and takes on his postmodernist critics is impressive. It is the claims that Knitter makes for the liberation method of interreligious dialogue that inform this dissertation to a great extent. Consequently, I pay close attention to his presentation of the method. Knitter begins by drawing attention to the contributions that the Christian theology of liberation has brought to bear on the liberation method.

His first area of concern is the importance of the “hermeneutic of suspicion” that is integral to the hermeneutic circle of listening to the word of God and interpreting it in the light of circumstances. This suspicion alerts theologians to the possibility of transforming the teachings of Scripture into an ideology to promote the selfish interests of the powerful. This hermeneutic aids theologians of religions to be conscious of how their view of those outside their tradition could be ideological.

Another foundational concept borrowed from Christian liberation theology is the preferential option for the poor, commonly referred to as the hermeneutical privilege of the poor. For Knitter, this principle resolves the issues surrounding the presuppositions and procedures for interreligious dialogue. He argues that the need for a common ground for dialogue has preoccupied theologians of religion for decades, and various models have been suggested. However, in the face of postmodernists' criticism they appear irrelevant. To enter into interreligious dialogue, however, indicates the existing bond between the religions, even though it has proved elusive to determine and here the liberation theology of the religions attempts a rescue:

...perhaps there is a common approach or a common context with which we can begin dialogue in order to create our shared 'shaky common ground'. For liberation theologians this common context would be the preferential option for the poor and the nonperson - that is, the option to work with and for the victims of this world.⁶⁵

Knitter further asserts that different liberation theologies have stressed the importance of the status of the poor as a key to understanding the scriptures and the world in general.

It follows therefore that ignoring the poor would amount to false religiosity. Interreligious dialogue could benefit from making a similar option for the victims of injustice and this will serve as a basis for the transcending of the incommensurability

⁶⁵ Paul F. Knitter, "Towards A Liberation Theology of Religions", *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*: 178-202, John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, Eds. (Maryknoll, New York, 1987) pp. 182-185. Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995) pp. 73-117.

of the religions and also pose as a source of mutual transformation. He, however, makes it explicit that he is not implying “objectivism” or “foundationalism”. For in making this fundamental option the religions will merely be creating an approach and a context, which must undergo clarification in the process of establishing a common ground. Hence, liberative praxis must precede the complex exercise of explicit dialogue.

Knitter acknowledges that each religious tradition will have its own perspective on what constitutes liberation, shaped by the teachings of its founder. He however maintains that the uniqueness of the method lies in its ability, as opposed to other methods in the past, to call into question the interpretations given to the said teachings in the light of the oppression of the poor.⁶⁶ Knitter contrasts global responsibility with religious diversity, insisting that, far from denigrating the importance of diversity, responsibility far outweighs it.⁶⁷

Knitter also considers the relationship between this method of dialogue and the other methods: concentration on texts, comparison of founders, telling of stories, religious experience. He insists that the liberation method has a priority over all the other methods, not a priority of value, but one of urgency which:

...can be recognised and affirmed by multiple religious communities [is] based on moral awareness...that is the amount of suffering, human and ecological, that we are aware of interculturally today, plus the degree of danger that faces all people and species on this Earth, is such that persons

⁶⁶ Paul F. Knitter, “Towards A Liberation Theology of Religions”, *The Myth*, p. 190. Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth*, pp. 129-135.

⁶⁷ Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth*, p. 73.

of all religions are agreeing that their religious identities must be lived out in response to these moral challenges and responsibilities.⁶⁸

The issues that the liberation method addresses cannot be safely ignored any longer and carry a great deal of urgency for the global religious community. If anyone pays attention to his critics, then it is Knitter. He interprets their criticisms as pointing to the dangers that lie ahead of the proposed method and not to insurmountable roadblocks. In addition, since the project at hand (liberation) is tied to the future of humanity, he insists that we must find ways to circumvent the dangers. He points out too, in line with Amaladoss, that the liberative movement is already taking place and gaining momentum within the different religions, suggesting that the impetus for it already exists.⁶⁹

B. METHODOLOGY OF THE GLOBAL LIBERATION METHOD

Knitter formulates the hermeneutic circle for the liberation method as turning on four spokes: compassion, conversion, collaboration and comprehension. Compassion constitutes the initial impetus for this method of dialogue. Unless people are moved by the situation of injustice and ecological devastation nothing can happen. He acknowledges that not everyone will be moved. But those who are moved enter into a dual relationship: with those who are affected directly by the situation and with each other. Thus the emergence of the “principle of unity.” Those who are moved by the situation can no longer afford to remain inactive. The situation lays a claim on them and this again involves their movement towards those having a similar experience.

⁶⁸ Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth*, pp. 151-153.

⁶⁹ Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies*, p. 139

No project is articulated at this stage, what is involved is a mere invitation to do something. An initial conversation is bound to begin at this stage as participants begin to share their stories and this creates a kind of a bond between them.

The next step is action, which constitutes the heart of the hermeneutic circle. It has the effect of further bonding the participants together. In the process of analysing the situation before action, participants might draw from their religious background. Diversity of plans for action is bound to rear its head at this stage but this could be overruled by the deep desire to remove suffering and the hermeneutic privilege of the poor. Their common failures and successes, courage and frustration, imprisonment and martyrdom are bound to facilitate a community. This community demands comprehension of each member's beliefs, and it is here that prayers, reflection, study, discussion and meditation begin to play a vital role. Armed with a common experience, they are now able to re-interpret their scriptures and beliefs and share with each other the inspiration they drew from their different religions in taking eco-human responsibility.⁷⁰

C. KNITTER'S PERSONAL OBSERVATION IN ASIA

Knitter does not stop at merely defending the liberation method of dialogue verbally. Unlike armchair theologians, he has kept abreast with the development of the method in Asia by comparing notes with theologians living there. He has also embarked on a personal observation of the working of the programme in India and Sri Lanka: in the Basic Ghandian Community, Aloysius Pieris' Research and Dialogue Centre at Tulana, near Colombo, its adjoining Association for Hearing Impaired Children and

⁷⁰ Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth*, pp. 140-142

the Centre for Religion and Society fostered by Tissa Balasuriya. He gives a detailed description of his findings at the Basic Ghandian Community, which we shall explore briefly.

He maintains that the Ghandian community came about as a result of a religious crisis that engulfed the town of Manavalakurichi in 1982, where peace loving Hindus and Muslims met to disown the violence that was being carried out in the name of their religions. The outcome of this reaction was the emergence of an interreligious community in 1987, which has been meeting regularly. Two years later a nearby village, Aloor, replicated this experience. He maintains that there are about eight of these communities in existence with membership ranging between twenty and thirty families. These communities did not develop spontaneously; they resulted from an interreligious conversation between Mr. N. Palerasu, a Hindu, who as a Ghandian scholar wanted to resuscitate the legend's dream of '*Gram Raj*' (i.e., village of *Raj*) and Fr. A. Tobias of the Nagercoil Diocese. The later consented to this dream and suggested some structural organisation, which was in place because the diocese was already experimenting with the BCCs of the Latin American vision.

Knitter attended one of the meetings of these communities at Aloor on November 20, 1991. Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jains attended it. He noticed that women were not in attendance but was informed it was not usually the case (though no explanation was offered for their non-attendance on the particular occasion). The agenda was informal according to his observation. After the preamble consisting of chitchats, they settled down to business, which boiled down to a communal problem. They dealt with the problem using the praxis-oriented approach. After this, they settled down to a variety of readings from their different scriptures followed by communal reflections and then spontaneous prayers. He further relates

that the meeting at Manavalakurichi was structured in a similar way though it was more formal. He found out that this community engaged in joint celebrations of the major religious festivities: Christmas, 1988; Deepavali, 1989; Ramzan, 1991.⁷¹

Knitter states that in India and Sri Lanka, concrete existence is marked by poverty and religious pluralism:

In dealing with the struggle of life, they do, because they have to, cooperate - always amicably, not without recurrent tensions, but if village life is to function, people do find themselves working with their neighbors. And they do this as devoutly religious people. Religion, for the most part, marks all that they do. So the daily give-and-take of village life in India and Sri Lanka is also, generally, an interreligious give and take.

...although in so much of this kind of interreligious cooperation and living together there is usually not much of what we would call formal dialogue - a discussion of religious beliefs and experiences - still, such acting together as devout religious believers is already an implicit dialogue; it is, as it were, the 'prime matter' or the inner reality or heart of such dialogue.⁷²

Knitter refers to these dialogues as 'living' dialogues, even though they lack a theological or reflective dimension, maintaining that they provide the context for the eventual evolution of the exercise.⁷³

D. A GENERAL CRITIQUE OF THE LIBERATION METHOD

The main source or guiding principle of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue is one that has not been properly clarified either in its Asian version or in

⁷¹ Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth*, pp. 167-180.

⁷² Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth*, p. 179.

⁷³ Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth*, p. 179.

Knitter's global version. One thing that comes across in its global formulation is that although the religions will play a role, they could be superseded and it does not clearly indicate the source that would serve as the superstructure, in their stead. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki believes that the vision for justice would be extracted from the ideals that the religions project. She puts this succinctly:

If it is the case that interpretations of well-being are rooted in the salvific interaction of religion with ordinary and extraordinary problems of existence, then it is possible that each religion's deepest valuation of what physical existence should be lies, not in its coping with the exigencies of history, but with ordinary and extraordinary problems of existence, then it is possible that each religion's deepest valuation of what physical existence should be lies, not in its coping with the exigencies of history, but in its projection of the ideal.⁷⁴

Knitter does not assume such confidence. Rather he presupposes that the religions have been instruments of division and violence. Consequently, they can only serve as sources of motivation for the liberation method and must subject themselves to its scrutiny.

Though in his formulation Knitter gives the impression that the liberation method will rely solely on the hermeneutical privilege of the poor, in some places he seems to suggest the employment of social analytical tools as the arbiters in the process. This stems from his seeming overconfidence in the social theories to provide us with the basis of our common humanity, which the religions mirror inadequately. That Knitter's formulation is coming at a time when social scientists are increasingly calling for myths to ground such theories is amazing. This contrast is reflected in the

⁷⁴ Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, "In Search of Justice: Religious Pluralism from a Feminist Perspective", *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*: 149-161. John Hick and Paul Knitter, Eds. (London: SCM Ltd., 1987) p. 159.

need for social theory by political theologians and the search for the 'mythic-religions' by social theory.⁷⁵ Heim maintains that the novelty of the liberation method lies in its claim to offer to us new insights into the issues of poverty and injustice, which the religions already address without proper insight.⁷⁶ So all those involved must lay aside their assessment of these issues since they are not perfectly articulated in their faith traditions. Knitter's confidence in extra-religious sources finds expression in the following:

...science, in what it tells us about how the universe originated and how it works, is providing all religions with a *common creation myth*.... If religious persons will listen to – or 'eavesdrop' on what is generally agreed upon among contemporary scientists (biologists, astrophysicists, cosmologists), they will find a creation story that enlightens, confirms, and excitingly expands their own religious stories of what the world is and how we are to live within it; more significantly, the universe story will provide a common hermeneutical framework to link a variety of religious stories.⁷⁷

Knitter expresses so much confidence in the scientific methods that the religions are made dependent on them. Definitely, this approach is dictated by the need for an exposition of our common humanity.

Yet reliance on social scientific methods raises a question: how objective is liberalism, on which most of these methods are founded, in providing us with insight into the issues of injustice and poverty? Liberalism, of course, which begins with a rejection of any overarching tradition ends up being one itself. Its conception of what

⁷⁵ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990) p. 3.

⁷⁶ S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Differences in Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997)p. 206.

⁷⁷ Pau F. Knitter, *One Earth*, pp. 119-120.

constitutes human good is coloured by this tradition. The inbuilt contradictions within liberalism show that it does not constitute rationality independent of an evolving tradition. Alisdair McIntyre argues that: "... liberalism has its set of authoritative texts and its disputes over their interpretation. Like other traditions, liberalism expresses itself socially through a particular kind of hierarchy."⁷⁸ Yet Knitter depends on this tradition for his neutral hermeneutic. How does this new hermeneutic, which Knitter additionally situates in his method, correlate with the hermeneutical privilege of the poor? Or does he presuppose beforehand an intrinsic relationship between the two hermeneutics? In that case, he did not take one of the weaknesses of liberation theology seriously.

We have seen in the case of Latin America that two liberation theologies emerged because the poor did not feel at home with the critical posture of the social scientific methods toward their popular religiosity. I believe that the presupposition that the tools for social analysis will serve to expose the dynamics underlying the situation of poverty and injustice according to the view of the poor and marginalized, stems from a failure to take a proper account of the style and form of popular religiosity. The failure of theologians who adapt liberation theology into the realm of interreligious dialogue to take proper account of the main reason for its failure in Latin American Christianity amounts to a considerable oversight. Pieris notes the existence of this alternative liberation programme steeped in popular religiosity but discounts it as an elitist programme of liberation⁷⁹, while Knitter completely ignores its existence.

⁷⁸ Alisdair McIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1998) p. 345.

⁷⁹ Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian*, pp. 117-120.

Our study of the Latin American context reveals that popular religiosity is an issue that must not be undermined by any programme of liberation if it is to be successful. Jon Sobrino, interestingly, is able to detect the tone and the role of popular religiosity in Asia. After a cursory observation of the Asian scene he asserts:

I think that for the poor of this world, religion exercises the primary function of offering a way to *manage life*. That is, faced with the inherent difficulty of surviving and of having a life with some meaning, religion provides a framework in which to live and organize one's life; it proposes a way in which to move forward; it offers meaning and hope; and it gives a measure of dignity.⁸⁰

Sobrino acknowledges that this comes close to proposing religion as an 'opiate of the people' yet it goes beyond that and it makes the terrible socio-economic conditions that the poor find themselves in meaningful and also removes them from the realm of chaos that their situation would otherwise have entailed. He acknowledges that an oppressor could manipulate the strategy to keep the poor contented with their situation, but this does not take away the value it gives to the poor, who are at the receiving end of life.⁸¹ That the poor make an option for the alternative liberation programme instead of the one articulated by the liberation theologians only makes us aware of their preference. No liberation theology of religions will be successful without accommodating this alternative form of liberation that aims at personal, instead of structural transformation.

Another shortfall of Knitter is his reliance on compassionate spontaneity in the formulation of the liberation method. This has led him to conclude that the every day

⁸⁰ Jon Sobrino, "Eastern Religions and Liberation", *World Religions and Human Liberation*: 113-126.

Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992) p. 114.

⁸¹ Jon Sobrino, "Eastern Religions and Liberation", *World Religions*, p. 115.

interaction between the adherents of the different religions in India and Sri Lanka could serve as contexts, like BCCs, for the articulation of the liberation method. What Knitter observes in the groups that he 'popped into' existed in Asia even before the articulation of Latin American liberation theology. This has found reflection in the writings of some Asian theologians but it has yet to metamorphose into praxis theology.⁸² We saw how Latin American liberation theology evolved from careful pastoral planning, involving official structures. The fact that Asia has been unable to translate its theological dream of engaging with poverty and religious pluralism up till now is because such pastoral structures have not yet been formulated within a collective vision of the diverse religious traditions. The liberation method cannot rely on some form of *koinonia*. I agree with Sharon Welch when she maintains that this:

... type of humanity envisioned by liberation theologians does not come about naturally; it has to be achieved. This type of human community is not a given; it must be fought for. Even then, it can be, and often is destroyed in history. It is to be achieved, not merely recognised. Liberation theology is part of a struggle for the establishment of a particular kind of subjectivity, not a declaration of the *a priori* existence of that subjectivity.⁸³

The liberation method requires the formation of people within communities to bring about the required transformation. This calls for some programme, articulated

⁸² We find a comprehensive account of the existence of the liberation consciousness in Asia, which has not however evolved into a theology akin to the one in Latin America in Bastiaan Wielenga, "Liberation Theology in Asia", *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*: 36-62.

Christopher Rowland, Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁸³ Quoted in William R. Burrows, "Commeasurability and Ambiguity", *World Religions and Human Liberation*: 127-142. Dan Cohn-Sherbok, ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992) p. 140.

within some structures, and not mere spontaneity motivated by compassion, generated by the suffering of the poor.

Finally, Knitter's case study, above, does not reflect any significant engagement with the hermeneutic circle he proposes in the first part of his book. Dialogue was never involved at any stage in the meetings of the communities at Manavalakurichi or Aloor, which he attended. If he is able to observe the absence of women at the meeting, he overlooks the absence of engagement in dialogue in the reflections on the communal issues that were handled there. The process of social analysis was employed, not as a step to dialogical reflection, but as an end in itself. I begin to wonder if Knitter is not reading too much into the situations he finds in the communities in India and Sri Lanka. I might well describe the meetings on which he reports, as constituted by social action, sprinkled with some modicum of religiosity, rather than reflecting the proposed BHCs. Even if the liberation method is a mere proposal, as Knitter often argues, its refusal to take account of the weaknesses of Latin American liberation theology is responsible for the handicaps, as we saw above.

The contribution of liberation to interreligious dialogue is, however, revolutionary. Underlying the formulations of Christian liberation theologies is the challenge of critical theory for the doctrine of salvation. Christianity is called upon to account for the social implications of the freedom won by Christ not just for Christians but also for the whole of humanity. Dermot Lane captures and widens these challenges:

Such soteriological themes of the gospel come under scrutiny today not only by critical theory but by all who look at Christianity from the outside. Do these doctrinal claims have any critical import for society? Does the gospel really have an emancipatory thrust in praxis that affects the social situation of humanity? Is the orthodoxy of 'salvation in Christ', simply a

matter of faith without an *ortho-praxis*? Is redemption just a theory about the next life without any basis in present experience and social praxis? Is salvation simply a spiritual and private affair between the individual and God without reference to the rest of humanity?⁸⁴

The responses to such questions are well articulated in the social teachings of the Catholic Church within which liberation theology emerged in Latin America. Human development is integral to the spread of the gospel. Gutiérrez, however, substitutes development with liberation, finding in it a more embracing term.

Liberation theology has left a lasting legacy in the field of religion. It makes it clear that no religious endeavour can dispense with the issues of poverty and injustice and even ecological devastation. We are witnessing today the reclaiming of the liberation tradition in virtually all the religious traditions. The fact that this retrieval is taking place also suggests the renewed relevance that these issues have in our global context. The engagement of the theme of liberation with the field of interreligious dialogue, despite all its shortcomings, is one that should not be discarded without serious thought. Interreligious dialogue cannot afford to ignore issues of liberative praxis without appearing elitist and irrelevant. Knitter and those proposing this model of dialogue are reminders to us that the split between the secular and the sacred is a questionable one and should not be allowed to prevail. But whether this method of interreligious dialogue can serve as a common ground for the religions is another question entirely.

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⁸⁴ Dermot Lane, *Foundations for a Social Theology: Praxis, Process and Salvation* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1984) p. 82.

Central to liberation theology is the hermeneutic of suspicion, which presupposes the inadequacy of Christianity to deal with the situation of poverty and injustice in Latin America. This called for the incorporation of social scientific methods for analysing the situation and deideologising the scriptures that have been placed at the service of the status quo. In any case, we noticed that the many of the poor in the continent refused to acknowledge the insufficiency of Christianity as it is then presented to deal with the situation, and continue to invoke popular religiosity, which presupposes that Christianity was sufficient to deal with the situation. The option they made for the Pentecostal movements speaks volumes for their perception of Christianity as sufficient to deal with the situation of poverty and injustice in Latin America. Knitter makes the claim that the poor in Asia are drawn to the liberation method of interreligious dialogue. I have argued above that this claim takes too much for granted. We shall now examine the Northern Nigerian context, theoretically, and see how Islam and Christianity constitute themselves as sufficient to deal with the crises that plague the region, thereby foreclosing on the possibility of mutual interaction even in the face of poverty and injustice.

CHAPTER TWO

ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

This chapter is concerned with the interaction of Islam and Christianity in Northern Nigeria, the socio-historical context of our study. It is clearly far beyond the scope of this thesis to deal with all the concrete issues and themes that add up to explain the development of these religions in this region and their role as moulders of public opinion, even to the exclusion of the traditional religion which still survives in small, scattered pockets in the region. To compensate for this deficiency, I shall limit myself to an examination of three broad areas: the influence of the two religions on the civilisation, politics and socio-economy of the region, with the aim of showing how the two religions present themselves as parallel traditions, leading their followers to perceive them and to commit to them as self contained institutions that do not need mutual enrichment.

I. RELIGION AND CIVILISATION

Northern Nigeria is not a monolithic entity and consists of various people, possessing divergent cultural and historical traditions. At the northernmost part of the region is Hausaland and Borno, occupied by the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri. Towards the southern part we have the Nupe, Yoruba, Tiv and a conglomeration of small tribes in the hill regions. Out of this complexity, Islam and Christianity provided two parallel civilisations by dislodging the traditional religions in the area. Even where the traditional religions continue to exist they do not exert any direct public influence in the region.

A. ISLAM IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

1. The Advent of Islam in Northern Nigeria

Islam predates Christianity in Northern Nigeria and the interaction between the religion and the region is so intense that it is difficult to extract the pre-Islamic culture of the areas that embrace it. For example, contrary to historical evidence, the Hausas trace their descent from either the Yamanites or the Ummayyads, descendants of the Prophet Muhammad and Arab conquerors of North Africa.¹ This shows the level of their affiliation to the Islamic Arab heritage.

The first area to have contact with Islam is Borno. It is on record that Islam was present as early as 666 A. D. and also that the descendants of the refugees of the Ummayyads were living in the locality. According to tradition, the religion was so entrenched that by the 15th century, Borno was regarded as a fully-fledged Islamic state. Mai Idris Alooma (1570-1603) even regarded his battles as *jihads* and established diplomatic relations with Istanbul and Morocco, which opened the area to the benefits of Islamic civilisation. He implemented a stricter observance of Islam, particularly the *Shari'a*. Besides all Borno titleholders, at the time, were Muslims. At the close of the 18th century, Islam provided guidance for the people of Borno from the womb to the grave. There is evidence, however, of the continuous existence of traditional religion in some form.²

Unlike Borno, Hausaland is not directly connected to the trans-Saharan trade routes and remained immune to Islam until the arrival of the Wangarawa, who were of merchants and clerics of the Mande-Dyula tribe of Mali, West Africa. The Kano

¹ Mervyn Hiskett, *The Course of Islam in Africa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994) p.108.

² Nehemia Levtzion, "Islam in the Bilad al-Sudan", *The History of Islam in Africa*: 79-88. Nehemiah Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels, Eds. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2000) p. 81.

Chronicle situates this event in the reign of Sarki Yaji of Kano (1349-1385), who accepted the faith and built a mosque under the sacred tree facing east to enable the assigned prayers five times a day.³ He created offices associated with the practice of Islam and ordered all the chiefs in his domain to embrace the faith. The reason that led to his immediate embrace of Islam, equally led his successor to reject it. Muslims had interceded for him to win a battle against one of his most formidable enemies. So when Kanajeji (1390-1410) his successor lost in battle, the chief priest of the traditional religion promised him victory through his intercession. Kanajeji won the battle and traditional religion was reinstalled as the state religion.

Another account states that the Wangarawa came to Hausaland at the time of Sarkin Kano Rumfa (1463-1499). With the account above, Islam would have been introduced in some form before Rumfa's era, but his enthusiasm would have led the chroniclers to associate the advent of the religion with his reign. He asked Muhammad b. Abd al-Karim b. Muhammad al-Maghili, the North African scholar and theologian to write the *Obligation of Princes* to facilitate his administration. It is also within this period that the Fulani legalists and theologians migrated into Hausaland and Borno.⁴ We shall see the influence of this wave of migration shortly. Rumfa's son, Abu Bakr Kado (1565-73), was an ardent Islamic scholar, who imposed the learning of the *Qur'an* on his sons and chiefs. Yet one of his successors, Muhammad Zaki (1582-1681), was syncretistic in his practice of Islam and revived certain non-Islamic practices. On the whole, the Kano kings continued to oscillate

³ Nehemia Levtzion, "Islam in the Bilad al-Sudan", *The History*, p. 82.

⁴ S. A. Balogun, "History of Islam up to 1800", *Groundwork of Nigerian History: 187-209*. Obaro Ikime, Ed. (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1989) p. 214

between Islam and traditional religion depending on which delivered the best results in the battles they fought for the consolidation of the city-state.

The Wangarawa also maintained a strong presence in Katsina and at the close of the 15th century constituted such a force as to take over the state. Local resistance, however, forced them to compromise with the *durbi*, the traditional priest-chief, who then reserved the right to appoint the rulers of Katsina. The kings, though zealous for Islam, were consequently forced to integrate traditional practices into their political administration under the influence of the *durbi*.⁵

It is clear that Islam was not successfully consolidated in Northern Nigeria during this early period, even though it occupied pride of place as state religion and it lent a civilisation to the states that adopted it. Moreover, apart from Borno, Kano, Katsina, and to some extent Gobir, Nupe and Zazzau, which could boast of a strong Islamic tradition, other parts of Northern Nigeria, like Kebbi, Yawuri and Yorubaland, did not equally embrace Islam.⁶ Suffice it to say that even those kings who professed Islam continued in their role as chief priests of the traditional religion, especially officiating in the traditional rites of the society.⁷

The emergence of the *'ulama* class however ensured Islamic revivalism in the region. It was the patronage that Islam received in Kano and Katsina, particularly the generosity of the royalty to scholars, teachers and preachers, that facilitated its emergence. Traditionally, the *'ulama* were harnessed to the status quo, but over time the class expanded in such a way that some of them fell outside the influence of the courts. It was from such *'ulamas* that the criticisms of non-Islamic practices,

⁵ Nehemiah Levtzion, "Islam in the Bilad al-Sudan", *The History*, pp. 83-84.

⁶ S. A. Balogun, "History of Islam up to 1800", *Groundwork of*, pp. 216-217.

⁷ J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in West Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973) p. 140.

tolerated for decades in the region, emerged. These practices endured because sufficient teaching of the implications of the faith did not usually follow Islamic conversion. Converts were usually left with the hope that they would come to discover what the faith entailed, but this was not usually the case, as many continued in their traditional practices while professing the faith.⁸

2. The Establishment of Islamic Theocracy in Northern Nigeria

The advent of the Fulani, mentioned above, created a bastion of Islamic purity in the face of massive syncretism. These were mainly of *Torodbe* or *Toronkawa* extraction, otherwise referred to as settled Fulani in contrast to their nomadic counterparts. They were outstanding in their Islamic zeal and dedicated themselves to the study of the Islamic sources, and they were also skilled horsemen and warriors. Though they were in touch with the rulers, they did not involve themselves in the administration of the state or the non-Islamic practices integrated in it. This disengagement from the affairs of state and their zeal for Islam created the tension which ignited the flames of the *jihād* that consumed Hausaland in the 19th century.⁹

All along Islamic presence was strongly felt only at the courts, but it was only a matter of time before Islam emerged as an ideology in Hausaland. The ideology found expression in the units scattered all over the region, nurtured by exposure to Islamic centres of pilgrimages in Mecca, Medina and the Middle East in general. Consequently, Islamic ideas, books and materials flowed into the region, and special Islamic settlements emerged with the *mallam* (*mu'alim*) at the centre surrounded by

⁸ S. A. Balogun, "History of Islam up to 1800", *Groundwork of*, pp. 220-221.

⁹ Nehemia Levtzion, "Islam in the Bilad al-Sudan", *The History*, p. 83.

his followers (*jama'as*). Despite this development, Islam was yet to adorn itself with a political garb because these settlements lacked adequate co-ordination. *Shaikh* Muhammad b. 'Uthman b. Muhammad b. Uthman b. Salih, who is known as Uthman dan Fodio (*fodiye*, meaning learned man), provided this focus. Uthman's popularity and charisma soon put him in confrontation with the kings of Gobir, the superpower in Hausaland at the time. Powerless in the confrontation with the state, Uthman and the entire community fled to Gudu. This flight that took place in February 21, 1804, was undertaken in the manner of a *hijra*, an important step in the execution of a *jjihad*.¹⁰

The grievances of Uthman with Gobir articulated the feelings of various Muslim communities who saw the conditions imposed on them by governments not run according to the *Shari'a* as constituting impediments to their practice of Islam.¹¹ Two months after the *hijra*, countless Muslims joined Uthman at Gudu. The sheer size of his force in the face of a disunited Hausaland forced Yunfa, the king of Gobir, into offering a concession, but Uthman's '*ulama* and councillors advised him to reject the offer.¹²

If the Muslim community at Gudu conceived and planned the *hijra* in line with the classical prophetic tradition, so also was the manner in which they fought the subsequent *jjihad*.¹³ The battle of Tabkin Kwotto (between April and June 1804) is often compared to the prophetic battle of Badr. With a gross disadvantage of number

¹⁰ Rovland A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria: The Sokoto Caliphate and its Enemies*. (London: Longmans, 1971) pp. 13-14.

¹¹ Rovland A. Adeleye, *Power and*, p. 18.

¹² H. A. S. Johnston, *The Fulani Empire of Sokoto* (London: Oxford Press, 1967) p. 42.

¹³ Muray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London: Longmans, 1967) p.20.

and equipment, the jihadists inflicted a great defeat on Gobir's army. They interpreted this victory as a sign of God's intervention, and this particularly boosted their morale. The *jihad* from this point on was no longer a singular event in Gobir as it soon spread to other Hausa states where Muslims faced similar conditions. As the Hausa kings took a stand against their Muslim populace, the *jihad* erupted in their states. It became the custom by 1805 that leaders of Muslim communities came from far and wide to pay homage to Uthman and to be appointed as his deputies to take the *jihad* to their localities, with a flag symbolising their authority.¹⁴

The Fulani in Borno also joined the uprising but, after a long struggle, failed to subdue their host community. Borno was in a state of decline at this stage and this must have inspired the Fulani within its territory to attempt a revolt. Encouraged by the success of their kinsmen against Gobir, they were initially successful but eventually faced stiff opposition from the local Kanuri population and this lack of support from the common people, which was vital for the success of the *jihad* in Hausaland, spelt their doom. Consequently, Borno not only survived as an independent entity but it also constituted itself to Sokoto and its Western Emirates as an 'inveterate enemy'. The process of the *jihad* lasted more than half a century.¹⁵

The *jihad* is sometimes attributed to the desire of the Fulani to gain dominance in Hausaland. In any case, Uthman tried to run the Sokoto Caliphate that emerged according to Islamic principles and the *Shari'a* law and also obliged his authorised deputies to follow suit.¹⁶ The Jihadists' conception of the state was largely derived from the *Maliki Madhhab* (school) of *Shari'a* law as the late Abbasid theorists

¹⁴ Rowland A. Adeleye, *Power and*, pp. 23-25.

¹⁵ Rowland A. Adeleye, *Power and*, pp. 30, 54.

¹⁶ Rowland A. Adeleye, *Power and*, pp. 40-42.

interpreted it. The success of the *jihad* was remarkable and so was the theocracy that resulted from the process.¹⁷ The jihadists were able to weave the warring Hausa kingdoms into a centralised unit, with a unified administration and legal system.¹⁸ In any case, they could not conquer many areas in Northern Nigeria and in some cases Muslims were forced to live side by side with unconquered non-Muslims.¹⁹ This situation prevailed into colonial times.

B. THE COLONIAL ERA

1. The Conquest of Northern Nigeria

The role of Islam in shaping the lives and culture of Muslims in Northern Nigeria became evident in their interaction with the Europeans, particular the British United African Company. The company was formed under the leadership of George Taubman Goldie in 1879 to overcome the cutthroat competition that characterised the different British companies operating in the Niger-Benue tributaries. Apart from being an umbrella-trading organisation, it was meant to secure British colonial interest in the region by edging out rival European nations. It was also in this period that treaties were introduced with the aim of bringing the caliphate under European political control. In their interaction with the Europeans, the caliph of Sokoto and the *shehu* of Borno treated them in line with Islamic principles. The commercial concession they granted them was unambiguous and revealed their awareness of the

¹⁷ Mervyn Hiskett, *The Course*, p. 111.

¹⁸ Willam F. S. Miles, "Religious Pluralism in Northern Nigeria", *The History of Islam in Africa: 209-227*. Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels, Eds. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2000) p. 210.

¹⁹ J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in*, pp. 19-20.

fact that they were dealing with inferior foreign subjects and not with overlords.²⁰ These concessions were given with full awareness of the demands of the *Shari'a* in respect of relations with Christians.²¹ They were given *aman* (safe conduct) for an indefinite period, which allowed them to enjoy the protection of the caliph, implying that, though unbelievers, they could reside in Dar al-Islam (world of believers) for commercial purposes. Interestingly, they were exempted from the payment of taxes, which were introduced only after the treaty period.

The signing of treaties, which characterised the period before formal colonisation also revealed the influence of Islam in the foreign policies of Sokoto and Borno. While the other potentates were signing a treaty pre-designed in Britain and presented to them by Henry Barth, a British Colonial agent, the caliph and the *shehu* took a different approach. They ignored the treaty and presented Barth with what they were prepared to grant the British in sealed documents, drafted in the spirit of the *Shari'a*. As Christians, the British were expected to assume the position of protected people, and their request for the exclusion of other Europeans from these territories was denied on the grounds that they were also Christians.²²

With the failure of diplomacy, peaceful negotiations and partial hostility to subdue the two caliphates, a formal administration was inaugurated on January 1, 1900 under the leadership of Frederick Lugard, to conquer the region. Gradually, the emirates under Sokoto's tutelage and Borno were subdued and this prompted the caliphate to decide on a line of action in the face of the impending British incursion.

²⁰ Ibrahim Sulaiman, *The Islamic State and the Challenge of History* (London: Mansell Publishing Ltd., 1987) p. 84.

²¹ See Appendix 9 for an example of this attitude.

²² Rowland Adeleye, *Power and*, pp. 121-122.

Attahiru I, the caliph, was in support of *hijra* in preparation for a *jihad* but his *waziri*, Bukhari b. Ahmad, was in support of leaving the situation open towards collaborating with the invaders.²³ Both of these attitudes are deeply ingrained in the Islamic heritage, as we shall see shortly. On March 15, 1903, after 1½ hours of battle, Sokoto succumbed to the British military machine with heavy casualties. The first reaction to conquest was immigration, with the caliph fleeing eastward, while the *waziri* and many of the residents fled northwards to Marnona. So the British found an empty Sokoto at their triumphant entry.²⁴

In the absence of the caliph, the *waziri* had to come to a decision in the face of the victorious British, a decision steeped in Islamic tradition. The council of *'ulama* resolved the issue by appealing to the teachings of Uthman dan Fodio in *Masa'il Muhimma* on the dealings of Muslims and unbelievers:

In order to preserve Muslims from harm, it was permissible by *ijma* for the Imam or his agents to give friendship to unbelievers when the Muslims live in fear of them and are not strong enough to oppose their power.²⁵

This concession is rooted in the classical Islamic principle and practice of *al-taqiyya*, which though it literally translates as 'dissembling', is more active in reality. It relates to the strategic, underlying loyalty to Islam concealed by a surface compliance to a superior force, in this case the British. It is founded on Qur'anic teachings (*Suras* 3:28, 16:106; 40:28; 7:148 and 2:195).

²³ Bavuro M. Bakindo, "Islamism in Kano", *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 91-105. Louis Brenner, Ed. (London: Hurst and Company, 1993) p. 98.

²⁴ Rovland Adeleye, *Power and*, p. 283.

²⁵ Rovland Adeleye, *Power and*, p. 284.

Based on the agreement reached in council, the *waziri* communicated the willingness of Sokoto to surrender, with one fear in his heart: that his people might be forced to become Christians. When Lugard assured him that the practice of Islam would be preserved, he led the people back to Sokoto to broker the peace agreement. Lugard abolished the office of caliph and asked the council to elect a new sultan. Muhammad al-Tahir b. Ali b. Muhammad Bello was elected Attahiru II. At the inauguration, at which Lugard officiated, he emphasised the need for the British to learn the laws and ways of the Sokoto people and vice versa, but he guaranteed the preservation of Islam.

In contrast to the *waziri's* collaboration inspired by *al-Taqiyya*, the caliph inspired a chain of *hijras* and *jihads* in opposition to the British. The general upheaval caused by the flight and fight of the caliph was intensified by several *mahdist* movements that arose between 1903-1906.²⁶ The battle in which Attahiru I was killed revealed that the initial defeat of Sokoto was merely temporary. It took two battles to defeat and finally kill him in his effort to reverse the achievements of Lugard, in the manner of a full-scale *jihad* with people drawn from all corners of the caliphate supporting his quest.²⁷ The most devastating *jihad* for the British was that of Mallam Isa with his cohorts in Satiru that almost wiped out a detachment sent to restore order.²⁸ The caliphate was founded on Islamic ideals and it is scarcely surprising therefore that in times of stress the people drew from the same values that had steered its course for 100 years until its termination by the British, a pattern we shall see repeated in contemporary times.

²⁶ Rowland Adeleye, *Power and*, p. 291.

²⁷ Rowland Adeleye, *Power and*, p. 309.

²⁸ William F. S. Miles, "Religious Pluralism in Northern Nigeria", *The History*, p. 211.

2. The Policy of Indirect Rule

The occupation of areas that lay outside the caliphates of Northern Nigeria (Sokoto and Borno) continued well into the First World War, but the colonial administration of the area started with the fall of Sokoto, through indirect rule. It is difficult to argue that the principle of indirect rule (otherwise referred to as the Lugardian system) was employed from a deep desire to nourish the cherished customs, traditions and institutions of the people, as it was officially presented. When one takes into consideration the fact that the British were handicapped in respect of men and materials to run a direct system of government, this option seemed the only one open to them. Hence, they instantaneously patronised the system they had vilified in searching for a justification to overthrow it. In fact, the system was so highly esteemed that they extended it in some cases over non-Muslim groups.²⁹

The Muslim Emirs were therefore given a firm grasp of areas that they had previously only raided for slaves or related with as tributaries. Cooperation with the Muslim rulers and their organised system of government was the best option for overworked or lazy administrators who considered the judicial problems in these areas difficult to handle.³⁰ This interference in the lives of the non-Muslims definitely conferred an undue advantage on Islam. Based on this, it is sometimes concluded that the Emirate system benefited tremendously under British rule.³¹

These benefits, however, came at a price to the caliphates as the emirs lost their traditional authority to the British overlords. To begin with, the office of caliph

²⁹ Sa'ad Abubakar, "The Northern Provinces Under Colonial Rule", *Groundwork of Nigerian History*: 447-481. Obaro Ikime, Ed. (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 2000) pp. 450-451.

³⁰ Ogbu Kalu, *Christianity in West Africa: The Nigerian Story* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1978) p.73.

³¹ Mervyn Hiskett, *The Course*, p. 116.

was replaced by that of sultan who exercised no authority outside Sokoto. This was considered the jurisdiction of the British High Commissioner. The sultan and the emirs were placed under a district officer and had to swear an oath of office in the name of Allah and the prophet to safeguard an institution foreign to the *Shar'ia*. The British also affected changes in the spheres of taxation, slavery and justice. Even though the *quadi* courts were allowed, they were highly regulated to ensure compliance with British humanitarian standards and the High Commissioner had the prerogative of justice.³² It was clearly a reversal of fortune for Islam in Northern Nigeria. The advent of Christianity in the region did not help matters and threatened to undermine the system of indirect rule, the last thread of hope for Islam in the region.

C. CHRISTIANITY IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

1. The Advent of Christianity in Northern Nigeria

Christian enterprise in Northern Nigeria is better understood by noting a deeply entrenched Islam, colonial policy and the missionary conception of Islam as its background. These factors came together to generate controversy and mistrust between the colonial administration, Muslims and Christian missionaries. Prior to the late 19th century, the period under consideration, early attempts at missionary work in the region are on record. Some Roman Catholic missionaries from Italy and Belgium undertook a project of evangelisation in Kano, Katsina and Borno, roughly between the 18th and 19th centuries. These early missions were a colossal failure.³³ Fresh

³² Sa'ad Abubakar, "The Northern Provinces Under Colonial Rule", *Groundwork of*, pp. 450-452.

³³ Raymond Hickey, *A History of the Catholic Church in Northern Nigeria* (Jos: Augustinian Publications, 1981) pp. 9-13.

attempts in the period under consideration were hampered by the British policy of preserving the customs and traditions of the people of the caliphate. There was a complete ban on missionary activities for the first 30 years, except in areas where the missionaries predated the British, like the Christian Missionary Society (C.M.S.) in Zaria or where the emirs allowed the missionaries on their own volition.³⁴ Moreover, the colonial authorities prevented missionary work even in some non-Muslim areas on the pretext that they were unsettled territories.³⁵ However, the zeal of the missionaries for the conversion of the Hausa-Fulani was beyond expression and the strategies for the evangelisation of the region dominated their agenda.³⁶

The missionary zeal was sparked by a negative perception of Islam and its narrow association with the Fulani, whom the missionaries considered to be the oppressors of the common Hausa people. They seriously called into question the religious values of Islam in the light of medieval polemics still prevalent in Europe, at the time and were obsessed with the notion of Islam as a “fatalistic religion full of superstitious ideas, bereft of any real spirituality, and socially backward to a degree that was totally obstructive to development and civilisation.”³⁷ The most aggressive critic of Islam was H. Karl W. Kuum, who maintained that its adherents were in perpetual darkness and were demonising Africa. He maintained that while Christians engaged in slavery in spite of their religion, Islam itself is founded on slavery and that once slavery was abolished it would crumble. He viewed Muslims as a people

³⁴ Lissi Rasmussen, *Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa* (London and New York: British Academic Press, 1993) p. 28.

³⁵ Lissi Rasmussen, *Christian-Muslim*, p. 27.

³⁶ T. G. O. Gbadamosi & J. F. Ade Ajayi, “Islam and Christianity in Nigeria”, *Groundwork of Nigerian History*: 346-366. Obaro Ikime, Ed. (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 2000) p. 350.

³⁷ Lissi Rasmussen, *Christian-Muslim*, p. 36.

lacking in morality and completely intolerant.³⁸ The salvation of Islamic dominated areas was therefore a question of urgency.

There was a notable exception to this negative perception of Islam in Edward Wilmot Blyden. He was a Negro from the West Indies who thought that Islam could serve as a convenient bridge for the transition from paganism to Christianity. He therefore strove to end the mutual antagonism between the two religions and fashioned some common fundamentals between them. His knowledge of Arabic was deep and his openness to Islam prompted the British to appoint him the director of Muhammedan Education in 1901.³⁹ But this ecumenical trend was not widely appreciated and its semblance is not discernible, even in present times.

The Christian Missionary Society (CMS) of the Anglican Communion was the pioneer missionary organisation in Northern Nigeria. The C.M.S. appointed Ajayi Crowther as bishop of the Niger, to oversee missionary activities in the areas beyond the Niger to the north. His approach of gentle persuasion endeared him to the heart of the emir of Bida, who even recommended Crowther to the emirs of Nassarawa and Yola. Crowther also received invitations to open stations at Kontagora and Nassarawa, among other places, but he failed to win converts.

Crowther's failure motivated the emergence of the Sudan Party, consisting of twelve missionaries with Graham Wilmot Brooke as their leader. His strategy was that of "cultural surrender": wearing Muslim clothes, significantly the turban, eating Hausa food and using Hausa language. He demanded the expulsion of the African pioneer missionaries on the ground that they were Europeanized. Unfortunately, his

³⁸ Lissi Rasmussen, *Christian-Muslim*, pp. 36-41.

³⁹ Lissi Rasmussen, *Christian-Muslim*, p. 41.

strategy did not work and the whole scheme ended with his death in 1892 of black-water fever.⁴⁰ Other missionary organisations were also unsuccessful. The emir of Ilorin rebuffed attempts by Bowen, an American Baptist missionary, and the Methodists folded up after the death of Allukur Sharpe, a Kanuri missionary in 1884. In 1886 the S.M.A. fathers opened a mission at Lokoja, but the Holy Ghost fathers were unsuccessful in their attempt to open a station at Ibi. The early missionaries of these congregations were of French extraction.⁴¹

Bishop Tugwell, along with Miller, attempted a mission to the heart of Hausaland in 1899. After an outstanding diplomatic effort that cemented a cordial relationship between the Emir of Zaria and Lugard, they were confident that the people were well disposed to missionary enterprise. In their newfound confidence they departed to Kano. On reaching Kano, they were embarrassed by the emir, Aliyu, who ordered them to depart immediately.⁴² The missionaries returned to Zaria and found to their disappointment that the earlier enthusiasm they had met had died out. The only achievement of this mission was the building of a mission house and dispensary at Girku, a military camp near Zaria, which was unfortunately burnt down a year later. Walter Miller was however allowed to return there in 1902.⁴³ Despite the embarrassment he received with Tugwell at Kano, Miller possessed a kind of naïve optimism in his attitude to the religious situation in Hausaland and predicted the end of Islam, holding passionately: "...the people prophesy the advent of the white

⁴⁰ E. P. T Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria* (London: G. Chapman, 1979) p. 31.

⁴¹ Ogbu Kalu, *Christianity in*, pp. 36-37.

⁴² Ogbu Kalu, *Christianity in*, p. 44.

⁴³ Ogbu Kalu, *Christianity in*, pp. 44-45.

man with the Christian religion. So it comes to pass that the whole Hausaland is waiting for Christ.’⁴⁴

The presence of Miller in Muslim-dominated areas reveals the contradiction that plagued the colonialists with respect to the missionary enterprise. On the one hand they wanted to fulfil their pledge, of preserving Islam, to the Muslims but on the other hand, they needed to cooperate with the missionaries on their secular projects like education and health. This created an ambiguity both to Muslims and Christian missionaries who separately accused the colonial administration of favouritism. Miller's indispensability to the colonial project ensured that he was not kept out of the Muslim areas but his missionary vision drove him into relentless Christian activism that saw him emerge as the most outstanding missionary in Hausaland. More missionaries arrived later, but they concentrated their efforts outside the core of Hausaland, particularly to the South.

The failure of missionary enterprise in Muslim Northern Nigeria is best understood in the context of colonialism and the general attitude of Christian missionaries to Islam. Missionaries were regarded as agents of the British whose aim was to take away the little independence that these areas possessed. Besides, Lugard and the subsequent High Commissioners were determined to honour the commitment of religious non-interference that they had given to the Muslims at occupation. Unfortunately, some of the missionaries did not help matters by posing as the liberators of the Hausa commoners from the Hausa-Fulani hegemony. Most importantly, Islam was already well established - not only as a religion - but it also

⁴⁴ Mathew H. Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1993), p. 4.

provided the impetus for life, law, ethics and education.⁴⁵ It was therefore the case that even when the emirs gave the missionaries a warm reception, as we saw in the case of Crowther, they could not make headway with the people.

There was no doubt a great deal of dissatisfaction by the *talakawa* (Hausa commoners) with the Hausa-Fulani elites, whose ideals were embodied in the *Qadirriya* movement. This being the case, the impetus for a revolt would be provided not by Christianity but by a rival Islamic movement, the *Tijaniyya* that arrived on the scene at the dawn of colonial rule. The *Tijanniya* movement has continued to manifest itself as a bastion of opposition, especially in Kano to the Hausa-Fulani hegemony based in Sokoto.⁴⁶ So the optimism of the Christian missionaries was again unfounded.

2. The Provision of an Alternative Civilisation

With their failure in the Islamic strongholds, the missionaries turned their attention to the Northern minorities who, lacking a meta-cosmic religion, embraced Christianity wholesale. With the faith also came the benefit of Western civilisation. It is pertinent to note that some colonial officers, obsessed with some anthropological presuppositions, had little or no interest in the development of these areas. They argued that the people should be spared the influence of Western civilisation. While some of these concerns were genuine, like the fear that the minorities must not be formed in a manner that would turn them into counterfeits of the Europeans, some of

⁴⁵ T. G. O. Gbadamosi & J. F. Ade Ajayi, "Islam and Christianity in Nigeria", *Groundwork of*, p. 352.

⁴⁶ Mevyn Hiskett, *The Course*, p. 117.

these resulted from the desire to maintain the status quo. So the colonial administration abandoned the minority areas to the missionaries.

For the Muslim areas, Western education was designed particularly for the sons of chiefs and *mallams*, to prepare them for administration. As early as 1904, Lugard had thought of establishing a Government School to cater for these categories of people. Miller of the C.M.S. experimented with this in Bida and Zaria. The syllabus was to be completely secular but without infringing on the Islamic religion, consisting of reading and writing in English and Hausa. This system of education was meant to facilitate the position of this category of people as junior partners with the British in administration.⁴⁷ The success of the experiments led the government to ask Miller to design a comprehensive school for the whole region but Miller's missionary tendencies made this an impossible feat and he was soon in trouble with Lugard's successors.⁴⁸ His failure led to the policy of separate development, influenced by a division of labour between the British and the missionaries, in Muslim and non-Muslim areas, respectively.⁴⁹

In 1928 the government experimented with a Teachers' School for Pagans in Toro. Anyone who converted to Islam in the school was expelled and even though conversion to Christianity was frowned on, pupils who so converted were not expelled; this singular exception would have come across to the Muslims as a sign of

⁴⁷ Bola Ige, *People, Politics and Politicians of Nigeria: 1940-1979* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1995) p. 35.

⁴⁸ Yusuf Turaki, *The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria: A social Ethical Analysis of the Colonial and Post-Colonial Society and Politics in Nigeria* (Jos: Challenge Publications, 1993) pp. 76-78.

⁴⁹ Yusuf Turaki, *The British*, p. 79.

colonial support for Christian missionary enterprise. The graduates of this school, like Rwan Pang, the first chief of Jos and Gwamna Awan, who later became the chief of Kagoro, soon began to resent the domination of the Hausa-Fulani over them. This made the missionaries even more unpopular in Northern Nigeria since they increasingly came to be seen as agents of social change to the abhorrence of the Emirs and the colonial government. Unfortunately, the graduates of this school could only become teachers, since vacancies in the Native Administration open only to Muslims.⁵⁰ In any case, Toro remained the only exception to the colonial neglect of education in the non-Muslim areas.

Generally speaking, the colonial administration's lack of interest meant that education started relatively late and was at the mercy of the missionaries. The syllabus was highly restricted at the beginning. This is hardly surprising because missionary education was not meant for social advancement but as a tool for evangelisation. The Sudan United Mission, for example, believed that an efficient teacher does not make a good evangelist but an efficient evangelist could teach.⁵¹ The education these teachers provided was generally rudimentary, concentrating on the vernacular, letter writing, counting simple numbers, like the church collection and Bible reading.⁵² Owing to the political and commercial developments that attended the era after the Second World War, however, there was greater demand for education in the non-Muslim areas and parents wanted a better quality of education than the one they had received. They wanted more subjects incorporated into the curriculum. These agitations must have motivated the Phillipson Report on grants-in-aid and the

⁵⁰ E. P. T. Crampton, *Christianity in*, p. 68.

⁵¹ E. P. T. Crampton, *Christianity in*, p. 101.

⁵² E. P. T. Crampton, *Christianity in*, p. 107.

Education Ordinance of 1948 to direct the voluntary agency mission schools to expand their syllabus, thus placing them on the same level with their counterparts in the Muslim areas.⁵³

With the benefit of hindsight, social analysts can criticise the quality of education that missionaries provided to those in the non-Muslim areas. But when set within the context of colonial neglect, one can only conclude that they offered to the natives the tool for liberation from the state of inferiority to which they were subjected. The net result of this effort was that the minorities, which were scattered miri-republics, now found a unifying civilisation in Christianity and Western values parallel to the one Islam had provided for their counterparts in the Hausa-Fulani areas. They found in Christianity and Western education a universal civilisation, which was lacking in their previous organisation. This new combination provided them with the platform to air their “grievances, political consciousness and protest against Hausa-Fulani rule and domination.”⁵⁴ Unfortunately the division inherent in Christian denominationalism which attended missionary activities, ensured that this platform was a divided one and did not equate with the united one that Islam provided for the Hausa-Fulani. Whichever way the issue is considered, at the dawn of independence Northern Nigeria became the home of two rival civilisations: the Islamic Arab heritage and the Western Christian heritage. We shall see how this rivalry played out in political developments in the region.

⁵³ E. F. T. Crampton, *Christianity in*, p. 106.

⁵⁴ Yusuf Turaki, *The British*, p. 271.

II. RELIGION AND POLITICAL IDENTITY

In the last section we saw how Islam and Christianity provided two parallel civilisations to the people of Northern Nigeria. These civilisations act in the manner that social scientists refer to as segmentary lineages or their equivalents. This means that they are unifying for their members but also divisive in relation to those who belong to the opposing lineage.⁵⁵ These unifying and divisive tendencies of Islam and Christianity were soon to be manifested in the period immediately after colonialism, as they provided the platform for political contest for the people of this region. The shaping influence of these religions continues to be felt in contemporary times, especially with regard to the political character of the Nigerian state.

A. THE DAWN OF INDEPENDENCE AND PARTY POLITICS

The dominance of the Muslim, Hausa-Fulani group in Northern Nigeria is best understood within the context of the dominance of the major ethnic groups in the other regions in Nigeria. In addition to this, the Hausa-Fulani were in close alliance with the British in the Northern system. This results from the indirect rule system and the fact that they were groomed to take over the administration from the British. This coalition attracted a strong protest from the minority non-Muslim tribes in the region. Bryan Sharwood Smith, the Governor of Northern Nigeria in 1952 clearly articulates this tension when he notes that the Northern leaders in his time were all Muslims from the large emirates who were insensitive to the resentment of the minority groups.⁵⁶ It took a good deal of persuasion from Smith to make them include a token three people from the minority groups as cabinet ministers.

⁵⁵ Basil Davidson, *Modern Africa: A Social and Political History* (London: Longman, 1995) p. 273.

⁵⁶ Yusufu Turaki, *The British*, 152.

The Northern establishment was not only conservative but also inimical to party politics. Hence, the development of political parties in the North came only as a matter of necessity. It was Smith who masterminded the creation of the first political association, the *Jamiyar Mutanen Arewa*, which blossomed into the Northern People Congress (NPC). Even when NPC finally emerged, it was not a political party in the ordinary sense of the word, since relationships in the party were determined by traditional obligations. The leadership was drawn from the nobility and its ideology from the religious and cultural legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate.⁵⁷ Unlike the *kabaka* of Buganda or the *Ngwenyana* of Swaziland, the Northern Emirs did not form their political party but rather entered into a symbiotic relationship with NPC because the moderation of its leaders was reassuring to their conservative stance.⁵⁸ The main opposition to this system came chiefly from the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), but it merely called for reforms within the system, in line with Islamic principles fashioned in the *Tijaniyya* tradition.⁵⁹ The British seemed satisfied with this arrangement. This is indicated in the fact that the elections of 1951 were manipulated in such a way that it became an exercise of confirming the leaders already selected by this party to the detriment of other political parties.⁶⁰ The non-Muslim groups felt severely threatened by this set-up, characterised by the Hausa-Fulani dominance and its attendant Islamic heritage. The ethnic confrontations

⁵⁷ Yusuf Turaki, *The British*, pp. 149-154.

⁵⁸ Mahmood Yakubu, *An Aristocracy in Political Crisis* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1996) pp. 6-7.

⁵⁹ Mervyn Hiskett, *The Course*, p. 121.

⁶⁰ See Niels Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in Middle Belt Christianity* (London: British Academic Press, 1994) pp. 111-112.

between the two groups between 1946-1965 are best understood in this context and so are contemporary ethno-religious crises in the region.⁶¹

While the Islamic heritage provided the foundation for NPC and NEPU, Christianity served as the impetus for the creation of political parties that stood for the agitations of the non-Muslim Northern minorities, who were afraid of the domination of the Muslim majority (Hausa-Fulani). These parties were the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and the Middle Zone League (MZL). The latter had more missionary connections and drew mostly from the population on the fringes of the Islamic territories. The two parties merged together in 1955 under the auspices of the UMBC.⁶² Unfortunately the agitation of the Northern ethnic minorities amounted to nothing because of the level of partnership between the British and the Northern oligarchy. They continued to rule together until March 15, 1959, with the former serving in an advisory capacity.

Through intelligence reports, the British knew that agitation by the non-Muslim groups in the North was a reality and took steps to introduce reforms that would ameliorate the situation. The Northern oligarchy was also keen to maintain a united North, since it was the only means by which they could win the elections at a national level come independence. Since one of the fears of the minorities had to do with Islamic domination, the premier of the Northern Region, Ahmadu Bello (the Sardauna), made religious tolerance central to his pre-independence and early independence speeches. His Christmas broadcast of December 1957 captures the essence of his political ecumenism.⁶³ At this stage it was unity at all costs. If the

⁶¹ Yusufu Turaki, *The British*, pp. 154-155.

⁶² Niels Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics*, pp. 73-74.

⁶³ Yusufu Turaki, *The British*, p. 170.

centre was to be captured by the Northern establishment, the minorities had to be courted to serve as the bait. At independence, the NPC came into power and the Sardauna discarded his earlier ecumenical leanings for Islamic revivalism.

B. REASSERTION OF ISLAMIC IDENTITY

1. The New Caliph

A personality that needs to be studied closely to understand the process of Islamic revivalism in Northern Nigeria is Sir Ahmadu Bello, the first Premier of the Northern Region, and the Sardauna (Crown Prince) of Sokoto as he came to be popularly known. He was an opponent of the policy of amalgamation that united Nigeria into one nation in 1914, and referred to it as a “monumental mistake”.⁶⁴ As a result, he continued to view the North and its values as completely independent from those of a united Nigeria. This perception can be gleaned from his activities on the international scene where he continually refers to Northern Nigeria as his country.⁶⁵ The Sardauna was never in any doubt of his place in the political landscape of the region. He saw himself destined to revive the empire that his ancestors founded through the *jihād* and had lost to British occupation, so that even though he was chosen by the ballot box, he

⁶⁴ Abubakar Umar, “Conflict Confidence Building and Reconciliation in a Post-Conflict Situation”, *Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Democracy in Nigeria: Challenges*: 307-328. Etanibi E. O. Alemika and Festus Okoye, Eds. (Kaduna: Human Rights Monitor, 2002) p. 310.

⁶⁵ John Paden, *Ahmadu Bello Sardauna of Sokoto: Values and Leadership in Nigeria* (Zaria: Huhuda Publishing Company, 1986) p. 535.

was to govern by the principles of Islam.⁶⁶ His political manifesto, in his own words, constitutes "...the restoration of the pre-1900 era..."⁶⁷

The impact of the Sardauna in Islamic resurgence takes on an international dimension in the role he played in the formation of the League of Muslim Nations. Significantly, he was invited to chair its inaugural meeting held in May 18-22, 1962. He eventually became the vice-president of the League. If the Sardauna was effective in the promotion of the Islamic *ummah* worldwide, his involvement in the development of Islam in Nigeria and specifically Northern Nigeria cannot be quantified. He was not slow in listing these achievements in his speech at the World Islamic League.⁶⁸ He also, not surprisingly, made a great impact on Africa and one of his notable achievements was the conversion of the Gambian Prime Minister, Dr. Dauda Jawara from Christianity to Islam by reminding him of his Islamic roots.⁶⁹

Unfortunately, the situation of Islam in Northern Nigeria at independence was deplorable and conflict-ridden not so much from colonial neglect as from the wrangling within the Sufi brotherhoods: *Quadirriya* and *Tijanniya*. Since Islamic progress is impossible without some modicum of unity in the fold, Muslim unity became a major preoccupation of the Sardauna. He turned to the legacy of the *jihad* expressed in the writings of the early leaders of the caliphate, especially Uthman Dan Fodio, to find the motif for this insurmountable task.⁷⁰ These works led to the revival

⁶⁶ Iheanyi M. Enwerem, *A Dangerous Awakening: The Politicization of Religion in Nigeria* (Ibadan: IFRA, 1995) p. 51.

⁶⁷ Iheanyi M. Enwerem, *A Dangerous*, p. 50.

⁶⁸ John Paden, *Ahmadu Bello*, p. 541.

⁶⁹ John Paden, *Ahmadu Bello*, p. 544.

⁷⁰ John Paden, *Ahmadu Bello*, pp. 552-553.

of interest in Uthman, Abdullahi and Bello and subsequently to the evolution of a religious school of thought referred to as *Usmanniya* (after the leader of the *jihad*, Uthman), which served as a unifying force for divided Islam. The Order of *Usmanniya* was established and conferred on distinguished Muslims.⁷¹

2. The Conversion Campaigns

The most controversial aspect of the Sardauna's religious endeavours was his conversion campaigns. These campaigns were passive but offensive to non-Muslims and to some Muslims as well. The result of these campaigns served as a great source of motivation for the Sardauna, who continued to make his presence felt, especially in non-Muslim areas in the region. Newspaper headlines like: "Islamic Campaign breaks through Christian stronghold, 9,000 become Muslims in Jos" (a predominant Christian town) and "Sardauna Declares Holy War", created great tension in the North and in the nation at large. The Sardauna had metamorphosed from a political leader into a religious one, and had resolved by late 1965 to take his campaign to the national level.⁷² He employed many obnoxious methods ranging from harassment and bribery to coercion. This forced many influential Northerners, especially the chiefs, to convert nominally and to superimpose Islamic names over their traditional ones to secure their positions.⁷³

Nevertheless, not all Muslims welcomed the religious attitude of the Sardauna. One of those who opposed this religious offensive was the Governor of the Northern Region, Kassim Ibrahim. He made it plain to the Sardauna that it was wrong to

⁷¹ John Paden, *Ahmadu Bello*, pp. 552-553.

⁷² John Paden, *Ahmadu Bello*, pp. 566-569.

⁷³ Mervyn Hiskett, *The Course*, p.120.

compel pagans to convert to Islam.⁷⁴ Whatever gains were made to ensure justice and fair participation for the non-Muslim groups in Northern Nigeria were reversed by 1965 at the height of the Sardauna's religiosity. The conditions in the Northern System began increasingly to reflect the culture and ideology of the Muslim Hausa-Fulani. Also the participation in power and prestige was limited to the Hausa-Fulani or at best other Muslims.⁷⁵

C. THE POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION OF THE NORTH

Those who hold a conventional view of politics find the Sardauna's religious conduct incomprehensible, but the perception of politics in Islam is not at odds with the unfolding of events in the life of the Premier. In treatises of the *jihad* it is clearly established, according to Islamic tradition, that *siyasat al-sharriya* (politics) exists for the protection of the dictates of the *Shari'a* and the Islamic religion in its entirety. From the perspective given in Abdullahi's *Diya al-Hukkam*, the purpose of politics is to keep the Islamic government viable, to uphold the law, and to suppress evil and corruption.⁷⁶ The Sardauna was well aware of the dependence of Islam on state agencies for survival and he placed his office at the disposal of Islam, as it is legally required. However it is evaluated, the Sardauna's dream came to a brutal end in a failed military coup in which he was assassinated in the early hours of January 15, 1966.

Despite the fact that the coup was aborted, the military came to power because the politicians that survived the onslaught were too scared to continue in office. This

⁷⁴ John Paden, *Ahmadu Bello*, p. 571.

⁷⁵ Yusufu Turaki, *The British*, pp. 172-173.

⁷⁶ Ibraheem Sulaiman, *The Islamic*, pp. 67-68.

military regime and subsequent ones saw themselves as corrective organs. One of the key elements of the reforms that concern us directly is the fragmentation of the regions into states to correct the imbalance in power that has always been the complaint of the minority groups in the country.⁷⁷ The impact of the break-up of the North on Islam cannot be quantified: "...the shift to a national from a regional perspective is noticeable in most spheres. National Muslim organisations replaced regional structures in significance."⁷⁸ The fragmentation of the region placed Northern Muslims within a new centralised federal structure, which amounted to reversed colonialism.

D. DIVISION WITHIN THE NORTHERN ISLAMIC 'UMMA

The fragmentation of the Northern region did enough to destabilise Islam but more devastating was a new kind of division that emerged within its ranks. If the former wrangling, which Sardauna dealt with, was founded on a difference in degree within the *turuq* (brotherhoods), the new kind was based on a difference in kind nurtured by divergent interpretation of the *Qur'an*. The mastermind, Abubakar Muhammadu Gumi, was appointed Grand-Khadi by Sardauna in 1962 and acted as his envoy in the Middle East due to his proficiency in Arabic and Islamic scholarship. Incidentally, at Sardauna's death, Gumi constituted himself as a force against Muslim unity, which he had worked for alongside his patron. He taught that the *turuq* were inimical to Muslim unity and unleashed his clout against them; ironically in the process he created a deeper division within the already fragile *'ummah* (Muslim community).

⁷⁷ Yusufu Turaki, *The British*, p. 213.

⁷⁸ John Paden, *Ahmadu Bello*, p. 696-701.

Apart from doctrinal differences,⁷⁹ Gumi accused the leaders of the *turuq* of innovating certain evil practices in Islam and ascribing them to the founders of their sects and of practising all kinds of witchcraft to mesmerise their followers and feast on their fears. He also attacked their practice of the veneration of saints.⁸⁰ Gumi was not to have an easy ride with them, however, as the *turuq* promptly swung into action. Two representatives of the brotherhood: Nasiru Kabara and Sani Kafanga, of the *Quadirriya* and *Tijanniya* respectively, engaged him head-on. Their position could be summarised thus: Gumi and his followers constitute the *wahhabiya* (a school of law predominant in Saudi Arabia) and their perception of the *turuq* is bedevilled with hatred and ignorance.⁸¹

Gumi was, however, undaunted and remarkably successful. His programme of reform culminated in the founding of the *Jama'at Izalat al-Bid'a wa Iqamat as-Sunna* (Association for the Removal of the Innovation and for the Establishment of the *Sunna*), better known as '*Yan Izala*'. This constituted a new era in Northern Nigeria, characterised by increased conflicts between the *turuq* and '*Yan Izala*'. If Gumi started his campaign to unite the *umma*, then it was a gross miscalculation. For his efforts served only to polarise it further, undoing the efforts of his patron, the *Sardauna*.⁸² It is within this turbulent climate that Christian unity emerged.

⁷⁹ Roman Lomeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997) pp. 187-189.

⁸⁰ Roman Lomeier, *Islamic Reform*, pp. 191-192.

⁸¹ Roman Lomeier, *Islamic Reform*, pp. 204-205.

⁸² Roman Lomeier, *Islamic Reform*, pp. 207.

E. THE EMERGENCE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

Christians in the North were always aware of the fact that unity, even if only superficial, was indispensable to mission. In 1948, many denominations came together at Bukuru to hold a meeting that is historically referred to as the *Rahol Kannang* (the hills of secret conclusions) meeting. The aim of the meeting was to work towards the formation of a united Middle Belt Christian tribe. This was a spark of hope for Christians in the North and no doubt drew the attention of Northern Muslims who accused missionaries of fanning the flames of agitation and unrest, in their congress of 1956. The deep suspicion of missionaries culminated in the untraceable "Dandogo motion" that demanded a moratorium on mission enterprise in the region.⁸³

Unfortunately this initial zeal for Christian unity was contained in no time by the Northern establishment. To begin with, the source of finance for such an ambitious project was lean. The total amount of money collected at the *Rahol Kannang* meeting amounted only to £10.⁸⁴ Missionaries might have been interested in the organisation as an instrument to check the spread of Islam in the region, but apart from the leave of absence they gave to their workers to participate in the project, there is no trace of any financial support from them. Lacking in basic necessities, it soon became obvious that the programme could not be sustained. Finally, the NPC made a strategic move and opened its doors to some of the leaders of the Christian

⁸³ Matthew H. Kukah, *Religion, Politics*, pp. 48-50.

⁸⁴ Bauna Peter Tanko, *The Christian Association of Nigeria and the Challenge of the Ecumenical Imperative* (Jos: Fab Anieh, Nig. Ltd., 1993) p. 118.

movement: Gwanna Awan, Rev. David Lot and Patrick Dokatri. This development soon created a rift in the nascent Christian organisation.⁸⁵

On the ashes of the dead organisation, the Northern Christian Association (NCA) evolved, but it was simply a mockery of the *Rahol Kannang* meeting. It was not only formed within the framework of the NPC but it apparently received the blessing of the Sardauna at its foundation. Consequently, even its expressed goal of checking the latter's campaign drive was sterile. Significantly, it moved its headquarters from Jos (a Christian stronghold) to Kaduna to put to rest the suspicion that it was teleguided by foreign missionaries. The fact that the NCA revolved around the political interest of some of its leaders, instead of that of the generality of Northern Christians, became apparent at the death of the Sardauna. It went moribund.⁸⁶

Interestingly, at this early stage the issue of a Christian Association with a political inclination was a Northern concern owing to the disadvantage of Christians in the predominantly Muslim, Northern region. However, in the context of the disbanding of regionalism and some federal policies inimical to Christian interest, like the takeover of Christian schools and the expulsion of Christian missionaries from Eastern Nigeria after the civil war, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) emerged on August 27, 1976 as a child of circumstances. CAN clarified its objectives and presented them as follows: to serve as a vehicle for Christian unity; to constitute itself as a liaison committee for common statement and action; to serve as a spiritual

⁸⁵ Matthew H. Kukah, *Religion, Politics*, pp. 50-51.

⁸⁶ Matthew H. Kukah, *Religion, Politics*, pp. 52-54.

and moral guardian of the society; to foster Christian evangelisation and to promote national harmony in a pluralistic country.⁸⁷

The organisation is national in character but its impact, and that of its rival Islamic organisations, which we shall refer to later, is fully felt in Northern Nigeria. It is therefore not surprising that its strongest component is the Northern Zone. The fact that CAN has been able to realise only one of its objectives (acting as a liaison for common statements and action for Christians) speaks volumes for the nature of the organisation. In the environment of religious politics and divided Islam into which CAN emerged, it scored high on the impact of its political agitation against the government.⁸⁸

F. THE RE-EMERGENCE OF THE COUNCIL OF 'ULAMA

The newfound Christian unity, which CAN provided, challenged the warring Islamic community, moving them to action. This movement towards Muslim unity is best understood in the light of the achievements of CAN in Nigeria. The local government elections of December 12, 1987 are indicative of this fact. These elections were the first to be organised after a long spell with military rule. They were conducted on a non-party basis and contested by a 'new breed' of politicians (uncorrupted by political office, an effort by the government to sanitise politics by getting rid of the old brigade politicians). Christian candidates won landslide victories in the Middle Belt areas and even in Kaduna the seat of the old regional government. The reason for this success lies in the political strategy of CAN and the division within the Muslim community.

⁸⁷ Theayi M. Enwerem, *A Dangerous*, pp. 81-83.

⁸⁸ Roman Lomeier, *Islamic Reform*, pp. 293-294.

CAN had selected candidates before hand and presented them to Christians as the 'right' candidates and even allowed them to speak at CAN's political campaigns. Unfortunately the Muslim community presented a divided house. Their dogmatic squabbles had encroached into politics.⁸⁹

The results of the elections made it apparent to Muslims that their unity was non-negotiable. At a meeting held at Lake Tiga, Kano State, the various Islamic factions decided to bury their various hatchets and revive the moribund Council of 'Ulama to liase on the position of Muslims in their interaction with the government. The absence of Southern Muslims at the summit suggests that Islamic religious issues only became national owing to the fragmentation of the Northern region into states within a federation with a centralised government that allowed for the invasion of the North with values not in line with the Islamic heritage.⁹⁰ The Council of 'Ulama soon established itself as the mouthpiece of Northern Muslims, and its effectiveness demonstrated that political ecumenism, akin to that of Christians, had been restored among Muslims in the region.⁹¹ Consequently, at a mass rally organised to raise funds for the victims of the Kafanchan riots on January 2, 1988, the council brokered peace between the warring Muslim factions. The warring parties adopted the peace agreement at a subsequent mass Muslim rally.⁹² Like CAN, the Council of 'Ulama prevailed as a unifying force and established itself, alongside the Christian organisation, as a platform for political protest in Northern Nigeria, a quasi political

⁸⁹ Roman Lomeier, *Islamic Reform*, pp. 306-307.

⁹⁰ Roman Lomeier, *Islamic Reform*, pp. 294-295.

⁹¹ Roman Lomeier, *Islamic Reform*, pp. 304-305.

⁹² Roman Lomeier, *Islamic Reform*, p. 309.

party, if one may say so. We shall examine some political issues that made these religious organisations relevant.

G. THE SECULARITY CONTROVERSY

The issues that have continued to divide Nigerians politically are best understood within the framework of the country's constitution. Nigerians are not fond of their constitution and few people, apart from legal luminaries, are entirely familiar with it. In any case, it would be difficult to find a Nigerian who is not aware of Section 10 of the 1979 and 1999 constitution, which spells out the country's religious policy: "*The government of the federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as a state religion.*" This section is a sort of a compromise that attended the debates on the relationship between the state and religion at the constituent assembly of 1979.⁹³ It was meant to appease the proponents of a secular state and the pro-*Shari'a* group, indicating that their core-values were taken on board. Unfortunately, instead of solving the problem the ambiguity of section 10 allowed for further haggling over its true meaning. Some maintain that it guarantees the secular nature of the Nigerian State, while others reason to the contrary. Whichever way the issue is argued, it allows the government to give preferential treatment to a religion without actually adopting it as a state religion.

The two positions that relate to this section of the constitution indicate two conflicting worldviews. Islam makes no distinction between religion and politics, a

⁹³ Husseini Abdu, "Religion, Democratisation and National Integration in Nigeria", *Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Democracy in Nigeria: Challenges*: 117-142. Etanibi E. O. Alemika and Festus Okoye, Eds. (Kaduna: Human Rights Monitor, 2002) p. 166.

distinction which Christians champion.⁹⁴ Consequently, while Christians will have no problem with the Nigerian state donning the garb of religious neutrality, their Muslim counterparts found the whole concept completely anti-Islamic. The constituent assembly of 1989 sought to clarify the issue by rephrasing section 10 to read: ***“No government shall overtly or covertly give preferential treatment to any particular religion.”*** Its proposal was, however, rejected on the grounds that being deeply religious people, Nigerians need the support of the state in religious affairs, which a secular state could well overlook. So the previous phrasing with all its ambiguity was left unaltered and it gives ample elbowroom for politicians to pursue religious policies according to the dictates of the moment.

All the thorny issues that have attended the Nigerian religious scene, particularly in Northern Nigeria (e.g., state sponsored pilgrimages, religious education, the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) controversy and the *Shari'a* issue), are rooted in section 10 of the constitution. Compromises have largely been reached on the issues of pilgrimages and religious education, but the issues of OIC and *Shari'a* hang over the Nigerian horizon like the sword of Damocles. We shall now pay closer attention to them.

1. Nigeria's Membership in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC)

The OIC issue is best understood within the context of Pan Islamism necessitated by the environment within which Muslims found themselves in many post-colonial states. They had great difficulty integrating themselves within the framework of

⁹⁴ Ogbu U. Kalu, “The Religious Dimension of the Legitimacy Crisis, 1993-1998”, *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century*: 667-685. Toyin Falola, Ed. (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2002) p. 681.

Western democratic values, because their primary allegiance has always been to their religion, which encompasses all spheres of life. It was this dilemma that motivated the formation of some Islamic bodies, as we saw while dealing with the Sardauna, to ease the anomie of post-colonialism. The aim of the OIC is “to strengthen the struggle of all Muslim people with a view to safeguard their dignity, independence and national rights.”⁹⁵ Nigeria has been on the conference since 1971 but merely as an observer. This status takes on board the pluralistic nature of the Nigerian state and the significant presence of Islam in the country.⁹⁶

In 1986 it came into the open that Nigeria had upgraded its status to full membership. This undoubtedly generated a lot of controversy that brought into question the role of the state in religious affairs. The brouhaha that attended the news of Nigeria’s membership of the OIC suggests the increasing apprehension among non-Muslims about the role of the state in religious affairs, since membership in the conference is national and not personal as in the other organisations to which Nigerian Muslims belong.⁹⁷ In addition, Christians were not consulted in spite of the fact that, although it primarily concerned Muslims, it was a national issue.⁹⁸ This generated reasonable suspicion, from the Christian camp, that joining the OIC was tantamount to Islamising Nigeria. Radical Christian groups therefore threatened that it could lead to a religious war.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Nehemia Levtzion, “Religious Pluralism in Northern Nigeria”, *The History*, p. 217.

⁹⁶ Iheanyi M. Enwerem, *A Dangerous*, p. 140.

⁹⁷ Nehemia Levtzion, “Religious Pluralisms in Northern Nigeria”, *The History*, p. 217.

⁹⁸ Matthew H. Kukah, *Religion, Politics*, p.230.

⁹⁹ Lissi Rasmussen, *Christian-Muslim*, p. 99.

The president, Ibrahim Babangida, was able to offer a non-religious explanation. He maintained that Nigeria's membership guaranteed it interest free loans, unlike what the country receives from Western lending institutions. However Christians were not easily convinced and expressed their reservations that such interest-free loans would serve only as avenues of tying Nigeria to the purse strings of Islamic countries. Muslims, on the other hand, saw this as an infringement on their right to be part of the Islamic *umma*, which guarantees them a level of solidarity, absent in the Nigerian state. As a deterrent to Christians, they argued that Nigeria must sever its relation with the Vatican, as a prerequisite for withdrawal from the conference.

To douse the tension, Babangida set up the Advisory Council on Religious Affairs (ACRA) to advise him on the best way to handle the issue. Unfortunately since the membership of the presidential council was drawn from Muslims and Christians, it was divided along religious lines and, as expected, no consensus was reached on the issue. If the membership of Nigeria in the OIC erupted into the Nigerian scene mysteriously, its exit is also shrouded in mystery. To date, it remains a matter of speculation if Nigeria is a fully-fledged member of the conference.¹⁰⁰ The debate that surrounded the OIC no doubt raised a great deal of awareness of the dichotomy that exists between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria but it was fully felt in the North and has continued to determine relations in contemporary times.

¹⁰⁰ Matthew H. Kukah, *Religion Politics*, p.230-233.

2. The *Shari'a* Question

At the dawn of independence, the Northern non-Muslim minorities expressed their fear over the possibility of the full-scale imposition of the *Shari'a* law on them. The British colonial administration affirmed this fear and began a legal reform process in the region. The first area was the distinction made between Muslims and non-Muslims as legal subjects. In 1955, the judicial system was integrated through the system of appeal. This meant that the decisions of the *Shari'a* courts were subject to appeal in the English courts. The Muslims agitated and they were compensated with the establishment of the Muslim Court of Appeal to deal with such cases in 1956. The process of legal reforms culminated in the entrenchment of the penal code as the legal system of Northern Nigeria.¹⁰¹

The disintegration of the Northern Region into multiple states shifted the focus of Muslims to the national level as is evident in the emphasis given to national Islamic bodies. But it also meant that the Muslim Court of Appeal, which was regional in scope, became obsolete. It is within this context that the *Shari'a* debates that plagued the 1978 and the 1988 constituent assemblies are better understood. Prior to the 1978 assembly, several seminars were held to explore the relationship of the *Shari'a* to the Nigerian state. The positions taken at these seminars shaped the demand of the pro-*Shari'a* group, for the establishment of a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal, in the constituent assembly of 1978.

The Christian members of the assembly and some non-Northern Muslims, particularly from the South, reacted against this demand. Eventually a compromise was worked out that allowed for three judges learned in Islamic law to sit on appeals coming from the State *Shari'a* Courts of Appeal in the Federal Court of Appeal,

¹⁰¹ Matthew H. Kukah, *Religion Politics*, pp. 116-117.

instead of setting up an alternative court. The Northern Muslim members of the assembly, 88 in number, staged a walk out, finding the compromise unacceptable but it was adopted in their absence.¹⁰² The same situation repeated itself ten years later, when Nigeria was warming up for the aborted Second Republic. This time around, two new dimensions were added to the *Shari'a* question: the extension of *Shari'a* to all states of the federation for the benefit of Muslims and also the establishment of a Supreme *Shari'a* Court of Appeal. The government simply removed the *Shari'a* issue from the jurisdiction of the Assembly. The same problem attended the constitution review of 1999. The fear it engendered was so widespread that the government had to assure non-Muslims that the stipulations of the 1979 constitution on the issue still stand.¹⁰³ What many Nigerians failed to notice, however, was the fact that after the 1988 debate, the term “personal” was excised from the definition of *Shari'a* as the “Islamic personal law” to render it “Islamic law”.

Almost immediately after the transition to civil rule, the *Shari'a* question reared its head once more. This time around it took a different turn. Instead of becoming the subject of a national debate, some state Governors simply announced its full implementation, departing from the penal law that was, in their view, a British compromise and imposition. Zamfara State was the first to implement it, as a legal and administrative system, with great ceremony and pageantry.¹⁰⁴ Christians were bitter in their criticism of the Zamfara State governor, Ahmed Sani, warning that such a breach of the constitution could spark a religious war. An extreme reaction was that

¹⁰² Husaini Abdu, *Religion, Democratisation*, p. 167.

¹⁰³ Husaini Abdu, *Religion, Democratisation*, p. 168.

¹⁰⁴ It was reported that almost 2 million people made the pilgrimage to Gusau, the Zamfara State capital, to witness the launching of the *Shari'a* law. *Weekly Trust*, 4/11/99.

of the Rivers State, a largely Christian state, whose legislative house passed a resolution for the adoption of Canon Law as the state legal system, if the situation persisted in Zamfara State. Sani, however, argued that his action was constitutional since section 6(5) gives the state legislature the right to enact laws for peace, security and good governance.¹⁰⁵ Other states with largely Islamic population, like Sokoto, Borno, Kano, Niger, Katsina, and Yobe soon followed suit.

It however became a matter of conflict when the attempt to implement the legal system was brought on to the floor of the Kaduna State House of Assembly, because of the highly pluralistic nature of the state, partially a consequence of its status as the former seat of the erstwhile Northern Region. The matter sparked two massive riots, in February and May 2002, which led to the destruction of lives and property. The state government was forced to adopt a triple legal system that made provision for full *Shari'a* law, Customary law and the English Common law, insisting on the supremacy of the Nigerian constitution. It is still a controversial issue in the Northern states where Muslims are in the minority, like Kwara and Plateau States. Muslims continue to agitate that the failure to implement the legal system infringes on their right to practise their religion but the non-Muslim majorities see the implementation of such laws to amount to Islamising their states. This divisive issue has been largely responsible for recent riots in these states.

Whatever is responsible for the adoption of *Shari'a* law by some Northern states, religious or political, it has no doubt further polarised Muslims and Christians in the region and has caused a further deterioration of the state of relations between the two groups. Granted, there is no monolithic Islam, nor is there a monolithic Christianity in the region, as both religions are expressed in variegated and divisive

¹⁰⁵ Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis* (London: Penguin Books, 2000) pp. 176-177.

manners by their adherents. Yet they temporarily unite against each other whenever the drum of conflict sounds. The thorny issues on the Nigerian political agenda have served to a great extent to manifest that Muslims and Christians in Northern Nigeria may share the same social space but they do so on incommensurable and parallel platforms. We shall now turn our attention to the role of Islam and Christianity in providing coping mechanisms to their adherents in the face of the socio-economic ills in the region.

III. RELIGION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ILLS

The socio-economic situation in Northern Nigeria is best seen within the context of the Nigerian socio-economic situation, which is simply appalling. This situation is aggravated by the prominence that oil came to have in the Nigerian economy. It initiated the process that culminated in the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), leading to the flight of the state from the lives of its citizens. This collapse of legitimacy provided for the relevance of alternative platforms. It is here that Islam and Christianity came to the rescue, as providers of succour in the face of economic collapse. Because Northern Nigeria is divided along religious lines, as we have seen so far, the parallel programmes provided by these two religions also engineer conflicts between their adherents.

A. ECONOMIC MISMANAGEMENT

The basis of economic mismanagement and the concomitant corruption is closely related to the fact that Nigeria has a political economy. This means that the only means of enrichment is through the acquisition of political offices. William Graf is therefore right to present the average Nigerian leaders as essentially non-productive

and lacking in the means of private generation of income. In addition, they are lacking in any progressive agenda apart from the manipulation of tribal sentiments to consolidate their hold on power.¹⁰⁶ In the period immediately after colonialism, these leaders fashioned all sorts of strategies to fleece farmers through marketing companies. The discovery of oil in commercial quantities in the 1960s, however, shifted economic attention from agriculture and made state plunder easier. This had a devastating impact on the Nigerian economy.

The impact of oil is not only felt economically, it also begins to shape the political and social relations in Nigeria. A predatory style of government soon came into place: "...preoccupied not with broad, national development concerns, but with personalist objectives and securing access to oil rents."¹⁰⁷ The rentier nature of the Nigerian economy removed any relationship between leaders and people, because the former are in a more lucrative relationship with the trans-national corporations who pay the oil rent. This reality removes leaders from the impact of any agitations from its citizens. So apart from destroying economic productivity in Nigeria, oil has succeeded in creating a military-political class that is dictatorial in nature and is insensitive to the needs of Nigerians. Right from independence, Nigerian leaders have been conspicuously incapable of humanitarian gestures and often come across as a bunch of greedy elites ever-willing to plunder state resources for their personal aggrandisement.

¹⁰⁶ William Graf, *The Nigerian State: Political Economy, State, Class, Political System in the Post-Colonial Era*. (London: James Curry, 1988) p. 17.

¹⁰⁷ Gregory White and Scott Taylor, "Well-Oiled Regimes: Oil & Uncertain Transitions in Algeria and Nigeria", *Review of African Political Economy*: 323-344. Christ Allen et al., Eds. 28 (September 2001) 89, p. 227.

B. ALIENATION OF THE MASSES

The economy of plunder has a devastating effect on the people. It has created a situation of chronic poverty in the midst of plenty, a “paradoxical situation in which the scandalous, almost legendary, wealth of key ruling class members exists to mock the unspeakable mass poverty, misery and degradation of the Nigerian people.”¹⁰⁸

Various governments made deceptive efforts to ameliorate the situation, but their policies always amounted to barking up the wrong tree, favouring the rich and fleecing the poor of the little they had. There is hardly any government that at least did not pay lip service to fighting corruption and indiscipline, but the programmes ensuing from their determination have always maintained a double standard. While the poor and the middle-class are dealt with severely for minor infringements, those on the corridors of power continue their habit of reckless plunder with impunity and official immunity.

Besides, economic recovery programmes are always designed in such a way that the poor are sacrificed on the altar of the private accumulation of the elites. The structural adjustment programme (SAP) was no different in its orientation. SAP, a programme designed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for Nigeria’s economic recovery, was founded on the wrong premise. The designers of the programme presupposed that the country’s economy was a colossal failure caused by the state’s over-involvement in social welfare and called for privatisation

¹⁰⁸ Segun O. Osoba, “Corruption in Nigeria: Historical Perspectives”, *Review of African Political Economy*: 371-386. Chris Allen, et al., Eds. 23 (September 1996) 69, p. 383.

and the removal of subsidies, to revive the comatose economy.¹⁰⁹ The foundation of the programme was clearly unrealistic. The Nigerian economy deteriorated due to the elites' plundering of the state's resources not due to public expenditure that translates into benefiting the real lives of ordinary people.

To ask the government to take away the little benefits accruing to the people was therefore criminal. Since this policy does not directly affect the leaders, they implemented some of the recommendations religiously, preaching to ordinary Nigerians the gospel of austerity. The cost of social services like education, health, energy and water skyrocketed without a corresponding increase in the income of the ordinary citizens. The net result on the lives of people was catastrophic. The programme: "heightened the level of poverty, diseases, illiteracy and misery to an unprecedented scale."¹¹⁰ Therefore, the adoption of SAP contributed to the people's perception of the Nigerian government as an illegitimate agency.

C. RELIGION AND THE LEGITIMACY CRISIS

It has been variously suggested that the lack of loyalty of Africans to their central governments results from their colonial heritage. In a paper entitled, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement", P. P. Ekeh captures the dynamics that account for this disloyalty on the basis of the existence of two publics:

¹⁰⁹ Husseini Abdu, "Religion, Democratisation and National Integration in Nigeria", *Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Democracy in Nigeria: Challenges*: 117-142. Etanibi E. O. Alemika and Festus Okoye, Eds. (Kaduna: Human Rights Monitor, 2002) pp. 156-157.

¹¹⁰ Husaini Abdu, "Religion, Democratisation and National Integration in Nigeria", *Ethno-Religious Conflicts*, p. 157.

the primordial and the civic.¹¹¹ We have already noted how this is true of Northern Nigeria in our study of the compression of various ethnic groups and cultures to cohabit the region's geo-political landscape. So the primary fidelity of these groups is not to this artificial colonial construct, but to their religious heritage.

The collapse of the civic public meant therefore that the thin thread of loyalty that binds the citizens to the state snaps. This ushers in a crisis of legitimacy for the state, which in the first place was only struggling to be legitimate, and more so because it became increasingly unable to provide for the basic needs of its people. They, in turn, started devising alternative means of coping with life and this often entailed a decomposition of the state and the flight for succour in religious identities.¹¹² Since it became increasingly difficult to define what it means to be a Nigerian there began a process of deconstructing the state into concrete religio-ethnic nationalisms that people could relate with.¹¹³ SAP heightened this crisis, since it was from all indications a bitter pill to swallow even for a chronically diseased economy like Nigeria's. The masses, unable to confront the state, sought alternative platforms to articulate their protest.

The socio-economic situation deteriorated with the passing of each day and became the social analysts' favourite subject of discussion, particularly the Marxist school of thought that emerged in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. This group tied

¹¹¹ Anthony Onyemachi Agwuele, "Military Occupation, the National Question and the Rise of Ethnic Nationalism", *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century*: 349-358. Toyin Falola, Ed. (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2002) p. 354.

¹¹² Hussaini Abdu, "Religion, Democratisation and National Integration in Nigeria", *Ethno-Religious Conflicts*, p. 158.

¹¹³ Anthony Onyemachi Agwuele, "Military Occupation, the National Question and the Rise of Ethnic Nationalism", *Nigeria in*, p. 353.

down Nigeria's problems to the structure of the international economy and demanded a revolution in national ideology. Their thinking, however, was superficial as far as religious people were concerned. In the local elections, to which we referred above, the Marxist party was unable to win a single seat. Even though they blamed their failure on the government,¹¹⁴ it is plain that the people were simply not disposed to their socio-economic analysis or the solutions they proffered. For the populace, religion and ethno-nationalism dealt more adequately with their situation. In Northern Nigeria, Islam and Christianity provided these platforms.

1. Islam as a Panacea for Socio-Economic Ills

The Muslim politicians might have used religion as a means to gain legitimacy among Nigerian Muslims, but it soon became apparent that they were using their position as a tool for personal gain and not for the preservation of their religion as they were required to do. *Ribah* (usury), forbidden by the *Qur'an*, became the basis of the oil economy. The *qadis* courts were ineffective and scandalous in the administration of justice, particularly with regard to property and land cases, forcing Muslims to resort to courts based on English common law to resolve such differences. While political and legal Islam was undermined by the burgeoning neo-colonial economy, intellectual Islam did not fare better. It was within this period that the council of *'ulama* became engrossed in its in-house fighting, without paying adequate attention to the growing decline of Islam as a public force.

Muslim votaries began to sense the contradiction between the flagrant and partisan activities and pronouncements of the Muslim elites, under the guise of

¹¹⁴ Matthew H. Kukah, *Religion, Politics*, p. 240.

recovering legitimacy for Islam, and their failure to translate these into reality. This sparked a spate of Islamic *tajdid* (revival). The development of this new phase of Islamic revivalism coincided with the austerity measures introduced to jump-start the ailing economy that was collapsing owing to unbridled corruption. There is no doubt a relationship between what was happening in Nigeria and the general revival of Islam on the international scene, remarkably the unfolding of events in Iran that culminated in the Islamic revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini. In any case, it is pertinent to note that the local situation provided the immediate impetus for Islamic revivalism.¹¹⁵ The Muslim radical groups that emerged considered the situation a symptom of a deeper social ailment, requiring a spiritual cure.¹¹⁶

The growing consensus among radical Northern Muslims was that the country was in dire need of revolution. Hence, since the 1980s, there has been a renewed interest in re-examining the Uthman dan Fodio *jihad* to find its relevance and application for modern day exigencies in Nigeria. This intellectual renaissance, focused on the motif of the *jihad*, makes the claim that Islam alone can solve Nigeria's problems. The main architect of this movement is Ibrahim Suleiman. His teaching, like that of others, shaped the agenda for the various religious movements, with special regard to the Muslim Students Society (MSS) who agitated for a re-enactment of the Iranian-type revolution in Nigeria in keeping with the *jihad*

¹¹⁵ Sani Umah, "Islam in Nigeria: Its Concept and Manifestation and Role in Nation Building", *Nigeria Since Independence: Religion*: 71-97. J. A. Atanda, et al. Eds. (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1989) pp. 86-88.

¹¹⁶ Umar M. Birai, "Islamic Tajdid and the Political Process in Nigeria", *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economies and Militance*: 184-203. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, Eds. (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1993) p. 186.

tradition.¹¹⁷ They are known to have carved “**Islam Only**” on walls of their schools and other public places.

The Shiites were more radical and indiscreet in their agitation and made it explicit that they would not subscribe to any government that was not inspired by the principles of the *Qur'an*. They continuously called for an Islamic revolution to facilitate the full implementation of the *Shari'a* legal system. No doubt they soon drew on themselves the ire of the state. One of their prominent leaders who was placed on trial bluntly told the court that he they did recognise the jurisdiction of the state.¹¹⁸ The eventual wide-scale reception of the *Shari'a*, as the legal system of some Northern states, only goes to suggest the level of discontent with the Nigerian state. Abba Kyari rightly notes that the initiative for the legal system might have resulted from political calculations of the elites, but for the people it is a question of life and death and the aspirations of the *Shari'a* make the difference.¹¹⁹ The Christian camp was not immune to these developments.

2. Christianity as a Panacea for the Socio-Economic Ills

The impact of the socio-economic situation also led to growing fundamentalism among Christians. Prior to the 1970s, Pentecostal and charismatic movements formed part of the Christian landscape in Nigeria. Prominent among them were the Olumba

¹¹⁷ M. Sani Umah, “Islam in Nigeria: Its Concept and Manifestation and Role in Nation Building”, *Nigeria Since*, p. 89.

¹¹⁸ Ogbu U. Kalu, “The Religious Dimension of the Legitimacy Crisis, 1993-1998”, *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century: 667-685*. Toyin Falola, Ed. (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2002) p. 680.

¹¹⁹ Kar Maier, *This House*, p. 148.

Olumba Obu's Brotherhood of Cross and Star and the *Aladura* (prayer) Churches (Cherubim and Seraphim and Celestial Church of Christ). These churches were in some sense conservative in their approach, in that they operated only within the Christian community and in a subdued manner. From the mid-70s, new churches emerged characterised not only by their Pentecostal and charismatic slant but also by their aggressive evangelism. The offence they caused to the Muslim community can only be imagined as they barraged them continually in open-air crusades, characteristic of their method of communication.

The new churches also constituted a threat to the mainstream churches, which were losing members to them by the day. These Christian fundamentalist churches analysed the nation's ills through strictly religious lenses and blamed the woes of the nation on internal enemies (meaning Christians who have failed to live up to expectations) and external enemies (those of other religions, especially Muslims). The salvation of the economy, they prescribed, depends on a national surrender to Jesus Christ, who alone can save Nigeria. Simply put, the nation will continue on the path of disorientation until all Nigerians accept Jesus as Lord.¹²⁰ This tendency within the Pentecostal realm broadened and gave a new description of Nigeria in God's plans.¹²¹

Incidentally, the preoccupation of the Pentecostal churches with healing and exorcism takes the focus of people away from the need to challenge the political status quo in the country. Their narrow analysis of personal and national problems as resulting from the machinations of the devil, which can be defeated through spiritual programmes that reconnect people with God, does not give a political angle to their

¹²⁰ Iheanyi M. Enwerem, *A Dangerous*, pp. 90-91.

¹²¹ Ogbu U. Kalu, "The Religious Dimension of the Legitimacy Crisis, 1993-1998", *Nigeria in*, p. 683.

message. Besides, using the analogy of Cyrus the pagan king in the Bible, they contend that God could use any leader to liberate Nigeria.¹²² In other words, structural change is not indispensable to economic recovery.

Karl Maier takes us on a tour of two Pentecostal denominations, Synagogue of All Nations and Living Faith Church (a.k.a. Winners' Chapel), which demonstrate the core of Pentecostal reaction to the socio-economic situation: exorcism and the marketing of prosperity.¹²³ Pentecostals believe that the problems of Nigeria could be overcome through deliverance, exorcism and through the people embracing the gospel of prosperity. This mentality is not far removed from what we saw in the Latin American situation.¹²⁴ This Pentecostal mentality has slipped into the mainstream churches through the window of their charismatic movements. These, rather than any political awareness, have been the contribution of the Pentecostal movement. It is clear that the most radical arm of Christianity is apolitical and works within the status quo through personal liberation and transformation.

The issues that become apparent in any discussion of the socio-economic situation of Nigeria are the collapse of the economy and the failure of the state to live up to the expectations of the Nigerian people. Religion or ethnic nationalism fill in the vacuum that the flight of the state created. People no longer reserve any loyalty to the state but reserve this commitment to their immediate communities that provide for their basic needs. In Northern Nigeria, the region that is worst hit by deprivation, despite the immense wealth of its elites, religion plays an important role in making people to come to terms with their plight. Unfortunately, the programmes Islam and

¹²² Ogbu U. Kalu, "The Religious Dimension of the Legitimacy Crisis, 1993-1998", *Nigeria in*, p. 683.

¹²³ Karl Maier, *This House*, pp. 251-267.

¹²⁴ Karl Maier, *This House*, p. 267.

Christianity offer are diametrically opposed, leading to a further polarisation of their adherents.

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Our contextual analysis of Northern Nigeria reveals the mutually exclusive influence of Islam and Christianity in the region. This exclusivity draws from the fact that each of the traditions does not acknowledge an epistemological crisis and their followers are only willing to draw from their respective traditions to deal with the exigencies of life. The two worldviews are firmly entrenched as parallel traditions that command the commitment of their adherent in a polarised fashion. So that even the situation of poverty and injustice is not sufficient to built a bridge across this divide. Rather they serve to polarise further Muslims and Christians, as we saw in the impact of religion on socio-economic ills. It is within this socio-historical context that my respondents' expression of religious commitment, which would be demonstrated in the analysis of our empirical data, is situated. We shall now turn our attention to the description of the field within which I administered my questionnaires and conducted my interviews.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FIELD AND FIELDWORK

So far I have dealt theoretically with the issues that I addressed in the fieldwork that I conducted in Northern Nigeria. I have investigated the concept of liberation and have demonstrated the role that Islam and Christianity play as life-defining agencies in Northern Nigeria. This chapter presents the process of the fieldwork itself: the locations in which I chose to collect my empirical data, the background of my respondents and, not least, the difficulties that I confronted in the process of the research.

I. THE FIELD

Northern Nigeria is the area widely referred to as Central Sudan in pre-colonial history. When Nigeria was colonised by the British, the region was referred to as the Northern Provinces, then it came to be referred to as the Northern Protectorate and at independence, the Northern Region. It occupies 75% of the landmass of Nigeria. At the northernmost part of the region are Hausaland and Borno, occupied by the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri. Towards the southern part we have the Nupe, Yoruba, Tiv and a conglomeration of small tribes in the hill regions. The Hausa and the Fulani assimilated through inter-marriage after the *jihad*, which they fought together, and are commonly referred to as Hausa-Fulani.

The region is a tale of two communities, formed along religious lines. Islam unites the Hausa-Fulani, Kanuri, Nupe and part of the Yoruba into the single largest entity in the region. The minority tribes of the region are formed according to

Christian heritage, as we saw in our socio-historical analysis of the region. Adherents of traditional religion exist in the region in small pockets but the accommodating nature of African Traditional Religion means that it pales into insignificance in the face of the two dominant, missionary religions. Consequently, the battle line in Northern Nigeria is drawn between Muslims and Christians.

Suffice it to note that, in spite of our common generalisation, not all the majority groups in Northern Nigeria are Muslim, nor are all the minority groups Christian. Christians are found in the majority tribes, just as Muslims are found in the minority tribes. Having established this exception, it is pertinent to note that conversion to any of these religions entails the adoption of the culture imbued in the religion, for instance the Nupe describe those who convert to Islam as *A ze goizi* (they became Fulani).¹ The same is true of those who convert to Christianity, as they usually adopt a European way of life. In addition, since these converts tend to identify more with their co-religionists rather than with their kinsmen, this broad generalisation is not without some basis in fact.

This situation is further complicated with the immigration of Southern Nigerians, mostly Yoruba and Ibos into the region. They came as traders and civil servants of the colonial administration and came to be seen as associate colonialists. The tension that their presence exacerbated, led the colonial administration to implement the principle of non-integration. Separate settlements, called *Sabon Garis* or new towns, were built and a law was promulgated to deter interaction of the immigrants with the indigenes. The Northern minorities are the co-religionists of some of these immigrants, since they are mostly Christians and one would expect a closer relationship between the two groups against the predominant Northern

¹ Ogbu Kalu, *Christianity in West Africa: The Nigerian Story* (Ibadan: Day Star Press, 1978) p. 76.

Muslims. In everyday interaction, however, the Northern minorities would prefer to pitch their tent with the Hausa-Fulani and only relate with the immigrants when Christianity is brought under pressure. Complexity defines Northern Nigeria.

Consequently, to get a fair representation of the situation in this complex region, I decided to limit my research to Kano, Kaduna and Jos, partly due to the cosmopolitan nature of these towns and their significance in the region. Interestingly, the majority of the population in Kano is Muslim; in Kaduna the population is almost equally divided between Muslims and Christians; while Jos has a majority Christian population. With the advantage of living almost my entire life in the region, going back to spend ten weeks with a fairly developed conceptual framework, enabled me to observe the unfolding of events with a fresh perspective. It is worthwhile investigating briefly the background of the locations of my fieldwork.

Kano is considered the commercial centre of the North. In pre-colonial times it was a lucrative trading post and was esteemed as a bastion of Islam. The advent of colonialism, however, changed the focus of trade from the trans-Saharan routes to industries in Manchester and Liverpool. The changing trade led to the introduction of a new market that surpassed the ancient Kurmi market. The commercial activities of this new dispensation, for reasons beyond our scope, have been in the hands of non-Muslim immigrants.²

After the *jihad*, Sokoto became the centre of administration of all the emirates under the caliphate. During the era of native administration, Sardauna, in spite of his commitment to restoring the caliphate, chose to develop Kaduna instead of Sokoto as

² Isaac Olawale Albert, "Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Kano", *Community Conflicts in Nigeria: Management, Resolution and Transformation*: 274-306. J. A. Atanda et al, Eds. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 2001) 274.

the political capital.³ Kaduna, therefore, became the home of civil servants and other functionaries in the service of the Northern regional government. Even after the dissolution of the North into states, Kaduna still assumes political significance.

The Birom people of Jos have been formidable in their resistance to the Muslim Hausa-Fulani domination and, as far back as 1945, formed the Birom Progressive Union (BUP). The following factors motivated the political activism of this people: land tenure (mining compensation) and the chieftaincy conflict with the Hausa-Fulani.⁴ With the fragmentation of the Northern region, the state set up an alternative university and media to symbolise their departure from the Northern establishment. The tin mining enterprise in Jos has made it attractive to non-indigenous people. A good number of Hausa-Fulani today claim Jos as their town of origin.

The significance of these towns in Northern Nigeria constitutes a burden. Their cosmopolitan nature ensures the intermingling of Muslims and Christians making them tension-laden. In recent times they have been reduced to theatres of religious conflict. In Kano, Muslims demand that the Islamic heritage dictate public discourse. The split population in Kaduna always debates on the secular nature of state organs. In the case of Jos, the Muslim minority has always protested at their marginalisation. These locations represent the region fairly.

³ Roman Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997) pp. 5 & 115.

⁴ Yusufu Turaki, *The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria: A Social Ethical Analysis of the Colonial and Post-colonial and Politics in Nigeria* (Jos: Challenge Publications, 1993) p. 160.

II. THE FIELDWORK

I administered a survey questionnaire and conducted interviews, to facilitate my empirical study, in Kano, Kaduna and Jos. Consequently, and for the sake of clarity, I shall present my fieldwork in two sections: the survey questionnaire and the interviews.

A. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Description

The respondents to my survey questionnaire were, first of all, final year undergraduate students of Ado Bayero University, Kano, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (Kaduna), and the University of Jos. These institutions are not the only universities in Northern Nigeria, but I selected them because they are within the vicinities of my fieldwork and reflect these concerns. Ado Bayero University, my first port of call, is highly Islamic in its orientation and a good proportion of the students in the institution are Muslim. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, on the other hand, is a mixed bag. Since it was established as an institution for the then-Northern region, it caters for students from both religions, but the struggle of Muslims to harness it to an Islamic orientation has been the source of constant conflicts. Finally, the University of Jos was instituted as a reaction by some components of the Northern non-Muslim minorities, when the region was fragmented. It was an expression of their liberation from the dominance of the Northern establishment. It is therefore highly Christian in its orientation and the majority of its student population is Christian.

The teachers of St. Thomas and St. Louis Secondary Schools, Kano also responded to the questionnaire. It would have been interesting to administer it to people on the street but for two reasons. First of all, their level of literacy is low and

that could affect their input. Moreover, I would have required more time to administer them effectively. I therefore confined myself to these teachers who have good academic qualifications and constitute a good link to the people on the street, since they live and interact with them.

(a) Purposive Sampling

My choice of student participants was purposive and not random. I confined myself to final year students of the department of sociology. This was informed partly by Robert Wuthnow's assumption that social scientists secularise more easily than natural scientists.⁵ In addition, I worked with the presumption that these students had completed a course in the sociology of religion and have acquired a certain degree of objectivity. My logic in this respect is simple: if these students, who are on the verge of completing their courses, remain uninfluenced in their allegiance to their various faith traditions, then it will be more difficult for the people on the street to experience a crisis of credibility.

(b) Number of Participants

I wanted a minimum of 200 volunteers to fill in the questionnaire. This also informed my not confining the administration of the questionnaire to one institution. Final year students in every department in the three universities are small in number due to the high rate of dropouts. So my extending the exercise across the three institutions ensured that I had this minimum number of participants. The number of participants

⁵ Robert Wuthnow, "Science and the Sacred", *The Sacred in a Secular Age*: 187-198. Philip E. Hammond, Ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985) pp. 190-191.

was also limited by the academic arrangement, which ensured that final year students attend few core courses at the same time, and the lecturers involved are usually unwilling to give away their time, even for a worthwhile cause. Besides, the exercise was completely voluntary and no remuneration was attached to it. Hence, participation was completely voluntary.

2. Instrumentation

The survey instrument I used to collect my data is a 26-point questionnaire, adapted to the local context of Northern Nigeria. I used a general topic, but one that reflects the issues in the dissertation: “The Role of Religion in the Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria.” This was to ensure that the concepts, “Interreligious Dialogue” and “Liberation” do not appear because many people have reservations about them, which could bias their responses to the questionnaire. The effectiveness of my sample instrument lies in its simplicity and the range of options it provided for the participants. Peruse Appendix 1 for a copy of the survey questionnaire. All the participants were comfortable with the questionnaire.

3. Data Collection

(a) The Sub-problems

1. Restatement of Sub-problem 1: The first sub-problem is to determine whether the liberation method of dialogue has any relevance for Northern Nigeria.
 - i. Data Needed: The data needed to resolve this sub-problem are the participants’ responses to questions concerning the socio-economic

situation in Nigeria, its effect on religion, the capacity of their given religion to transform the situation, their capacity to subscribe to a programme of societal transformation not in line with their religion and their perception of the motivation of religious revivals.

- ii. Data Location: The data are located in participants' responses to Questions 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 14 and 17.
 - iii. Data Security: The data will be secured by accurately tabulating all of the responses of the participants to the above questions.
2. Restatement of Sub-problem 2: The second sub-problem is to investigate the factors engineering Muslim-Christian conflicts in Northern Nigeria.
- i. Data Needed: The data needed to resolve this sub-problem are the participants' responses to questions concerning the state of Muslim-Christian relations; the cause of the conflict and the motivation of leaders of religious revivals.
 - ii. Data Location: The data are located in participants' responses to Questions 4, 5, 18, 19, 20 and 21.

iii. Data Security: The data will be secured by accurately tabulating all the responses of the participants to the above questions.

3. Restatement of Sub-problem 3: The third sub-problem is to inquire into the possibility of establishing a common ground for Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria.

i. Data Needed: The data needed to resolve this sub-problem are the participants' responses to questions concerning their attitude to the Bible/Qur'an, the preaching of their religious ministers, prayer, beliefs, salvation, politics, community, adherents of other religions and their source of direction in life.

ii. Data Location: The data are located in participants' responses to Questions 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26.

iii. Data Security: The data will be secured by accurately tabulating all the responses of the participants to the above questions.

(b) Strategy

I personally administered the questionnaire only in the University of Jos, with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences. I explained the generalities of the project to the students, without going into specifics to avoid socially desirable

responses. I collected the data within the lecture and was therefore limited only to those students present in the class. In the other universities, I depended on the goodwill of some friendly lecturers to help me administer the questionnaire. I explained to them that they were not to go into specifics with the students and only address them on the generalities. In cases where students are confused on the options provided, they should tell them to choose the best option possible. The same applied to the teachers in the secondary schools, where the principals of the schools administered the questionnaire for me.

In designing the survey questionnaire, I took into consideration the greatest level of anonymity. Knowing full well that demanding background information, like religion and gender, may influence the responses from the participants, I decided to leave them out. In addition, I was careful that the views of respondents remained confidential. Where I administered the questionnaire, I had an envelope with me. I passed it round after the participants had filled in their questionnaires. Having collected them, I sealed the envelope before walking out of the class. I specifically instructed those who administered the questionnaires on my behalf to do the same. There were no complaints of breach of confidentiality reported to me while still in the field.

4. Data Analysis

I used the method of simple percentage in analysing the data from the questionnaires. From the responses to the questions I constructed a table showing the figures and percentages of the different options chosen. It indicates the varying attitudes to the issues treated on the questionnaires. I then compare the responses to my hypothesis. In case the result of the analysis does not support my hypothesis, I will present the

control variables responsible for the discrepancy. These variables are drawn largely from the literature and from my personal observation of the unfolding of events in Northern Nigeria.

B. INTERVIEWS

1. Description

While the survey questionnaire, administered above, has the advantage of clarity and facilitates quick collection of data, it has an in-built disadvantage. It does not allow the respondents to express themselves adequately. I received comments from some students on some of the choices they made in the questionnaire. I did not discard these comments, as they were helpful in my analysis of the questionnaire. To make up for the aforementioned shortcoming, I decided to conduct in-depth, formal interviews on the field. Even though structured, the open-ended method of the interview allowed the interviewees to relate their attitude to the issues discussed and also enabled them to discuss their experiences and those of their co-religionists. My interviewees consist of religious leaders, young professionals, politicians, academics, conflict resolution specialists and human rights' activists. All these have been part and parcel of developments in Northern Nigeria and they were able to share with me their personal evaluation of the dynamics at work in Muslim-Christian relations in the region. All the interviews, except the one granted by Alhaji Isah Kufena, were conducted in English language.

By inquiring about their views and opinions, I aimed to address the following key themes and questions in the interview:

1. *The relevance of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue for Northern Nigeria*

- How would you describe the socio-economic situation in Northern Nigeria?
- How does the situation impact on the practice of religion?
- Can religion transform the situation?

2. *The feasibility of fashioning a common programme of liberation in Northern Nigeria*

- In a multi-religious situation like Northern Nigeria, can the religions fashion a common programme to transform the socio-economic situation?

3. *The Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*

- What is cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Northern Nigeria?

The interview sessions lasted between thirty minutes to two hours. I stuck to the above questions during each interview session. However, since the style was open-ended, some of the participants digressed to highlight some issues that they considered important. Sometimes, too, I picked out some underlying issues not covered by the questions to address the interviewees. Except in a few cases, where the interviewees specifically objected, I used a mini-disc recorder to record the interviews. I left the field at a point when I felt that I had gathered sufficient materials to provide some answers to the research questions I had set above.

I had to rely on contacts to put me in touch with some of the interviewees because of their high profile or religious inclination. In some cases where I tried to

engage some interviewees without contacts, like my attempt to interview the officials of the *'Yan Izala* in Jos, I met a with rebuff. On the whole, the responses were encouraging. Apart from these formal interviews, I also conducted non-formal interviews and discussions with friends and people I met on occasions, to sample their views on the issues that concerned me. Since such settings were relaxed and informal, the wealth of information that I mined from them was astounding and contributed to my appreciation of the unfolding of events in Northern Nigeria.

2. The Interviewees

The bulk of the empirical material in this dissertation derives from the formal interviews conducted in the field and the interviewee's opinions on my subject matter affected my view of the feasibility of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue in Northern Nigeria, shattering my assumption that it was practicable. It is worthwhile to give some background information about each of these interviewees, as that might provide a better appreciation of their position. For the sake of clarity, I shall present them categorically.

(a) Religious Leaders

I interviewed the following religious leaders on the field. Archbishop Peter Yariyok Jatau, who has been the metropolitan archbishop of Kaduna since 1971. Apart from being a foundation member of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), he was the leader of the Northern Zone of the organisation for ten years. Dr. Datti Ahmad is a medical doctor by profession and also a seasoned politician. Now in retirement, he devotes more time to the practice of his religion. He is considered an influential

member of the *'Yan Izala* in Kano. In addition, he is the chairman of the Committee for the Implementation of *Shari'a* in the Nigeria, an influential member of the Council of *'Ulama* and also the chairman of the *Zakat* committee in Kano State.

Rev. Dr. Peter Bauna Tanko is the director of the Catholic Resource Centre in Kaduna. In addition, he is heavily involved in Muslim-Christian dialogue in his capacity as a member of Nigeria Religious Council (NIREC), which is a high-powered, federal government sponsored organisation that reflects on interreligious issues. Alhaji Ibrahim Isah Kufena is the Secretary of the *Jama'at-el-Nasr-el-Islam* (JNI), the society for the victory of Islam, initially set up for Islamic unity and the propagation of the faith. He was involved in the drafting of the Kaduna Peace Declaration. Rev. James Kabuk is the assistant director of the Christian Bureau, set up to represent Christian issues in government policy developments in Kaduna State. Rev. Dr. Gabriel Ojo is the chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Kano State Chapter. Alhaji Idris Kulya Umar is the chief *imam* of the Kano central mosque. His position puts him in touch with the ordinary people in Kano city, a Muslim enclave. I chose each person in this category because they articulate the religious commitment of their followers, which they brought to bear on the issues relating to the interview.

(b) Politicians

I interviewed the following politicians. Alhaji Tanko Yakassai is a veteran politician who has been involved in Northern politics since the period before independence, as a staunch member of the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC). Chief Gabriel Musa is the political leader of a segment of the non-Muslim minority groups residing in the predominantly Muslim city of Kano. Councillor Vitalis Onyeze is the only non-

Muslim political official in Kano State. He represents a non-Muslim ghetto, *Sabon-Gari*. Even though this area is vast enough to require a local government, it is reduced to a ward and placed under another local government. Rev. Dr. Matthew Hassan Kukah is a priest and political scientist who has gained political prominence in the region. In a recent almanac detailing the Northern politicians, he was the only non-Muslim included. He has established himself as an authority in religion and politics in Northern Nigeria. Each of these respondents is conscious of the political dynamics in the region and of the role of religion in shaping policies, leading me to engage them as resource persons.

(c) Academics

I interviewed the following academics. Professor Stephen Nkom of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, was heavily involved in the defunct Marxist movement in the university, an ideal he is still passionate about. He also articulated the views of the non-Muslim minorities of Kaduna State during the infamous Kafanchan riots. Professor Attahiru Jega of Bayero University Kano is a political scientist and the director of the Centre for Democratic Studies, Kano. He has contributed significantly to the social analysis of the Nigerian state in different journals and publications. Professor Emmanuel Olofin is the former Dean of Social Science, Bayero University, Kano and a specialist in rural demographics. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mamman is a lecturer in religious studies at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; he is also the Catholic chaplain at the university.

Dr. M. G. A. Raji is a lecturer in Arabic and Islamic studies in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. He is also a non-Northern Muslim, who is married to a Christian. Rev. Fr. Marinus Iwuchukwu is the Catholic chaplain of Bayero University Kano, he

also lectures in religious studies at the Federal College of Education, Kano, where he is a member of the moribund interreligious committee of the institution. Rev. Fr. Cletus Gotan is a lecturer in the Religious Studies Department of the University of Jos and is also a member of the peace commission set up to discuss the issues surrounding Muslim-Christian conflicts in Jos and other towns in Plateau State. Each of these respondents is aware of alternatives to the present state of Muslim-Christian relations, bringing into the interview the wealth of their personal experiences shaped by their academic leanings.

(d) Human Rights Activists

I interviewed the following human rights activists. Barrister Eucharia Duru is a lawyer and also a human rights' activist, involved in the enhancement of the status of women in Kano State. Hajia Fatima Kwaku is a lawyer and a member of the International Committee for the Prevention of Discrimination against Women. I brought these women on board to glean feminist perspectives on the issues of injustice and poverty.

(e) Conflict Resolution Experts

Rev. James Movel lost one of his hands in one of the many Muslim-Christian conflicts in Northern Nigeria. As a result, he devotes himself to bettering the relationship between adherents of the two religions. His counterpart is Ustas Mohammed Ashafa, the co-director, with Movel, of Inter-faith Network, a religious conflict resolution organisation. They were the architects of the Kaduna Peace

Declaration. I interviewed Movel and Ashafa in order to get some practical perspectives on the state of Muslim-Christian relations.

(f) Young Professionals

I interviewed the following young professionals. Steve Adehi is a lawyer in private practice. Sani Sagab is an architect and a one-time teacher, who is currently in private practice. Alhaji Ibrahim Dalhatu is a lawyer and the secretary of the grand *khadi* of the *Shari'a* court of Appeal, Kano State. Alhaji Ahmed Rufai Inuwa is the permanent secretary, Ministry of Education, Jigawa State (it was carved out of Kano State). I interviewed these young professionals to see if their education and professional life removes them from the mindset of their co-religionists.

(g) Miscellaneous

I interviewed the following people for special reasons. Harold Blackburn is a retired colonial officer, who serves as the managing director of an indigenously owned corporation. I wanted to crosscheck the accusations level against colonialism with him, issues he was reticent to discuss. Mr. Sunday Salami is a retired civil servant who has lived for over twenty years in an exclusively Muslim ambient, in Kano. I wanted to get first hand information on the implications involved in his co-habitation. Mrs. Matina Adeboye is the counsellor of a voluntary agency school in Kano, whose students and teachers consists of Muslims and Christians. I interviewed her to get a picture of Muslim-Christian relations in an educational setting. Rotzin Dimka is a journalist and a news editor with the Plateau Broadcasting Corporation, Jos. I interviewed him to get some media perspective on the Jos crisis.

3. Data Analysis

I shall assemble the interview materials in three chapters, according to the three broad categories outlined above. These chapters reveal the relevance of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue, the cause of Muslim-Christian conflicts and the feasibility of a common programme of liberations. I then compare the opinions of the respondents to each of the issues. I base my analysis on a comparison of their opinions, without any attempt to interfere with the data.

III. THE DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

A. DELIMITATIONS

1. This study focuses entirely on Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria and refers to other regions of the country, only where necessary. The selection of the North as a case study is deliberate and informed by its peculiar nature with regards to religion in comparison with other parts of the country. It is also the region of my origin and I am more familiar with the dynamics at work therein.
2. This study will not pay attention to other conflicts in the region that do not have a religious undertone. A good example is the prolonged Tiv-Jukun conflict that has resulted in the destruction of many lives and property and to the dislocation of people in the region.

B. LIMITATIONS

1. The vastness of Northern Nigeria made it impossible for me to undertake a research for ten weeks in every town in the region. This limitation is serious

because of the variety of cultures and perspectives in the region. But my familiarity with the field compensated for this shortcoming.

2. Northern Nigeria is a patriarchal society. Consequently, men are involved in shaping public discourse. My interviewees were exclusively men, with a few exceptions. Other studies, like Roman Lomeier's,⁶ encountered the same limitation.
3. The fact that I am a native of the area and belong to one side of the religious divide not only by identity but also by profession implied that I was not given complete information and sometimes was turned down at the last minute for interviews.
4. I had to depend on the generosity of my bishop and friends for my fieldwork and as a result I was not in a position to employ research assistants who would have helped me overcome the limitation that my religious identity and profession placed on me.

The delimitations and limitations taken into consideration, the research work went according to design except for some minor hitches, which fortunately did not alter the findings of the research in any significant way. For example, some of the people, who could not make themselves available for an interview, gave me copies of interviews that they had conducted with journalists from local magazines. Though the

⁶Of the 85 interviewees Lomeier engaged with in his field work in Northern Nigeria, only 2 were women and one of them is a European. Roman Lomeier, *Islamic Reforms*, pp. 389-394.

contexts of the interviews differ from mine, many features are similar and useful to my work. The most difficult aspect of the research work was the time constraint and lack of funds to employ some assistants to enable me cover more ground than I did in the field. In any case, the data collected is representative of what I require to prove my hypotheses, and this shall become evident in the data analysis. To this we shall now focus our attention.

PART TWO

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

It is necessary to restate the research questions of this dissertation before we begin our data analyses: Is the liberation method of interreligious dialogue relevant as a common ground for Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria? If this model is not feasible in a region ridden with poverty and injustice, what is the factor that facilitates interreligious dialogue? In this chapter, I shall explore this question through analysing the data collected with the survey questionnaire. It consists of three parts, reflecting the sub-problems of the dissertation. Part one analyses responses to questions that concern the relevance of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue. It seeks to establish the state of the socio-economic situation in Nigeria and also to examine its interaction with religion. Part two deals with the dynamics responsible for Christian-Muslim conflicts in our socio-historical context. It seeks to account for the polarisation between the two communities in the region. And part three deals with the feasibility of a common ground for Muslim-Christian relations. It investigates the level of openness of the respondents to other religious traditions than theirs.

The survey indicates a movement from openness to closure in the attitudes of the respondents. Without doubt, the antagonism that the adherents of Islam and Christianity have for each other does not spring from malice but rather from their attitude to their respective religions, which does not allow for openness and naturally nurtures such antagonism. So, while the respondents indicate openness to issues of liberation, for example, their attitude to their scriptures and the teaching of their leaders renders the adoption of the method an outright impossibility. This tension is

reflected in the day-to-day interactions of Muslims and Christians in Northern Nigeria. They are not at daggers drawn with each other and friendship is nurtured across the divide, but at the outbreak of conflict, deeply entrenched values transcend these friendships.

I. THE RELEVANCE OF THE LIBERATION METHOD

Our first sub-problem is to examine the relevance of the liberation method of dialogue to Northern Nigeria. To resolve this sub-problem seven questions of the survey questionnaire seek to explore the socio-economic condition in Nigeria; its effect on the practice of religion; the ability of religion to transform the situation; the willingness of people to subscribe to a programme of transformation not in line with their religion and their ability to work on a religious project with someone who is not of their religion. The issues raised by these data cover the elements involved in the liberation method of dialogue and the responses of the respondents are tabulated in the table below.

A. RESULTS

No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	What is the socio-economic situation of Nigeria?	Sound	3	1.5%
		Fair	94	47.0%
		Deplorable	98	49.0%
2	Does the economy have any impact on the practice of religion?	Yes	169	84.5%
		No	29	14.5%
3	Does your religion have the capacity to transform the situation?	Yes	174	87.0%
		No	20	10.0%

6	Would you subscribe to any socio-economic programme that is not in line with your religion but capable of transforming the current Nigerian situation?	Yes No	131 65	65.0% 32.5%
9	Would you work on a religious project with someone who is not of your religion?	Yes No	139 44	69.5% 22.0%
14	Do you think that religious revivals are motivated by the current economic situation?	Yes No	110 82	55.0% 41.0%
17	Do you think religious leaders are motivated by solely spiritual reasons?	Yes No	54 141	27.0% 70.5%

B. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Question 1 deals with the description of the socio-economic situation in Nigeria. 1.5% of the respondents felt that the situation was sound, 47% felt that it was fair, 49% felt that the situation was deplorable, while 2.5% were not sure of the socio-economic situation. These responses indicate that the socio-economic situation is somewhere between fair and deplorable. The difference in percentage between those who felt the situation was fair and those who felt the situation was deplorable raises a question.

My informal interviews and discussion with people on the field clarified the issue. Those who felt the economy was fair compared the Nigerian economy with those of other African countries worse than Nigeria's. On the other hand, those who felt that the economy was deplorable did so by way of comparing the Nigerian socio-economic conditions with those of advanced countries in the West. Judging by the resources that are available in Nigeria, one can safely say that the socio-economic situation leaves much to be desired and calls for transformation as the study of our socio-historical context demonstrated.

Question 2 seeks to find out if the socio-economic situation has an impact on the practice of religion. 84.5% of the respondents are of the view that it does have an impact, 14.5% thought differently, while 1% of the respondents were not sure if there is any impact. What comes across is that the socio-economic situation does have an impact on the practice of religion. This establishes the fact that religion is not immune to its social context. This is true of the religions in Northern Nigeria. On the one hand, we have witnessed increased religiosity but also the commercialisation and the abuse of religion for material gains.

Question 3 examines whether religion has the power to transform the situation. 87% of the respondents believe that religion could transform the situation. 10% of the respondents believe it cannot, while 3% are not sure if religion is capable of transforming the socio-economic situation. What is apparent is that Nigerians have great faith in the ability of religion to serve as a force for the transformation of society. The data further affirms the belief that there is a relationship between religious revivals and the socio-economic situation. If religion was not viewed as a force for transformation, then such a relationship could be readily dismissed. Allowing for the fact that Africans are generally said to be deeply religious, religious revivalism could be traced to the time when the socio-economic situation started experiencing a crisis as was apparent in the study of Northern Nigeria.

This assertion is evident in the responses to item 14 on the questionnaire, which seeks to know if religious revivals are motivated by the socio-economic situation. 55% of the respondents thought it was the case, 41% of the respondents denied any such relationship, while 4% were not sure. One could conclude that those who denied the circumstantial nature of religious revivals are a significant minority and this therefore calls the relationship into question. I think the fact that the

respondents are all practising religious people makes it difficult for them to accept that their religiosity is motivated by the socio-economic situation, despite the engagement of many of them with the social sciences. They would rather see such revivals as motivated purely by religious factors. In this regard having 55.5% of the respondents affirming the relationship between the socio-economic factor and religiosity is significant and makes it is apparent that such a relationship does exist in the Nigerian situation.

This assumption is sustained by item 17 on the questionnaire, which gives the respondents a greater degree of objectivity in focusing on the motives of the leaders of these revivals. The responses confirm the relationship of revivals to the socio-economic situation by viewing the motives of their leaders to be so determined. 27% of the respondents thought that leaders of revivals are motivated purely by spiritual reasons, 70.5% indicated that they were not so motivated, while 2.5% of the respondents were not sure. There is a significant shift in the assessment of religious revivals with the respondents dwelling on the motives of the leaders of these revivals. The level of religiosity that the socio-economic situation has sparked in Nigeria was evident to me while I was in the field.

Question 6 seeks to find out if people would be willing to subscribe to a programme that is not in line with their religion but that is capable of transforming the socio-economic situation. It is interesting to note that 65% of the respondents maintain that they would subscribe to such a programme, 32.5% indicate that they would not, while 2.5% were not sure. This finding indicates that in the face the appalling socio-economic crisis that Nigerians are going through, the majority of the respondents would be willing to go along with a programme that could transform the situation even if it is not in line with their religion. This is essential because the

liberation method of dialogue is often criticised for its dependence on Marxist principles, which it engages for social analysis and its secular underpinnings, which tend to pay little or no regards to religion. Interestingly, the majority of respondents indicate that they would subscribe to a programme with such leanings. This is therefore a refreshing finding.

Question 9 inquires into the possibility of the respondents working together on a religious project with those who are not of their religion. In this case, 69.5% indicate that they would be comfortable working on such a project, 22% indicate that they would not collaborate with adherents of other religions, while a significant number of respondents (7.5%) were not sure. It is clear that a significant majority will work on a religious project with people who do not share the same religion with them. This data shows that the respondents are willing to collaborate on interreligious ventures, suggesting some form of openness to people of other religious traditions.

C. IMPLICATIONS

It is apparent from this set of data that the liberation method of dialogue is relevant to Northern Nigeria. First of all, the socio-economic situation is far from sound and people yearn for a transformation of the situation. This yearning is revealed by the increased religiosity that has become characteristic of the region, because people believe that religion can transform their desperate circumstances. Also interesting is the willingness of the respondents to embark on a non-religious programme capable of transforming the situation, indicating that some of the reservations towards the liberation method, particularly its secularist orientation, would not make it unacceptable for the people in Northern Nigeria. The method is made all the more

acceptable by the fact that the people are willing to work on a religious project with someone who does not share their religious beliefs.

II. MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

The second sub-problem is to examine the state of Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria. To present the situation sufficiently, six questions on the survey questionnaire seek to explore the opinions of the respondents on the state of relations between the two groups; the factor responsible for this state of relations; the separation of religion from politics; the relationship between the individual and society and membership in socio-political organisations and political parties. The responses of the respondents are tabulated in the table below.

A. RESULTS

No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
4	What is the current state of Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria?	Cordial	15	7.5%
		Tense	151	75.5%
		Deplorable	33	16.5%
5	What is responsible for the current state of relationship?	Politics	106	53.0%
		Economy	19	9.5%
		Religion	30	15.0%
		Ethnic	36	18.0%
18	Should religion be separated from politics?	Yes	127	63.5%
		No	72	36.0%
19	The community needs to be transformed before individuals can become religious.	True	99	49.5%
		False	95	47.5%
20	Do you belong to any social or political organisation?	Yes	57	28.5%
		No	134	67.0%
21	Do you belong to any political party?	Yes	35	17.5%
		No	152	76.0%

B. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Question 4 inquires into the state of relationship between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. 7.5% of the respondents indicate that it is cordial; 75.5% indicate that it is tense; 16.5% indicate that it is deplorable while 1.5% were unsure. The responses to this question indicate that the state of Muslim-Christian relations is tense. This is representative of the situation I observed while in the field, which could be likened to a loaded gun. Although there were no overt conflicts at the time, any simple issue could shift the situation to a deplorable state because the conditions were ripe. For example, the May 1995 riots in Kano resulted from a fight between two people, over a personal issue. The fact that one was a Muslim and the other a Christian fanned the flames of old grievances, nurtured five months prior to the events. The degree of tension between the two groups is indicated in the voluntary segregation of Muslims and Christians now evident in cities like Jos and Kaduna where they used to live side by side. I was specifically warned, for instance, not to conduct my fieldwork in certain areas that were considered Muslim areas in Jos.

Question 5 seeks to establish the factor, among other apparent factors, most likely to engender the conflicts. 53% of the respondents indicated politics; 9.5% indicated economy; 15% indicated religion; 18% indicated ethnicity while 5.5% were not sure. It is not surprising that politics is indicated by the majority of the respondents as the most likely factor responsible for Muslim-Christian conflicts in Nigeria. It is interesting to note that there is a long tradition of scholarship that blames political manipulation of religion to account for these conflicts. Moreover, political actions are more visible than those engineered by other factors. So the abuse of religion by influential politicians is put forward as the cause of the conflicts.

Following from the above, the response to question 18 is a little surprising. It inquires if politics should be separated from religion. 63.5% maintained that politics should be separated from religion; 36% maintained that the two should not be separated, while 0.5% were not sure. It is only logical that if the political manipulation of religion is causative of the conflicts, then the separation of religion from politics will be a way forward out of the crisis experienced by the two religious communities. The answers of the respondents to the questions that follow from this, however, indicated a change in perspective.

Question 19 seeks to know if the community needed to be transformed before the individual is transformed. Simply put, it asserts the division of politics from religion, which is achieved by the privatisation of religion. 49.5% indicated that the community needed to be transformed to achieve individual transformation; 47.5% maintained that the community does not need to be transformed before the individual is transformed; 3% were not sure. It is also intriguing to note that the margin between those who felt the statement was true and those who felt it was false is insignificant and the respondents on both sides of the divide are almost equal in number. The privatisation of religion is a modernist principle, championed by Christianity, as we saw in our study of social context, while Islam maintains that religion is not divorced from politics. The responses are therefore characteristic of the religious affiliation of the respondents, which was not required in the questionnaire.

Question 20 explores the membership of the respondents in social or political organisations against their belonging to religious organisations. 28% of the respondents indicate that they belonged to such organisations; 67% indicate they do not belong to any of these organisations, while 4.5% were not sure. Those who do not belong to social or political organisations affiliate completely with their religious

organisations and find in them a platform for expressing their grievances. The complete lack of interest in social and political organisations therefore makes religion a major factor in the lives of the people, their single source of identity and therefore a major catalyst in any conflict.

Question 21 examines the interest of the respondents in party politics. 17.5% indicate they belong to a political party; 76% indicated that they do not belong to any political party, while 6.5% were not sure if they belonged. The responses to this question serve only to confirm the observation made above. If there is any successful political party in Nigeria, especially Northern Nigeria, then it is religion. Religious affiliation is considered more serious than belonging to any other organisation. So while the respondents see nothing wrong in not affiliating to a political party, it would have been an aberration for them not to belong to either Islam or Christianity.

C. IMPLICATIONS

From the above it is explicit that the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Northern Nigeria is tense and that any issue, religious or otherwise, could serve to deteriorate the situation. The two religions are so vital in the lives of the people that they do not merely serve as platforms of expression but also as sources of identity. The political manipulation of religion is possible in the region when one considers that, apart from the apolitical attitude of the people, their lives are also shaped by two mutually exclusive religions. The divergence in fundamental outlook of the two religions and the unwillingness of the people to identify with non-religious organisations that can cut across their religious affiliations, will continue to provide politicians with an occasion to manipulate religion.

So that while people could call for the separation of religion from politics in principle, as we observed in the course of our analysis, reality suggests otherwise, especially in the complete apathy of the people to organisations that are non-religious in nature and to political parties. That civil society is not popular in the region is crucial to our analysis. What we have as semblances of civil societies, apart from the non-governmental organisations sponsored by over-sea agencies, are community-based organisations with religious orientations. Sadly, these organisations do not engage in common projects and are limited to their respective members. Since religion provides the identity for social mobilisation in the region, the generality of the populace will continue to find in it the only ready alternative to a collapsed economy and a state that has failed them.

III. THE FEASIBILITY OF A COMMON GROUND

The image that emerged from our data above is that the people of Northern Nigeria are dependent on religion for their identity rather than other meaning-defining agencies. We also discovered that Northern politicians could manipulate religion because of the divergence of the two religious traditions: Christianity and Islam. The next set of data seeks to examine the possibility of a common ground for Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria. The data explores where the adherents get their direction in life; their estimation of the preaching of their ministers or imams; their relationship to scriptures and prayer; their willingness to change their beliefs; their attitudes to adherents of other religions and how they became members of their religious tradition. Simply put, this section seeks to explore the level of exclusive religious commitment among the people of Northern Nigeria, to ascertain if there is

any openness that will make the liberation method of dialogue, which they have affirmed above, practicable.

A. RESULTS

No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
7	How often do you read the Bible/ <i>Qur'an</i> ?	Often Sometimes Seldom	134 59 5	67.0% 29.5% 2.5%
8	What would you consider the preaching of your Imam or Minister?	An opinion A mere directive A divine directive	16 27 153	8.0% 13.5% 76.5%
10	Which of following gives direction to your life?	Bible/ <i>Qur'an</i> Media Constitution Family	172 1 6 13	86.0% 0.5% 3.0% 6.5%
11	How often do you say your personal prayers?	Daily Weekly At random	167 2 29	83.5% 1.0% 14.5%
12	Would you be willing to change some aspects of your beliefs if someone of another religion gives you a reason to do so?	Yes No	41 156	20.5% 78.0%
13	Do you consider the Bible/ <i>Qur'an</i> a revelation word for word from God?	Yes No	180 18	90.0% 9.0%
15	If you find any teaching questionable in your religion will you be willing to give it up?	Yes No	108 86	54.0% 43.0%
16	Do you think that only those of your religion can be saved?	Yes No	62 130	31.0% 65.0%
22	How did you become an adherent of your religion?	Birth Conversion	173 25	86.5% 12.5%

23	If you are Christian, have you ever read the <i>Qur'an</i> ; if you are a Muslim, have ever read the Bible?	Yes	110	55.0%
		No	89	44.5%
24	Have you ever studied any other religion apart from your own?	Yes	89	44.5%
		No	111	55.5%
25	Do you find any aspect of your faith questionable?	Yes	31	15.5%
		No	168	84.0%
26	Do you listen to any religious programme apart from your own?	Yes	151	75.5%
		No	48	24.0%

B. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Question 7 inquires from the respondents how often they read their Bible/*Qur'an* to determine the importance given to these scriptures. 67% of the respondents claim they read their scriptures often; 29.5% claim they read them sometimes; 2.5% claim they seldom read them, while 1% were not sure. This indicates that the scriptures play a vital role in shaping the lives of the majority of the respondents. This is hardly surprising and the practice springs from the place that the respondents give to the Bible and *Qur'an* as literal revelations from God. Question 13 inquires into the status of these scriptures. 90% of the respondents indicate that they contain literal revelation from God; 9% indicate that they are not literal revelation, while 1% were unsure. This indicates that scriptural literalism is the norm in Northern Nigeria. Strangely enough, the effect of biblical criticism has not had any effect in the perception of the Bible among Christians.

Question 10 further strengthens this outlook. It inquires from the respondent the source that directs their lives. 86% indicate that the Bible/*Qur'an* directs their lives; 0.5% indicate that the media directs their lives; 3% indicate that the constitution

directs their lives; 6.5% indicate that the family directs their lives, while 2% were not sure. Scriptural literalism is a strong feature of fundamentalism, and its remarkable presence in our data reveals the level of strict adherence of the respondents to the scriptures, based on their firm belief that it is God's revelation, without any form of human mediation.

Closely linked to the above data is Question 8, which inquires into the value of the preaching of the minister or the imam. 8% consider it an opinion of the minister or imam; 13.5% consider it a mere directive; 76.5% consider it a divine directive, while 2% were not sure. This means that the majority of the respondents will subject themselves, unquestioningly, to the interpretation of the scriptures by their minister or imam because they consider them as sources of the mediation of God's will for them in the community. The estimation in which these religious leaders are held by their adherents constitutes them as strong moulders of opinions in their lives, next only to God himself.

During the Miss World crisis that struck Kaduna and Abuja, Nasiru Kabara, the leader of the *Qadirriya* movement, maintained that he and other religious leaders would stop their followers from taking the law into their hands only if the government called off the beauty pageant. He expresses the influence religious leaders have on their followers by stating: "When we say 'stop it,' the people stop it. When we say 'do this,' the people do the same." The authority of religious leaders over their followers cannot be overstated. Ironically, it is their followers who set the parameters within which they wield this influence. This will become evident in the interviews conducted in the field.

Question 11 seeks to know how often the respondents said their personal prayers. 83.5% indicate that they prayed daily; 1% indicate they prayed weekly;

14.5% indicate they prayed at random, while 1% were not sure. This goes to show the religious orientation of the respondents. They are always eager to acquire protection and favour from God for their daily lives. On the whole, the responses indicate that the majority of respondents believe not only in God's intervention in their daily lives but also in the power of the devil to harm and distort their lives, which is a strong motivation for daily prayers.

Question 12 deals with the willingness of the respondents to change their beliefs in the face of convincing reasons given by someone of another religion. 20.5% indicate that they would be willing to give up their beliefs in such a situation; 78% indicate that they would not be willing to give up their beliefs, while 1.5% were not sure. The fact that arises from this item is that people will generally not give up their beliefs if the person convincing them is from another religion. That shows that there is a great level of apprehension and defensiveness when encountering someone who is of a different religious tradition.

This is the case because in Question 15, where the respondents were asked if they would be willing to give up any teaching they find questionable in their religion and not suggested to them by a person of a different religion. 54% indicate that they would be willing to give up the teaching; 43% indicate that they would not be willing to give up the teaching, while 3% were not sure. It is intriguing to note that those who are not willing to give up their beliefs are in a significant minority. It is safe to conclude that the beliefs of the respondents are so deeply entrenched in them that they even prefer to hold on to false beliefs rather than give them up.

Closely related to the above is Question 25, which inquires if the respondents find any aspect of their faith questionable. 15% indicate that they find some aspects questionable; 84% indicate that they do not find any aspects of their faith

questionable, while 0.5% were not sure. These responses go to confirm the assumptions made above. It is probably safe to maintain that the respondents could find some aspects of their beliefs questionable but would turn a blind eye or rationalise those irritating aspects. Consequently, the rate of conversion from one religious tradition to another is low. Question 22, inquires how the respondents became adherents of their religion: 87.5% indicate they belonged to their religion by birth; while 12.5% indicate they became adherents of their religion through conversion. So the responses indicate that people are not generally willing to change their religion. My observation is that conversion is usually from one denomination to another within the same religion.

The next issue concerns the level of exposure to other religious traditions. Question 24 inquires if the respondents have ever studied another religion. 44.5% indicate that they have done so; while 55.5% indicate they have not undertaken such studies. Question 23 inquires if the respondents have read the scriptures of other religions. 55% indicate that they have; 44.5% indicate they have not, while 0.5% were not sure. Question 26 inquired if respondents listen to other religious programmes apart from their own. 75.5% indicate that they do; 24% indicate that they do not, while 0.5% were not sure. These data reveal that the level of exposure to the teachings of other religious traditions apart from those of the respondents is high. Yet this exposure does not reflect on their openness to the other religious traditions. The explanation for this discrepancy is obvious from my observation that most of those who expose themselves to the teachings of other religious traditions other than their own do so with closed minds, and with the sole objective of gleaning areas of weaknesses in the religions to keep in their arsenal for polemic engagements, which is now commonplace.

C. IMPLICATIONS

It is apparent from these data that the respondents do not acknowledge any epistemological crisis which is vital for interreligious dialogue, but rather perceive their religions as self-contained traditions. This calls in question some of the positive responses to the questionnaire. How could one engage in a programme, for example, that goes against one's religion if one is convinced that the sources of his religion, typified in the scriptures and the teachings of his minister, are infallible and contain divine injunctions? In a situation when such teachings are flexible and not fundamentalist in orientation, then one is hopeful of such a possibility but in Northern Nigeria the historical antecedents of Islam and Christianity ensure that these teachings are mostly divisive in nature.

This questionnaire was deliberately administered to students of social sciences who have undertaken a course in the sociology of religion. Surprisingly, a high percentage of them indicate that they do not find any teaching in their religion questionable. These students are so deeply entrenched in their religion that the findings of the social sciences have had little or no effect on them. This is hardly unusual when one knows that some of their lecturers are themselves religious fundamentalists and shape their lectures with their religious presuppositions. If the academic institution is not free from the shackles of religious fundamentalism, what happens to those on the streets who do not have the privilege of Western education? Suffice it to say that they are in the majority in Northern Nigeria.

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The relevance for the liberation method of interreligious dialogue is evident from our survey. For a people that is so religious in its orientation to indicate a willingness to subscribe to a programme that is not in line with their religion, but that has the potential to transform their situation, shows only the depth of their desperation for change. Moreover, the desire for interreligious engagement is expressed in the willingness of the respondents to engage in religious activities with those who are not of their religious tradition (even though some commented that the project in question must be in line with their religion), which is far-reaching enough in the face of the polemics that have characterised the relationship between Muslims and Christians in the region.

In the face of serious issues like religion, however, goodwill and desire are not sufficient and always give way to deeply entrenched values. It soon became evident in our survey that the cynicism and pessimism towards politics and political activities that attended the collapse of the state meant that people engage in seeking alternative platforms in the face of chaos. Incidentally, religion provides this platform, as is indicated in the apolitical and even asocial attitudes of our respondents. Their preference was for religious institutions. And since Islam and Christianity provide parallel identities and programmes, the result is increased polarisation between Muslims and Christians. When one takes into consideration the attitudes of the respondents to their scriptures, the teachings of their leaders (which is often divisive) and even their unwillingness to change, one understands why this polarisation is only a matter of course. Consequently, the refusal of Muslims and Christians to acknowledge an epistemological crisis makes the liberation method of dialogue, which is relevant, unrealistic.

Having analysed the data contained in the questionnaires, we shall now turn our attention to the analysis of interviews. All the direct quotations that follow in chapters 5 – 8 are extracted from the interviews conducted in the field. The date of each interview is recorded in Appendix 10.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

This chapter is concerned with the perspectives of my interviewees on the socio-economic situation in Northern Nigeria. Because regionalism has been replaced by federalism, this region is not divorced from Nigeria, and its socio-economic situation is best appreciated within the framework of the Nigerian situation. First, I am concerned with a description of the situation from the perspective of my interviewees. Second, I am concerned about the reason for the state of the economy. And finally, I wanted to get a broad picture of the effects of the situation on the masses. This chapter deals with the first part of the first sub-problem of the dissertation, which examines the relevance of the socio-economic situation for Northern Nigeria. It seeks to establish the existence of poverty and injustice in the region, prerequisites for the liberation method of interreligious dialogue.

I. A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

The interviewees manifest a keen awareness of the socio-economic situation in Nigeria. Some of them interpret the socio-economic indices to mean a deplorable situation, while some of them think otherwise. Professor Attahiru Jega thinks Nigeria's economy is an ailing one and presents it as such:

It is awful, it is terrible, the level of poverty is phenomenal and Nigerians have been pauperised by decades of reckless misrule particularly by authoritarian military rulers so the combined effect of that is the terrible socio-economic situation we now have and whatever indices you use to measure the socio-economic situation you will end up with a terrible

result. Be it in terms of the extent and magnitude of poverty, in terms of the rate of unemployment, in terms of the poor social welfare services that are provided by the state and in terms of the poor state of infrastructure that are provided by the state. So whatever indices you use reveal a really terrible and bad situation.

This assertion by Jega suggests a complete failure of the state in its function, a situation that leaves the citizens completely to their fate and at the mercy of other meaning-defining agencies (apart from the state) like religion and the extended family system.

With the recent transition to a democratic government, there is a general impression that the economy is beginning to grow and specialists even put the growth rate between 3% and 4.1%. Professor Stephen Nkom, who furnished me with these statistics is, however, of the opinion that the so-called growth does not reflect reality and therefore concludes:

My judgement is that the situation has not improved much even if the economic indices seem to be pointing in the positive direction. I have been looking at the indices of poverty and I know that from my assessment, the poverty situation has not really changed. It has been getting progressively worse since 1992. When the study of the period between 1997 to 1999 was conducted it showed that the poverty situation is really bad. Corruption is still widespread and it is robbing the masses of some of the gains that would flow from the kind of growth rate mentioned statistically.

I think that the growth in poverty, which is geometrical, far outpaces the so-called economic growth that is by all indications retrogressive. In any case, the lot of the masses still remains unaltered.

Conversely, Hajia Fatima Kwaku thinks that the situation may not as bad as it is portrayed. Yet compared to the situations in more advanced countries it could be

very depressing. Fr. Marinus Iwuchukwu feels that the socio-economic situation is far better than it used to be in the past and indicates some level of appreciation. Their optimism does not compare in the least to that of Mr. Sunday Salami, a retired civil servant. For a pensioner who has every reason to complain about the socio-economic situation, Mr. Salami gave me a positive perspective:

I think people are just making undue noise about our economic instability because it is still able to absorb the basic requirements of the majority of the population and as far as I am concerned, it is moderate and we don't get people eating crumbs from the dustbins. The average beggar in Nigeria earns more than N100 a day, and a beggar is unemployed. I try as much as possible each day to give out some alms and if the economy were so bad, I will not have enough to spare to help the needy. So I think the economy is moderate and as a pensioner, since the advent of this administration, there was a review of pension rates and I think this is positive and pensioners are happy because of this revision. It is only an indication of a growing economy. I think that those who are really complaining about the economy are looking for things that they will squander but our basic needs have been taken care of by this economy. Specialists always talk about the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and try to compare ours with those of advanced countries, and if the comparison is right, I think the GDP is commensurate with our population.

It is important to note that Mr. Salami is a devoted teacher of positive thinking and runs a counselling centre on the subject. Possibly this has enabled him to adopt a positive perception of the situation. Some of the indices he invokes, like salary increase and the level of pauperisation, as indicators of an improving economy will be challenged later on by some interviewees. My respondents' perception of the socio-economic situation reflects the responses to the survey questionnaire, in the last chapter, on the same issue.

II. ECONOMIC MISMANAGEMENT

The theoretical analysis of the socio-historical context revealed that economic mismanagement is responsible for country's economic predicament. My interviewees express the same position. Nigeria is a country blessed with ample mineral resources. According to Alhaji Tanko Yakassai, "The deposition of minerals in this country is such that each of them if properly exploited is enough to keep the country going for a long time because we have a large deposit of each of them." Fr. Matthew Hassan Kukah, corroborates this view:

...the truth of the matter is that Nigeria has got 'no business with poverty' We really ought not to be living in the kind of the socio-economic conditions characterised by poverty, squalor, illiteracy, lack of housing, lack of public transportation and so on and so forth. These things are things that ought not to be associated with our country. Precisely because of the very rich economic resources we possess.

He maintains that to understand the situation one needs to be reconciled to the nature of the situation that has led to the current state of existence. And this lies in the fact that despite its natural and human resources, Nigeria has been plagued with irresponsible leaders. Hajia Kwaku argues:

The situation could be good but I fear and most Nigerians will agree with me that the situation is depressing because we lack focus and leadership.... Our basic problem is lack of commitment on the part of every Nigerian and this is because of the lack of capable leadership and that is why every system in the country is breaking apart. Our leaders are supposed to serve the people but they forget the people as soon as they assume office. The demands of leadership make it clear that the more you see people clamouring for it the more you deduce that they are not going there to be of service to the people.

This poor leadership provided by democratically elected leaders has resulted in the military meddling with governance, posturing as corrective agents. Unfortunately, these 'benevolent' dictators have little to show for their intervention in the political process of the country, bringing about instability as the country witnesses one coup after another and the continuous interruption of the democratic process.

This instability in government has taken its toll on the socio-economic situation. Alhaji Yakassai contends:

The cumulative effect of this instability is that there was no coherent economic policy and no consistencies in the pursuit of any development programmes and this is the reason why in spite of the enormous human and natural resources endowed to this nation the country is too poor because we are not able to develop properly or articulate economic or development programmes that could be pursued and implemented to the satisfaction of Nigerians. So the present socio-economic situation of Nigeria is to be seen against this background.

Apart from the impact of the instability, what has become increasingly clear to Nigerians is the fact that their leaders are uniformly irresponsible, corrupt and lacking in goodwill even to fashion the desired development programmes. Yet, owing to the prolonged military rule that the country has experienced, military rulers more than civilians are blamed for the socio-economic woes of the country.

Barrister Eucharia Duru takes this posture and blames the 'khaki' boys for the breakdown of social facilities:

This is obvious because the military are not trained for governance, they are trained to defend the territorial integrity of the country but they were in power with their cronies, coup beneficiaries, managing the economy of the country and one would not expect anything better. Nothing was updated. The hydroelectric system has remained the same way it was over 40 years

ago. The same applies to other facilities: the telephone service and basic things like water are all stagnant in the face of a rising population that overstretches the dilapidated amenities. Nothing is done to rehabilitate them or to increase their capacities. The refineries, for example were not prepared for the population explosion that increased the demands made on them, so we have a total breakdown.

It is intriguing to note that civilian governments are seen in better perspective, compared to the military. This assessment is far from realistic when one considers the fact that past civilian administrations managed the country like adventurous pirates who happen upon a stray ship. Of course military rule is an aberration as Fr. Iwuchukwu is quick to point out:

We have had a mutilated system in all senses of the word: politically, economically, and socially. Our backwardness is thanks to the military, which had stuck in power for decades and have been terribly irresponsible to the people and this society. We have experienced decades of decay and so reviving it is not going to be a day's job. Certainly, the present civilian government might have made some impact, they certainly have in some areas of development, but because the destruction and ravaging have been tremendous it will take quite some time to clean up more or less. We are still going through a period of repair and anything under repair cannot be said to be at its best.

No doubt the period of military rule left much to be desired, particularly when one notes the suspension of due process of law and the structures of democracy, whose value Nigerians are only beginning to appreciate after decades of totalitarian regimes. In any case, insensitivity to the needs of the masses has characterised both military and civilian leaders, who are designated as an elitist class apart from the common folk.

The transition to democracy has not put a stop to the massive corruption and greed, with its disturbing consequences for the governance of the country. Professor Emmanuel Olofin contends:

Our own politics is politics of money and people see politics as a business venture instead of an avenue to set things right. That is why you have people struggling to get into political positions by all means and that is why we have a lot of violence and unrest surrounding the preparations for the local government elections. Only recently we heard that there are two parallel houses in Abia State, what is responsible for this? Are they truly civilian rulers that they cannot follow democratic lines in solving their problems, that they have to part ways and have separate meetings? Whose laws will bind the people of the state?

At the heart of these political conflicts is the accumulation of state resources. This is reflected in the contest of strength at the national level between the presidency and the legislative arm of government. Consequently, Barrister Steve Adehi is so disillusioned with the possibility of democracy to salvage the socio-economic situation:

Democracy could have helped but not with the way it is practised in this country. The process of checks and balances is not effective and is rather abused. For instance, up till now the legislative and executive arms are still fighting over the budget, which is six months overdue and that shows you what democracy is all about. Both arms of government have been antagonistic to each other since inception and they allow this antagonism to blind them to the needs of the common man. And this antagonism is not across party lines but it is purely a power play by individuals leading to splinter groups within the same political parties.

Fr. Peter Tanko describes the insensitive accumulative tendency of the elitist class, which is ongoing even in the current democratic dispensation:

... a few people have garnered the resources of the country to themselves either rightly or wrongly and have continued to retain these resources within their own small circle, within their own constituency and have kept the masses of Nigerians out of this circle.... So the situation is such that you find within the different ethnic groups in Nigeria what we may call the elite who pose as the messiahs of these ethnic groups but when they are able to get something from the national cake, they corner it to themselves or their cronies or their immediate families to the exclusion of the majority of those they think they are trying to help.

The exploitation and plunder of state resources by Nigerian leaders for their private use or those of their cronies has drained the state of its resources, leaving many to wallow in abject poverty. This wanton accumulation of state resources for personal benefit is made possible by the rentier economy in which oil and the multinational companies are the major actors. So those in power collect the revenue at source without going through a process that might engineer accountability. Architect Sani Sagab observes:

I think our economy is doing very poorly particularly because of our leaning towards the sole cash product in Nigeria, that is crude oil, to the detriment of our other source of income, that is agriculture. The tendency for us to lean on one product as the source of income to the country has left an undesirable effect on our economy. I always say that the availability of crude oil in Nigeria is not a blessing and anytime that the technical know-how of the world evolves to the extent where petroleum ceases to be the main source of energy then I think we would start real growth in Nigeria.

It is ironic to hear that when oil ceases to be relevant then Nigeria's socio-economic development will commence. This view stems from the fact that the country's possession of oil has stifled productivity. In the words of Fr. Kukah:

We are an agrarian society, 70 or so percent of the Nigerian people live in the rural areas, people have always been farmers but the discovery of oil in 1956 and in commercial quantities in the early 60s and so on now meant that the rule of the military has been characterised by a total and absolute control of oil. So we moved from a diversified economy to a mono-economy in which case other aspects of economic activities - farming, even trading in commercial quantities - began to go down, which is why you now have a situation in which the years of military rule coincided with the complete collapse of Nigerian manufacturing capabilities, its industrial base was completely wiped out because nobody wanted to produce anything. Everybody wanted to be an oil merchant; you go across the streets from Akwa Ibom to Zamfara and everybody is trying to run around the street trying to sell petroleum products in one form or the other. All these have now meant that the young men who are meant to be on the farm are on the main road trying to sell petroleum product because everyone gets the impression that that is the only way you can make money. If you drive from Abuja to Kano I am sure you will probably count not less than fifty or a hundred petrol stations by the right because everybody believes that there is no need for farming.

Lucrative as the oil business may seem, it creates a situation whereby, in the view of Fr. Kukah, the socio-economic power is concentrated at the seat of government, Abuja, with the periphery stripped of any indication of the oil wealth. This lack of equitable distribution of resources breeds injustice, according to Fr. Tanko, even in Northern Nigeria where most of Nigeria's leaders come from:

It is also good to remember that Muslims have ruled this country the longest. At a recent meeting of the Arewa Consultative Forum, the governor of Kaduna State asked the participants the question: 'We have ruled longest but we have remained poorest, we have amassed wealth but our people are still poor, what is wrong?' So even though the Muslims or Northerners have ruled this country for a long time, the region continues to be poor because those who have amassed wealth are using it only within their own circle, only within their family circle. They have not invested in industries, factories, etc., that will make the poor man to benefit, so the struggle continues.

The cumulative effect of this accumulative tendency is the emergence of class division in the region, with a marked distinction in the life-style of the elites and the

masses. The former ascended to their socio-economic status thanks only to their privilege of benefiting directly or indirectly from the government and not as a result of personal enterprise, except in some few cases.

III. EFFECTS OF THE SITUATION ON THE MASSES

The implications of a political economy are felt in Nigeria. Those at the helm of affairs control the country's oil wealth and exploit it for their selfish ends, without any regard for the common good. According to Fr. Joseph Mamman:

For the elites they live well, you see this in the kind of houses they built, the fences they put up to protect what they have and the kind of cars they drive and the way they live their lives. For them, the economy has helped them to get to where they are and they don't want others to get to where they are; that is why they make sure that the poor continue to remain where they are. And the poor of course are the ones who are badly affected because the money is not circulating to them.

The Nigerian political set-up is like a fortress where those who get in cannot come out and those who are outside cannot get in. The consequence of this set-up is that the elites continue to benefit from the system to the exclusion of the ordinary people.

Barrister Duru emphasises the lifestyle of the former:

The rich and powerful who manage the economy have a different experience: their children don't have to steal, they are in the best schools where they pay fees of \$50,000 or they send them abroad to the prestigious schools in Europe and America and they still take their holidays but when we are talking about Nigerians, we have to consider that these people are not up to 10% of Nigerians, they ride the big cars, while 90% of Nigerians live in abject poverty feeding from the bin.

Harold Blackburn describes the kind of education that the poor receive in comparison with the type described above:

The masses have mostly been given the most minimal of education, while the elites give their children the best of education, even abroad. Sometimes the education that the masses receive consists of the 'madrashic' education. This means that they are versed in Arabic instead of English, which is the *lingua franca* of the country.

But even when the children of the poor have the opportunity to attend the same school with those of the rich, the class distinction is glaring. Mrs. Martina Adeboye makes the following observation of St. Louis Secondary School, Kano, a voluntary agency school:

The situation also affects students in the school. I find out that in most cases, especially with our students that those of them that are not from well to do homes come to school at times not fed and there is no way they can be attentive in class and after sometimes when they are not able to cope with the payment of fees, they are told to stay away from school and sometimes they are away for a week or two and there is no way that they can catch up with what the others have learned while they were away. And we also find out that the class distinction is always there. The poor go with the poor and the rich with the rich. Everybody knows where they belong and this affects their relationship with each other despite the teaching of religion that demands equality. Their background makes them to behave that way.

The society is so structured that it is difficult for people to rise above the status they acquire at birth, because it is not organised according to merit but according to one's place in the society. And the fact that Nigeria is organised around a political economy ensures that only those who have political clout are able to better their lot in society. Barrister Ibrahim Dalhatu maintains:

The economy in Nigeria is not a productive economy because the government controls the economy with a strong public sector. The private sector makes little or no contribution. And we are mainly an import economy, exporting only one product, which is oil. So if government does not generate income, everything comes to a standstill. And this is increasingly becoming the case: people are not paid their salaries and contractors are not awarded contracts.

One can only begin to imagine the cumulative effect of this economy on the ordinary people, especially when the government has also failed in its responsibility to cushion such effects by ensuring a smooth distributive system of scarce resources. Councillor Vitalis Onyeze is of the view that the:

Majority of Nigerians are struggling just to have a single meal a day. Even though the government has done much to improve the salary structure of the civil servants, this has no effect on the generality of the population who are not within this bracket. Moreover, the improved salaries exist side by side with high inflation so that the payment of such salaries cannot comfortably cater for the high inflation indicating that the economy is very poor. In 1992, the *Guardian Newspaper* was sold at 30 *Kobo*¹, today it is sold at N70; a measure of *garri* is today N100 and so on.... Unfortunately many of those in the private sector are not able to pay the minimum wage. Some self-employed people are not able to cater for their basic necessities. So a situation (increased salary) where those in the private sector cannot be carried along leaves a lot of problems.

Since government is the main generator of wealth, it naturally follows that it is the main employer of labour. Unfortunately it is able to employ only a tiny fraction of the overall population. So the improvement of workers' welfare impacts only on the lives of the few privileged employed Nigerians. Archbishop Peter Jatau states that:

¹ There are 100 *Kobos* in a *Naira*.

...the rate of unemployment is very high in Northern Nigeria and thousands of our youth are unemployed and this has led to a lot of crises and misbehaviour by the youth but this is only an indication of their desire to be gainfully employed.

He contends that the situation is not helped by the “general lack of investment by rich Nigerians, especially here in the North. These sometimes even hide their money not even in the banks but in holes in their houses unlike their Southern counterparts who are eager to invest their wealth in the society.”

The overall impact of unemployment on the society becomes understandable when one considers that the government has no concrete welfare package for those who are unemployed. Councillor Onyeze observes that these people:

Survive solely on charity. A lot of touts hang around in town, unemployed, and constitute social menaces taking to the streets and to vandalism, destroying people’s property and killing them. All these are the spill over of the poor socio-economic situation in the country.

And the proportion of those not gainfully employed is staggering. Even though statistics are nothing to go by in Nigeria, Fr. Mamman maintains that: “only about 30% of the entire population are employed so the 70% have to fend for themselves.”

These depend mostly on their extended relations and constitute social menaces, as armed robbers or a ready army to be employed at a ridiculously cheap price for violent activities, like interreligious and political conflicts. Fr. Kukah captures this succinctly:

...it is just to say in economic terms that Nigeria finds itself with an exploding population but with almost, as it were, no resources to check that population and channel the energy that is the result of this massive sea of young people. Nigeria has for example not less than 56 universities. How do you manage these young people, when every year each university is turning out not less than a thousand people, which means that the

conservative estimate, minus colleges of education is that you are turning out every year over a hundred thousand graduates? How are you going to accommodate all those, so if you don't address the issue of creating a conducive economic environment, the result is that very competent hands that are supposed to be employed or deployed to the process of reconstructing the state end up not properly handled and you now have these young men running around, they are either fleeing Nigeria, taking onto armed robbery or the result is the unfavourable consequences that we now see in the rise of ethnic militia. So these are some of the consequences that manifest themselves in the society. The result of course is national insecurity.

The plight of university graduates who feel that they are entitled to a better life that befits their academic qualifications can only be imagined.

Alhaji Kulya reminiscences about the "good old days" and points out the immediate effects of unemployment:

The unemployment situation is at its peak. Employment was completely available in the past, in my days as a student completing my education in Cairo, the public service commission posted our application forms to us while still in school and posted us as soon as we came home. But the situation is quite different now and looks beyond repair. The young people are just contributing to our moral decadence and indulging in the use of dangerous drugs; all these are motivated by idleness. When a teenager is idle, he can cause problems to other people and to the society in general.

The situation is not helped by the fact that even those who are employed, apart from being highly underpaid, have no job security. Barrister Duru argues that:

We have constant retrenchment going on because the few industries and banks cannot cope and are not making enough profit to maintain the workforce. Even the government itself is retrenching and so people are retrenched to nothing because their poor salaries while in the service were not enough to enable them to save for lean times. So they simply return to the over-saturated labour market.

Unemployment in Nigeria constitutes a social menace and, lacking a productive industrial base, the country is able to do little or nothing to mitigate the situation.

Another glaring indicator of the collapsed economy and the failure of the state is the poor condition - and sometimes complete lack- of basic infrastructure. The sector that has had the most devastating effect on people is the energy sector because of its significance to the informal economic sector that has continued to sustain the urban poor in Nigeria. Barrister Adehi is of the view that the complete breakdown of infrastructures is a deliberate act of sabotage:

It is just that some people make so much money from dysfunctional situations. So in the case of NEPA (National Electric Power Authority) it is said that the people who trade in electric generators are responsible for its woes but I still believe that people working in NEPA have something to do with the problems at hand. Also one cannot rule out the proponents of privatisation, especially those who want NEPA privatised; perhaps they want us to see the inefficiency of NEPA to make up our minds that it needs to be privatised. And a lot of our leaders are waiting for this opportunity so that they can buy over the government parastatals. They suggest that the inefficiency is the reason for privatisation. The other sectors do not fare better.

The people feel the impact of the failure of infrastructure seriously. Chief Gabriel Musa maintains that: "The hospitals are lacking in drugs, the educational system is in shambles and parents that are able to pay school fees send their children to private schools. In fact everything seems to have ground to a halt." Barrister Duru takes up the impact of the collapse of the energy sector:

In the 21st century, it is unimaginable that some people stay without light for up to 2 or 3 months and when you don't have energy, the economy is dysfunctional. The alternative is that we are running a generator-driven economy so what profit could one make out of such business. You pay for the diesel and the maintenance of the generator set you are using and you cannot produce at a maximum because very few companies are buoyant

enough to avail themselves of generators that can meet their production demands, so that everything is done at the barest minimum. And the private sector is capitalist by orientation but then they barely make enough profit.

To be fair to the democratic government, it has accomplished some projects particularly related to basic amenities such as water and roads. But Professor Nkom contends that:

Generally the state of infrastructure has not improved much in the urban areas even if some improvements can be seen on some urban-rural roads, the basic infrastructure that sustains the lines of production that sustain the urban poor has not experienced any major improvement.

He is definitely referring to problems in the energy sector that have continued to defy solution thanks to sabotage. We shall see the impact of this energy crisis when we come to deal with informal activities in greater detail.

Taking account of the above situation, it follows that poverty is widespread in Nigeria, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Rev. Gabriel A. Ojo, is of the view that:

The average income of a Nigerian is very low compared to what obtains in developed countries. Though we have very few people who are extremely rich a greater percentage live below poverty level and there is a high level of unemployment among university graduates and those who possess higher education, who are supposed to be working and living comfortably.... The church has become a place of refuge for the destitute. In the office I meet several people who cannot satisfy their basic needs and among our members we have a good number of people who cannot afford their house rents because they are not able to extract it from the low income or people who cannot send their children to school or those who are sick and cannot go to the hospital because they cannot afford the bills, the church has to come to the support of all these categories of people. These situations are very common in our society today.

Nigerians are naturally resilient people and are able to put up with tough conditions that could be considered legendary in other places, but it seems the situation has stretched their level of tolerance. Architect Sagab observes:

The deplorable state of the economy impacts significantly on the masses. As you know the economic situation of a human being determines to a large extent his behaviour, opinions and attitudes. Nigerians have been very resilient in trying to put up with things but along the line things have taken a turn for the worse, like when I was in primary school it was a common thing that every household would have milk along with tea but today even the tea itself is gone away from the tables of Nigerians. This example, I have just cited is a very simple example of what could happen to people when the economy is very poor. And it has brought about many attitudinal changes especially in morality.

The present administration has recognised this fact and has put in place a Poverty Alleviation Programme, but Professor Nkom is of the view that the programme has not been able to put a dent in poverty. While Professor Olofin feels this is because it is not reaching the correct people, which might not be due to any ill will from the government, Alhaji Kulya is of the view that the programme is doomed from the start because it is mere political propaganda. Some Nigerians have even contended that the programme is meant to keep the faithful of the ruling party loyal. Whichever way, the programme has so far not delivered the goods.

When one takes into account the situation under which Nigerians are made to live, one wonders how survival is possible. Hajia Kwaku remarks:

People are disillusioned, fed up and desperate, forced and pushed to do things they would not do under normal circumstances. Can you imagine the poor worker not being paid for up to five months, what does he do in such circumstances. Such a person is prone to bribery and even theft and you can't blame him. No one has any regard for any other person because

it is a question of survival by whatever means, whether good or bad without the fear of God.

Professor Nkom refers to the coping strategies adopted by Nigerians as 'informal activities':

Most people have devised all forms of informal activities to survive. Since the 1990s we see most workers taking to part-time agriculture to produce the food they eat and using their income just to subsidise their livelihood: trading of various kinds, small-scale businesses, purchasing of grinding machines, motor cycles for commercial transportation, what we call *kabukabu* or 'going' around this area. Some of these activities are on the negative side: we have seen an increase in prostitution, both open and covert, we have seen an increase in theft, armed robbery and in various kinds of negative activities that at least still manage to produce something for people to live on, so definitely the situation has impacted very negatively on morality in general and crime in particular.

Today, it is easy to take it for granted that Nigerians will indulge in criminal activities but that has not always been the case. Nigerians were highly moral people in the past and cherished values of honesty, trust and industry. Architect Sagab made the painful observation:

In those days when the economy was better, Nigerians had a greater sense of morality than they do today. We never had the issue of 419²; prostitution was not as rampant as it is today and several other moral deviances did not exist. So the condition of our economy today in Nigeria has a very negative impact on us as a society.

Today armed robbery has become commonplace and so sophisticated that the police cannot even handle the robbers in some cases. Professor Olofin maintains that

² Decree 419 was a military decree promulgated to combat fraud and the crime soon took its name from the decree.

there is no limit to what Nigerians can do just to make money. In this regard,

Barrister Duru remarks:

Africans have this strange belief that human body parts can be used for moneymaking purposes, so you have children and adults disappearing everywhere and they are discovered dead and mutilated. Here in Kano many of them have four wives or at least two so when you come into their houses you see nothing less than ten children, some even have 40 so what do you expect. The children are jobless, just like their parents so they take to begging or stealing and the ladies take to prostitution. So we have our girls going to Italy for prostitution, in the case of those coming from the Southwest, while those from the North go to the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia to prostitute.

To rid themselves of their children, some parents send them to the *mallams* (Islamic teachers) and they end up in the *almajiri* system of education where they beg to supplement their sustenance at the hands of the *mallam*. Archbishop Jatau readily points out the overall implication of this system:

The *almajiri* system does not help issues either, there are thousands of them all over the North and across the country, most of the beggars in the South are from the North. If these youths were in school, it will not be easy for evil people to use them for evil ends. It will be difficult to fetch students from school to fulfil the role that the *almajirai* are fulfilling. These children simply wander about. Some of them do not even know where they come from. Their parents have so many of them that they do not even need them around. You must realise that the Islamic system of marrying many wives encourages the procreation of many children that parents simply cannot cater for them. They are told to go in search of a *mallam* who usually sends them out to beg. In the process they fall prey to evil people who give them money and even drug them to fulfil their aims.

The failure of the state, in the face of economic collapse, to cater for the basic needs of its citizens is not without consequences. The first effect is the political apathy and cynicism it creates among the people. I saw the poster of a discredited

politician who was advertising his election campaign for the office of 'President' and I asked the taxi driver who brought me from the airport, when I went home for this fieldwork, what he thought about it. He told me straight away that he was not interested in politics because all the sacrifices he made in the past to make sure the candidates of his choice got into office did not in any way better his lot. Even young educated professionals who should know better are caught up in this cynicism.

Barrister Adehi told me:

I am completely disillusioned when it comes to politics and have never been interested in any political party to the extent of even wanting to read their manifestoes. In fact the only time I voted was in 1999, when I told myself that it is useless to sit on the fence, since one vote could make a difference.

Professor Jega sees this apolitical attitude as the most significant impact of the deplorable socio-economic situation, which has called into question the legitimacy of the state:

The most fundamental negative impact of the situation is in terms of the ways in which it has created apathy and indifference on the part of the ordinary person and it has also pushed many people to become withdrawn from the sphere of the state not only to become indifferent to political happenings but to preoccupy themselves with matters of survival. Coping strategies basically for survival are the preoccupation of the ordinary Nigerian. Which means that once they withdraw from the sphere of the state then they look for an alternative organisational platform. So withdrawal from the state means increasing questioning of the issues of citizenship or even for many people ignorance about what it means to be a citizen. When people cannot identify with their country and relate with their government then obviously they fall back on primordial sentiments and religious organisational platforms as avenues for political expression, for socio-economic engagements, for fraternity and the bonds of unity.

Jega's comment on the withdrawal of the average Nigerians from the state to alternative communities is fast becoming commonplace.

It is apparent that Nigerians have lost faith in what the government can do for them. According to Blackburn:

This accounts for the attraction that the *Shari'a* holds for the masses across the North. What comes across is that everything else, even their elites, has failed them so what they have left is to be steadfast to their tradition. They believe, for example, that the *Shari'a* will force the rich to pay the *Zakat* required for the creation of an egalitarian society.

This increasing faith in the power of religion to deliver the goods is reflected in my conversation with the taxi driver above. He quickly switched the conversation by asking me if I was a Christian. Even though I answered in the affirmative, he was not so sure of the depth of my Christianity and started preaching to me about his newfound denomination. He maintained that since he gave his life to Christ, it has been replete with miracles. The Mercedes Benz, which he was using as a taxi, is only one such miracle. In short, what the government could not do for him, his renewed connection with God has brought about in his life.

The overall impact of the socio-economic situation is devastating on Nigerians in general, but more particularly for those from the North. Mr. Blackburn maintains that:

The socio-economic situation in Northern Nigeria is very bad. The modern industries that provided employment to the population have virtually folded up and the local industries, like leather, trade and agriculture are no longer thriving. The situation is not helped by the fact that the region has missed out on technical education.

We have already taken up the issue of the failure of the Northern elites to invest their money in the industrial sector in the region.

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My interviewees have demonstrated clearly the state of the socio-economic situation in Nigeria, insisting that poverty is the common denominator among the masses of Nigerians, particularly in the North. They were also able to attribute the existence of such poverty, in the midst of plenty, to the gross injustice that characterises the mismanagement of the country's economy. Finally, they present a gruesome picture of the overall impact of the comatose economy on the masses. The issues in this chapter are vital to the relevance of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue, which relates to the first sub-problem of the dissertation. We shall now turn our attention to the impact of the socio-economic situation on religion, another crucial issue to the resolution of the same sub-problem.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPACT OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION ON RELIGION

In this chapter we shall attempt a conclusive resolution of our first sub-problem, which seeks to establish the relevance of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue in Northern Nigeria. We shall begin by looking at the impact of the socio-economic situation on religion, and then investigate the suitability of religion as an instrument of transformation. The last chapter revealed the socio-economic situation in Northern Nigeria. The aim of this chapter is to show that Islam and Christianity are not divorced from the deplorable socio-economic situation and that the two religions have the capacity to transform the situation. The findings of this chapter are vital, because if religion is not capable of transforming the situation, then the liberation method is not be relevant to this context.

I. POSITIVE EFFECTS OF THE SITUATION

One of the positive results of the socio-economic situation in Northern Nigeria is increased religiosity. Even though this is a fact, most of my interviewees make it clear to me that I should not conclude that this religious fervour is merely the side effect of the socio-economic situation, because there are exceptions to the case. According to them, there are people who genuinely practise their religion out of personal convictions. Such people are merely grateful for what God has done in their lives and they feel that they should devote their time to serving him. This exception taken into consideration, it is

typically becoming the case that the increasing religiosity is linked with socio-economic deprivation in the region. According to Councillor Onyeze:

Essentially one cannot know God without a problem existing. The situation has made a lot of people to become very religious and we are even experiencing a reversion to traditional religion. So the situation has led to a population explosion in religious organisations. But the people who go to these churches or mosques do not belong to the leadership position in the country, so their attendance does not affect the policies made at the level of governance. They are only hoping that God being the ultimate will touch the lives of those in authority and bring about a transformation in the situation and also provide their daily bread.

Professor Jega also alludes to this population explosion in religious attendance and even sets it within a particular period:

One of the greatest impacts of the socio-economic situation is the fact that there is a rising spate of religiosity. When people are confronted with phenomenal poverty then they are forced by objective conditions to move closer to God and to pray and to seek for guidance and help more. So there has been a rising spate of religiosity and it is very clear in the Christian religion. Beginning from about 1987 till date there is a phenomenal growth of Pentecostal movements many of which are also clearly profit-oriented. Similarly, in the Islamic religion there has also been a rising spate of many different sorts of religious organisations, which are clearly different in orientation and activism from the traditional pro-establishment organisations such as the JNl, and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs. You now have the Council of '*Ulama*, the brothers' movement, the *Izala* movements and so many of the *Taruqs* are also very active in different organised platforms. So I think one major impact of the socio-economic situation is what I call the rising spate of religiosity, the intensity of religiosity, religious fervour has simply increased.

The impact of the socio-economic situation on religion cannot be overstated. People patronise different religious groups within their faith tradition in the hope that they can find a way out of the oppressive situation.

Commenting on what obtains in Christianity, Professor Nkom argues that people are not merely patronising the churches to get the traditional services that Christianity provides, promising an after-life that attends good conduct. Most churches have standardised their services to meet the socio-economic needs of their clients:

I see two major trends: on the one hand, we see quite a number of religious outfits that are taking advantage of the desperation of the ordinary person so we have seen quite a lot of mushroom churches promising all kinds of escape routes for the ordinary people. In fact my friend calls them spiritual *babalawos*¹ who provide exactly the kind of psychological diversion that traditional spiritualists provided in our traditional societies. So we have seen a major swing in that direction, we have seen many more churches springing up all over the place but literally they are feasting on the desperation and frustration of the ordinary person and I don't think there is any drastic increase in religiosity by way of religious commitment to real Christian ethics.

This indicates that religion is not immune from the social environment in which it finds itself. Granted religion is supposed to be a prophetic phenomenon, but it lives out its mission with marked reference to its context. According to Fr. Kukah:

¹ A traditional medicine man sometimes also referred to as a witchdoctor because of his powers of divination, which goes beyond the mere diagnosis of diseases and prescription of herbs. He is reputed to have the power of accessing the spiritual realm and combating the forces responsible for one's bad state in life.

... the massive poverty now has led to the redefinition of religion. So religion is now really the alternative to security. So God is literally everywhere in Nigeria but there is a distinction between religion and spirituality. What you see in Nigeria is an explosion of what you might call religion. But in terms of the core values of religion, that is people's spiritual attitude, which is different from religion, the fruit of that spirituality is supposed to be seen in love, in obedience to authority, in very cordial and conducive inter-communal relationships, transparency in business, in all kinds of activities. But in Nigeria all those things pale to insignificance. So despite this dubious and rather superfluous expression of religiosity that you find everywhere, it is like you have too many Cains and too few Abels. There is a sense in which religion and the environment around which it is expressed are so intertwined.

Even though Prof. Nkom sees this manifestation of religion as mere psychological diversion, its clients hardly perceive it as such and come to it with great expectations.

Barrister Adehi points to the fact that it is addressing a need in society:

If I am looking for a job, for example, and I cannot get it the next thing I will be looking for is a miracle and where do I get this? There are some modern churches, sometimes called prosperity churches, which provide these services. This has turned a lot of people to religion.

Apparently, religion in the Nigerian context has been shaped by people's response to the socio-economic situation.

Some of my interviewees even wonder if people would be as religious if the situation were not so deplorable. Comparing the situation with what obtains in advanced countries Fr. Mamman remarked:

I don't know whether to call it a blessing or a curse. But some people would say it is a blessing because many people go to Church, turn to their God and try to be religious. So in that sense many see it is as a blessing. But some

people will say it is not a blessing. The impact it has on religion is that many people go to Church. But some people will say that there are some rich people who also go to Church, yes that is true and I agree with them. Some rich people are faithful to their religion. Yet if we are all rich I wonder how many people will still go to Church. Take for example Europe where people are satisfied: not many go to Church or bother about religion. For us in Africa, the Christian boom is as a result of the poverty that is booming.

In fact some of my interviewees, who have been exposed to Europe and America, tell me that they are in a dilemma and are caught between the sufferings that poverty brings and the religiosity it facilitates. Yet, many of them think that it would be preferable for people to remain in poverty if prosperity will bring about irreligiosity.

Not everyone, however, agrees that the movement to the churches and mosques is a widespread phenomenon resulting from the socio-economic situation. Architect Sagab is of the opinion that since suffering has become part and parcel of the life of the ordinary Nigerian, those who are affected by the deplorable situation are those people who have fallen from grace to grass:

Incidentally, the masses in this country don't seem to consider that they are really in difficulty; they envisage everything as an everyday struggle for survival, one in which everybody partakes. Except for those who have experienced a reversal in fortune and such turn to God again and become what the Christians popularly refer to as born again. You also find the Muslims now staying all the time in the mosque praying all the time but once they are out of that difficulty, they turn again to their usual ways. And you find situations where the downfall of some people leads them to prison and there they turn back to God; by the time they come out they claim to be preachers. But a lot of them are not really engaging in religion genuinely but simply as an avenue for self-employment.

I think this does not truly represent the situation because Architect Sagab had alluded in the last chapter to the fact that the situation has gone beyond the resilience of Nigerians, who were used to coping with hardships. Notwithstanding this observation, not every one agrees that the socio-economic situation has an impact on the practice of religion. Alhaji Umar is of the view that religion is something that is deeply entrenched in the hearts of people and cannot be affected by the socio-economic situation. In his view, the environment cannot exempt people from “the whole-hearted compliance with the dictates of their religion.” I believe that this is wishful thinking and that it merely states the ideal; it is clear from the majority of the interviewees that religion is not immune to the socio-economic situation.

What catches the eye is not people’s patronage of religious activities but their intense participation. People make spiritual sacrifices, requiring discipline at the direction of their leaders. When I interviewed Dr. Ojo, he had just returned from a night vigil, which he tells me has become a feature of his church. He told me that people are drawn to these activities as the only alternative:

Since human beings have failed them, God is the last resort. For example, we are having three nights of fasting and prayers and we shall have the same next week. We have churches that organise all-night vigils of prayer almost on a daily basis. The situation has led more people to God or to religious activities because you may find out that some people may still go back, after fasting and prayers, to do things that are not expected of them as Christians but at least they take part in the activities. In Kano here Muslims are imitating the Christians, it will surprise you to know that Muslims are also having night vigils, which I consider a mere imitation.²

² Fasting involves abstaining from food and water for up to 12 hours in the day and the night vigil entails people coming into the church from 10 p.m. and remaining there in worship till 6 a.m. the following day.

The observation that Muslims are also involved in night vigils in the mosques is true³ and also indicates the impact of the social context on Islam.

Any casual observer will notice that the religious temperature in Nigeria is high and does not need exaggeration. In any case, Fr. Iwuchukwu is quick to point out that it is an expression of escapism:

People preach prosperity religion today and I think it provides a window of escape for people who have not been able to make it ordinarily to hope that God is going to give them solutions someday. That their blessing is coming even if it is not something they are getting now or that is within sight. So if they are poor, unemployed, impoverished or suffering from one need or another, their hope is that the God they are serving is going to make them prosper. And if you look at the tags that the Pentecostals put, everyday the hope heightens: "This is my year of prosperity", "This is my year of double blessings", notwithstanding the fact that in the previous years so much of the claims were not achieved but they keep fanning themselves on that tempo.

Observers from the outside like Fr. Iwuchukwu may be able to afford the luxury of holding such views, but those who are involved in these activities see things differently. Mrs. Adeboye, for example, is optimistic about the impact of such activities. She argues that:

... positively, you find out that if you are a committed person, God has made us in such a way that anytime we hear the word of God there is supposed to be a change. I see that in some of our church programmes where people

³ I watched with fascination on the television a group of Muslims participating in a night vigil programme singing and clapping their hands in a mosque at Abuja. I cannot say for certain what tradition of Islam they belonged to because this constitutes an aberration to some orthodox Muslims.

manifestly turn away from the bad ways of life and return things that they had stolen in the past. God can transform the situation by transforming individuals.

In her view, therefore, the people may be turning to religion as a window of escape but their lives are truly transformed in the religious organisations they patronise. Whichever way it is considered, the transformation she alludes to has not yielded dividends in reality, where these same religious people indulge in all forms of irreligious lifestyle. We shall now turn to the contradiction of increased religiosity.

II. NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF THE SITUATION

We have already insinuated that the religious fervour that has attended the deplorable socio-economic situation has not translated into reality because of the contradiction in this coping mechanism. Professor Jega was quick to point out that being religious does not mean that the people even understand their religion deeply enough:

... so what accompanies that religiosity is also the misinterpretation and misrepresentations of both the religion that people adhere to as well as other religions. So many people who are very active in religion do not sufficiently understand their own religion much less the religion of others. Because they are very actively involved then they begin to interpret things in a manner that leaves much to be desired. And related to that is the tendency to begin to apportion blame as to who is responsible for one's own socio-economic condition. I think that has created further problems in terms of the rising spate of conflicts, which is what I will call the third factor in terms of what the socio-economic condition has brought about. So religiosity and religious fervour, increasing misinterpretation and misrepresentation of religious texts and precepts and increasing conflicts because people begin to see one religion

trying to dominate another. These have to be seen within the context of this religiosity.

The overall impact of this misinterpretation of religion is evident in the conflicts it generates and also ensures that the values of religion have little or no impact on society.

Barrister Adehi could not conceal his amazement when he contended:

... to be frank with you, the fact that we have a lot of people turning to religion does not mean that we have fewer vices in our society; in fact that is the most amazing thing about this turn around. We have so many people in the church; today as well as so many churches, even in Kano where people talk about the oppression of Christians you still have streets where every single house has a church next to it or a prayer group. But you find out that even with this, we still have more crimes in the society: we have more armed robbers and 419 (fraudsters) than we use to have. In courts we are witnessing an escalation of criminal cases. That is one aspect that I have not been able to reconcile.

Professor Nkom notes that people are still able to maintain many vices irrespective of their seeming religious commitment:

People are accepting a compromise position of an apparent religiosity but at the same time allowing for the tendency for vices. So the ways of life that are obviously contradictory to the religions are still living side by side even within people that appear very religious. It is in this context that I also see corruption because it has been legitimised by many people who engage in it without significantly being pricked by their conscience. It has literally become accepted and people do not see it as contradictory to their religious faith.

And this contradiction results from the adaptation of religion to fit the needs of the people who have to deal with unjust structures in their everyday lives.

Fr. Iwuchukwu is fascinated by the innovation of the religions in this quagmire. In fact, some of the contemporary doctrines and practices could be considered aberrations of religion. He contends:

... based on the theology that God is going to see them (the faithful) through, it has been more or less coined, especially from a Christian perspective, to what I hear from the roadside Islamic preachers that if you get away with stealing and you are successful then it is *Allah* who gave you more or less and you discover that we are breeding a new generation of Christians who go about corruption and crime with impunity in their conscience; they feel that since the Lord says this is their year of double blessing then it has to come one way or the other and if it comes through the back door, it is acceptable; all they need do is to pay their tithes or give God thanks. Some of these new-breed Pentecostal churches have found ways of twisting the message to suit their material aspirations. So for them if you can get away with murder, it is your blessing from the Lord in so far as you come to pay your tithes or give thanks, God accepts, irrespective of where you get it from; what matters is that you have it. I see, funny enough that religion, Islam or Christianity, has responded to this situation in a very odd way.

But one can understand the desperation of the religions to standardise their message only in when faced by the harsh reality of everyday existence. Consequently, religion like any other dimension in society becomes a pawn in the struggle to make ends meet.

According to Archbishop Jatau the situation:

... makes people experiment with various means to meet the basic necessities of life, even criminal means. That affects the spiritual life of the citizenry. The economy does not allow for healthy relationship with God and their neighbours, especially with regard to charity, which is the golden demand of

religion. But people still have trust in God. Unfortunately this trust is being manipulated by prosperity preachers. The advertisements inviting people to such churches are very clear in their tones, they are meant for problem solving. People strive to do anything they are told by these preachers believing that their problems will be ameliorated. Some of these preachers dabble with traditional or even demonic means in an effort to display their spiritual powers. Their aim is purely commercial; some even threaten their members with dire consequences should they stop attending. Some Nigerian films portray the deceit involved in the ministry of these prosperity pastors.

People are so interested in getting out of the socio-economic mess in which they find themselves that the ethical dimension of religion is not a priority for them.

Architect Sagab comments on how the Islamic fold is equally affected and some

Islamic religious leaders are caught in the web of religious corruption:

Unfortunately even people who are supposed to be the ones to tell people about religion, like the religious leaders, have been affected by the economy to the extent that sometimes what they divulge to the people deviates from the norms. This is simply because they have turned religion into an avenue to make money. You have so many *mallams* who have become consulting *mallams* today; rather than teach religious morals, they are waiting for people to come and get help for their problems and mostly the problems have to do with getting away from fulfilling their obligations to other people: like paying up a debt or even to be enabled to defraud someone.

Fr. Tanko is quick to point out that even during worship God may be far from the minds of some worshippers:

... people may be moving in huge numbers into churches and mosques, but the level of corruption and crime is alarming and increasing. It makes one wonder if their attendance has any bearing on the society. The criminals are either professed Muslims or Christians. So the large number of the congregation should not deceive us. Stealing takes place even within the places of worship.

In a situation where survival has become the rule of the game, the religions have to place much emphasis on how they can enhance success in this life. The beatitudes are reprioritised with the third beatitude: "Blessed are the meek, they shall inherit the earth" replacing the first: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven." People want to feel the impact of religion in this life and this has greatly shaped the theology of prosperity that is fast becoming mainstream in Christianity and the desire to effect structural changes that is now becoming the concern of Islam.

III. RELIGION AND TRANSFORMATION

Analysing the observations made above, one wonders if religion is potent enough to bring about a transformation of the socio-economic situation that has so bastardised it. As aforementioned, some of my interviewees are vehement that the abuse of religion should not be confused with the genuine practice of religion strongly maintain that religion can still provide the ingredients necessary for societal transformation. Archbishop Jatau holds this view:

Certainly religion can transform the situation. First of all a convinced and committed Christian and Muslim will comply to the tenets of their religion in the dos and the don'ts and this will make the society a better place. People engage in social misbehaviours that go counter to the demands of society but this is an indication of their lack of commitment to their religion. Take the golden rule, for example, people are told not to do to others what they would not want done to themselves. Hence, a convinced Christian and Muslim will be aided to avoid anti-social activities: armed robbery and stealing will be reduced, if not eliminated entirely. Compliance to the golden rule will bring about societal well-being.

The abuse of religion does not blur its capacity as a treasure house that contains all the virtues required for societal transformation. Alhaji Yakassai, who spells out aspects of religion that could transform the greed and corruption that has come to characterise the situation, also reasons that:

Islam teaches people to be honest and to live with each other in honesty and mutual interest and they should not encroach on the wealth of another person. They should respect the wish of God and they should, in the pursuit of serving their Almighty, ensure that they do not cheat their fellow human beings. It discourages people from being parasites or being idle. If we follow the teachings of Islam religiously, and the same thing with Christianity, then religion will assist in improving the quality of life of all Nigerians.

Notwithstanding its bastardisation by its adherents, religion has a role to play in social transformation. Using the parable of the rich man in the Bible, who built barns for himself but did not live to enjoy what he stored, Professor Olofin views religion as the proper antidote for the greed and materialism that has plagued Nigeria:

If we remember this then we realise that it is better to save in heaven than to save on earth. If people learn such lessons then religion can transform the society. In that case, we would not estimate riches as more important than our God or our salvation. That is the only way that religion can help. If we really follow the injunctions of our scriptures that constantly remind us that it is better to save in heaven than to grasp the world because when we die we take nothing with us, we take only our souls, then there is no way that religion cannot transform the situation.

We saw that greed and private accumulation of public resources are the bane of Nigeria's problems. It follows, therefore, that the lessons against materialism that religion offers could mitigate such tendencies.

In fact, Alhaji Umar is of the opinion that religion is the only instrument that can bring about social transformation bearing in mind the place that it holds in the lives of Nigerians, but he is quick to point out the level of ignorance of religion among the people:

I think it can because our main disease is corruption and every religion forbids it. In the Holy *Qur'an* it is said that anybody who practises it will end in hell, it is strictly forbidden in Islam, yet it is increasing. And this is irrespective of whether our leaders are Muslims or Christians and if religion does not stop you from being corrupt there is nothing that will stop you. So with the fear of God in obeying the teachings of the religions corruption can be minimised. And the fear of God is something personal, the improvement of the individual is his sole responsibility. But also the lack of sufficient knowledge in the religion contributes a lot to our problems. People are knowledgeable in almost everything but religion....

James Movel affirms the function of religion in this respect, but in a manner that suggests that religious organisations should take over the functions of the state:

Yes religion can transform the situation. But religious leaders have not been able to take their responsibility seriously. Our faith is holistic in its approach, and deals with the spiritual and material dimensions of human beings. It seems that the churches are lacking in the provision of the material needs for the people. Initially the church embarked on projects like education with the intention of enlightening people so that they can take their destiny into their hands. But the church has failed in recent times in the area of resource mobilisation, acquisition and consolidation. Religion can have a positive influence in emancipating the people socio-economically. But some religious leaders have misinterpreted the scriptures by emphasising the need for poverty as a condition for piety, which is required for salvation. Some of these leaders manipulate their adherents and keep them in the dark fearing that if they acquire knowledge, they may demand for certain rights that may upset the status quo. So they keep them from acquiring Western education.

The call for the religious organisations to take over the social functions of the state could have arisen from disenchantment with the failure of the political leaders to act, under the influence of the values of their religion while in office, thereby failing to liberate the people. Councillor Onyeze was quick to point this out:

Every religion basically teaches honesty, charity and a lot of virtues and morality so, to a large extent, religion can influence the standard of the society. Given that devout Muslims and Christians influenced by these virtues will place themselves at the service of the common good without making any discrimination along ethnic or religious lines. Also that they do not indulge in immorality. If such people are placed at the leadership position of the country, things are bound to transform.... That is why I advocate that at all levels people should be taught the norms of their religion. If people are grounded in the teaching of their religion and they take up leadership positions, they are bound to affect the society for the good. Majority of our leaders today see governance as a source of self-enrichment and insist that religion should be separated from politics. They themselves are not grounded and do not feel morally bound in the discharge of their duty. No religion encourages immorality. But most of these leaders are nominally religious and do not feel committed to the common good that religion requires.

From the above observation, we are left with the impression that religion can only transform the situation indirectly, mainly through the goodwill of political leaders who act under its influence.

This is the position also taken by Professor Nkom who insists that liberation depends on committed leadership:

I don't see how religion *per se* would transform the situation. If we are able to get a committed leadership that has a sense of direction and a vision and a mission trying to use certain elements of religious ethics and morality to try to push society in the right direction, then I can see religion as a very useful

instrument. In other words, you have to have a leadership that is able to utilise religious ethics, attitudes and values to build a national agenda and a specific vision for society. In that respect it is possible to harvest and take advantage of values across the religious spectrum. These can be used really to mobilise and transform people in a particular direction. But on its own, except acting as an instrument in the hands of the vanguard group to transform society, it is not able to transform society. That is the way I have always seen it, partly influenced by my Marxist orientation to religion.

The Marxist disillusionment with religion is obvious in his statement. Yet people like Fr.

Kukah demonstrate that religion has been instrumental in some historical revolutions:

And I think that if you look at the situation in Poland and in the Philippines, people demonstrated, the Holy Father demonstrated very clearly that this is what religion really is. Karl Marx talked about it being the opium of the people but religion then became the basis for overthrowing the revolution of Karl Marx because that was what happened from Poland right across Eastern Europe. So in 1979 and beyond from Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution in Iran people then began to see religion differently. So, yes religion has the capacity to be redemptive but again if you look at what is going on in the Middle East, in Egypt, Algeria and other countries where in the name of religion all kinds of inhuman actions are being undertaken that are literally acts of criminality then that shows you the other side and the extent to which it is possible for people with a dubious agenda to manipulate the minds of people using religion as a portent weapon for the destruction of society. But as I said it is really about working the fine balance between religion, social responsibility, political obligation and so on.

So if religion is not able to bring about the desired transformation it is not due to its sterile nature, as the Marxists would make us believe, but the failure of religious leaders to exploit its prophetic dimension. Chief Musa captures this adequately and argues:

In a way it depends on the spiritual leaders. If they are honest there must be some changes but our Muslim brothers are not prepared to be honest but so also with the Christians, especially when you consider that some Pentecostal

churches have turned religion into a financial institution instead of a source of communion with God. True religion implies being faithful, honest, sincere and helpful to one's neighbours. But all they preach is money. So it is difficult for religion as it is practised at the moment to transform the situation. Because even those who are practising religion are doing so for personal reasons, mainly out of frustration seeing God as their last alternative. You find that only a few of those who are fairly financially OK bother about churches and mosques. The only way for the situation to be transformed is for our leaders to be honest and to have the concern of the masses at heart and not to go about accumulating money for themselves, money that even generations of children after them cannot exhaust while people are dying of hunger and disease.

The disillusionment with religious leaders could not be more clearly spelled out, if hope is reposed on politicians who have since constituted themselves as canker worms that gnaw away at the entrails of the country.

Architect Sagab thinks that the religious leaders are themselves influenced by the popular opinion of their followers, and that is why they are forced to standardise their message instead of preaching on issues that could relate to societal transformation. He manifests his distaste for the ignorance of people with regard to religion, maintaining that many simply go through the motions. Unfortunately, proper religious education is not possible according to him because:

... the preaching that is popular is that inspiring people to hate other religions. If we can all objectively try to understand that we are all human beings and that God created all of us and that he gave us the right to decide the religion of our choice, we should not abhor another person because he chooses another religion but we should see the other just as a human being and treat him as such and we should eschew all antagonism, things will be better. If objective preaching becomes the order of the day, then I think we will get transformed. But unfortunately, this will not be popular because once you begin to preach such, you will find out that even people in your religion will begin to think

that you are trying to divert to the other religion, that is why you are taking that approach.

Religion, thus divested of its prophetic role, can hardly play any significant role in national development.

Hajia Kwaku goes a step further and states that there are certain bad practices that are nurtured by religion itself and, according to her, religion may sometimes require transformation in order to be relevant as an instrument of social change:

I know there are certain bad cultures that are motivated by religion and some people feel very strongly and dogmatic about them but I think religion was passed down to us thousands of years ago and no one alive was present when the Bible or the *Qur'an* was written or when the commandments were given. It is what has been passed down to us that we are now adhering to. But things have changed, and granted there are certain fundamentals of religion that are unchangeable but there are certain things that we need to change to move with the times. I am not saying that because of inconvenience the five times prayers should be changed since the Muslim does not have time. I will not subscribe to that. But there are certain things that must be changed because times have changed. In the olden days people walked on foot to Mecca for pilgrimage but now you fly over in a few hours. Those who are learned in the religion should look at the situation and where it is necessary change it a little bit, in line with the changes.

We shall see later that not everyone shares this view and many would rather subscribe to the fact that such practices are nurtured by a misinterpretation of religion rather than religion itself, the position that Professor Jega takes above.

Some, however, express an ambivalent opinion on the matter, which could result from their efforts at marrying the ideal with reality, and also their reluctance to dismiss religion, outright, as a potent force for change. Fr. Iwuchukwu expresses this hesitation:

Yes and no. Yes if we truly allow religion and the search for God to be the primary focus. In fact it is difficult to use the word religion because I see it as a political outfit for social identity, if deep relationship with God which religion should encourage is the drive for religion then our society will certainly transform. But no because the common trend is just to identify with religion as part of one's bargaining power, you go to an office to look for a job and you see the person with a cross or a scapular and you tell him that you are also a Catholic, and so he gives you an edge over the other people if they are not Catholics. If religion is only conceived from the aspect of taking care of people's material needs and giving succour in the midst of afflictions and difficulties then I am afraid to say that it will not attain its goal. And I feel some kind of discomfort with the brand of religion we are spreading in Nigeria and virtually all of Africa. Religion is abused and exploited because people's use of religion is for different reasons.

Some interviewees, however, dismiss the ability of religion to transform the situation opting rather for other sources of transformation. Mr. Blackburn does not subscribe to the view that religion can effect social change. Taking up the issue of the recent implementation of *Shari'a* he argues that:

Shari'a law has always been in existence since colonial times. The only limit placed on it at the time is to ensure that it was not grossly applied, as is the case with amputation or stoning to death. But otherwise, the Alkali courts have always existed side by side with British courts. What is novel is the emphasis on the criminal aspect of the *Shari'a*. And as things go, the implementation is very selective and leaves out the social dimension of the *Shari'a*, which is capable of such a transformation. The situation as it is would not last because the masses may soon turn against the elites who are grossly ignoring the dictates of the Islamic law.

He maintains that only proper education can transform the situation. In so far as people continue to be tradition-bound, he further asserts, the situation will remain unchanged. Living in a globalised world, people must broaden their horizon, he concludes. Barrister Duru shares his opinion:

With the way things are now, it is difficult for religion to transform the socio-economic situation. It is really difficult because religion has to do with values. Generally we say that both the Islamic religion and the Christian religion are saying the same thing. But here, a bulk of the people are illiterate, I think what they need is proper education. A proper education and civilisation will enable them to reason, and live like human beings. After all those who indulge in violence, looting and killing have read the *Qur'an* five times and dropped it.⁴ Some of those fuelling the Christian side are pastors telling people that they are soldiers for Christ. But Christ never told anyone to kill nor to destroy. As a matter of fact, no one has the right to destroy life. So it takes an educated person, who is exposed to different life situations to eschew violence. I think what Nigerians need is education and that is why I commend the universal basic education programme that the government has initiated, all Nigerians need is enlightenment.

Alhaji Dalhatu also subscribes to other means of transformation because according to him there is a lot of mutual distrust with regard to religion in Nigeria:

Only money can transform the situation. If the government can generate employment and bring down the tide of inflation, things can turn around. I am not saying religion cannot contribute to the transformation of the society but the problem is that there is so much mutual distrust of religion in Nigeria. This is where education can come to the rescue to help make people more objective and this must go hand in hand with exposure to be effective.

Suffice it to say that the proponents of education and exposure as the only way forward miss the mark. In a discussion, after the interview with him, Architect Sagab maintained that it is not only those who travel to Europe that are exposed. The Arab world and civilisation offers an equal exposure. I think there is sometimes the arrogant assumption that civilisation and exposure are limited to the encounter with the Western world. This is an assumption that easily wounds the pride of Muslims.

⁴ This refers to the celebration that normally accompanies the completion of the course in *Qur'anic* recitation.

This point taken into consideration, one also has to note that most of those who spearhead the religious conflicts are not always illiterate; some of them have been exposed to Western education and were even educated overseas. As far as I can see, this has not made a difference to the way they appreciate other religions. I think that context sometimes shapes the attitude and behaviour of people the level of their education and exposure.

The consensus that seems to emerge from my interviewees is that religion, properly practiced, more than any of the other factors mentioned, can inspire change. Yet Alhaji Dalhattu states a crucial modifier of the ability of religion to fulfil this role in his comment above: the mutual distrust of the religions. Professor Jega captures this with his routine but deliberate question: "Which religion?" He argues that a religion can bring massive transformation to those who profess it, but it cannot affect those who are not its adherents:

Religions have transformed societies in history so it can. But the question is which society, and it is difficult to answer this question. Certainly religion has transformed even plural societies but whether religion can help transform a complex plural and religiously divided society such as Nigeria is something that is difficult to say. Because the question that comes to mind when one examines the role of religion in the transformation of the society is: which religion? So that is where the difficulty arises. It has transformed lives in history and even within smaller local contexts it changes life and provides meaning for many people. In Zaria, for example, the brothers' movement have done a lot to transform the lives of the local people. They have their own community schools, hospitals and the movement has transformed their lives but in what direction? And this is a different matter. But in terms of changing peoples' lives, they have withdrawn from the state and many of them don't see the Nigerian state as something they identify with. Nigeria is a secular state and if it is a secular state, it is not for them, they would rather fight and overthrow it. And therefore they concentrate their energies and efforts in terms of creating an alternative platform for themselves and in that

sense it has transformed their lives. Many Pentecostal born again have also withdrawn from many worldly affairs and this has transformed their lives. In that sense, religion can transform individuals and in that sense it can transform society. But when you are talking about the holistic transformation of Nigeria as a society, the question becomes: which religion? And I can't answer it I think.

Both Islam and Christianity have demonstrated their ability to bring about transformation, but only within their own fold, since they seem to have no influence on the followers of other faiths.

The complexity of the Nigerian situation is better appreciated when one reads the remarks of Dr. Ojo:

It will depend on your definition of religion. For me, it is Christ that can transform the situation. 15 years ago an author commented that the level of the penetration of Christianity in Africa is commendable but the impact that the religion has had on the society is still subject to question. Here in Sabon Gari, Kano, there is no block you will go to that you will not find a church, and I remember the governor once saying that Abia state, which is a Christian state, does not have as many churches as Kano state, a Muslim state. But if we use the term Christians to mean those who actually allow their lives to be controlled by Christ, then I will say yes, Christians are the only hope, the Church of God. I wouldn't want to comment on the contributions that Islam can make in transforming the situation because the hope of Nigeria is the Church, if the Church fails then we have failed woefully; that is why I prefer to say that only Christ can change the nation.

This expresses the complexity involved in the Nigerian situation, because Muslims will also hold the same position in their "*Shari'a* Only" slogan. This reveals the polarisation of the liberation programmes inspired by Islam and Christianity in Northern Nigeria.

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This chapter set out to establish the relationship between the socio-economic situation and religion. It is obvious that increased religiosity, despite the modifiers expressed, springs from the deplorable socio-economic situation. Yet the fact that patronage of religious organisations does not amount to anything in reality indicates a standardisation of religion to fit the socio-economic situation. This led us to explore the capacity of religion to be an instrument for transformation. My interviewees are divided on this issue but what comes across, even in their disparate positions, is the fact that religion, properly practiced, has the capacity to transform the socio-economic situation.

I have established, in the previous chapter, that Northern Nigeria is marked by injustice and poverty. The fact that Islam and Christianity are not divorced from these issues but have shown enormous ability to accommodate themselves so as to provide meaning for their adherents, goes to show that they are relevant as social actors. Consequently, our interview data in this chapter and the subsequent one demonstrate that the liberation method of interreligious dialogue is relevant to Northern Nigeria. Yet one of the vital modifiers in the positions expressed by our interviewees is the mutual exclusivity of Islam and Christianity, which could prove an obstacle to the possibility of fashioning a common programme of liberation. In the next chapter, we shall look at the cause of Muslim-Christian conflicts to see if the dynamics involved in them may render the liberation method of interreligious dialogue, which is relevant to the region, impracticable.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CAUSE OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN CONFLICTS

Our second sub-problem is to investigate the cause of Muslim-Christian conflicts in Northern Nigeria. The purpose of this investigation is to reveal the foundations of the mutual exclusivity that the adherents of these religions have for each other in the region. Even though some people maintain that 'religious conflict' in the region result from non-religious factors, I would pay attention to both factors in my analysis. Resolving this sub-problem is necessary because, as we saw in the previous chapter, Islam and Christianity both accommodate themselves to the situation in Northern Nigeria to remain relevant to their adherents. The question that quickly comes to mind is: to what extent are these religions shaped by their context? The position of my respondents with respect to the dynamics imbued in Muslim-Christian conflicts would go a long way to answer this question.

I. NON-RELIGIOUS FACTORS

Some of my respondents are of the opinion that there is nothing religious about Muslim-Christian conflicts in Northern Nigeria, and hold rather that they are generated as a consequence of the intermingling of political, ethnic and socio-economic factors.

According to Archbishop Jatau:

The Muslims always begin the conflicts, especially in Kaduna State, except in a few cases. It is not motivated by the love of their religion but it is political more than religious and in some cases tribal, indicated in the case of the Hausa-Fulani and non Hausa-Fulani groups. It is political because some people believe that the conflicts are strategies aimed at distracting people from noticing the dirty work that the politicians embark on. The genesis of this trend could be traced to the Babangida administration during which we

had the beginning of these crises. People want to stick to political power by putting Muslims and Christians at each other's throats.... There is nothing religious about these crises as they are more of a political nature and a means employed by mischief-makers to fulfil their selfish interests.

Without doubt, a Muslim could also argue that Christians are often the aggressors and also find reasons to back this conclusion. Dr. Ahmad's view is typical of this position:

My personal opinion, and that of many others, is that the politicisation of CAN ushered in violence in Northern Nigeria. Because if you observe, you will find out that CAN is predominantly Northern. When it started it was a pure religious organisation, organising churches on how to go about their affairs, but CAN is now almost a political party with very minimal religious function. And some of its leaders feel that the only way they can prevent Muslim domination is by inciting Christians to violence. And this incitement is done in such a way that it results in violence. So unless we decide to change our handling of sensitive religious issues and not mix religion with politics directly things will remain the same.

He also argues that the conflicts result from the political manipulation of religion, but blames the Christians for being the aggressive party.

Fr. Tanko is of the view that the conflicts result from some structural injustice prevalent in Northern Nigeria since colonial times and also socio-economic factors. He further maintains that religious doctrines are far from the minds of those who go out to fight during religious conflicts:

The conflicts have been largely over resources. We have scarce resources. Also since the colonial masters came to Northern Nigeria they gave the impression that the North is largely Muslim and that Muslims were more in population and that lie is still being used today in the sharing of the national cake. In some states where you have more population, only one person is representing it, where you have less population, like in some of the Muslim-Hausa local governments you find two or more people representing them. So there are structures of injustice on the ground that do not make for a level playing ground politically and naturally this leads to agitation. People feel marginalized and therefore they react. The struggle over scarce resources,

power, and values all constitutes sources of Muslim-Christian conflicts. It is also good to remember that Muslims have ruled this country the longest.... It is not religion *per se* that constitutes the cause of the crises but the scarce resources. Those who go out to fight know little or nothing about the basics of their faith; it is not over clashing doctrines that people fight. It is just that when the situation explodes, it acquires religious colouring, with Muslims and Christians taking different sides.

Fr. Kukah demonstrates this view graphically:

What people are quarrelling about...has nothing to do with religious differences. If you ask the Muslims or the Christians or whatever you call them what they are fighting about, nobody will tell you that they are fighting because your time of prayer coincided with our own time for prayer that is why we are not happy. When they start talking about this crisis and you begin to ask people what they are quarrelling about, they tell you that they gave them chief and they didn't give us chief. They gave them two senate seats, they only gave us one, every time you hear these crises people are comparing their privileges from the state but that is because they perceive that the state is not being just.

He also asserts that this close identification with religion, apart from blurring the real causes of conflicts, also facilitates the failure to accept personal responsibility for misdeeds in society, which could also constitute a source of conflict:

... the point I am making is that if you don't provide an equitable platform, people will define their social conditions by using different mechanisms, which may be outside your control. So a man may be inefficient but he may tell you: "I lost my job because I am a Christian." He may be a thief but if you don't have a way of dealing with these things clearly, he may say that: "It is not because I am a thief or anything it is just that this man doesn't just like Muslims, that is why." And these ideas begin to gestate and this is how we ended up with this confusion in Nigeria, everything that happens to you, happens to you because you are a Christian or a Muslim and I normally ask the question when will anything happen to Nigerians as Nigerians because people are dying as Christians and dying as Muslims but as it is a Nigerian has never died in any crisis in Nigeria only Christians and Muslims are dying. Yet how do you know from a dead body that has no clothes on that he is a Muslim or a Christian?

The issues raised by Fr. Kukah just go to show the level of identification of the people with their religion, to the detriment of citizenship within the state, for reasons we have alluded to in our study of Northern Nigeria.

Speaking of Kaduna State, James Kabuk also situates the conflicts in structural injustice, which he traces to the colonial policy of indirect rule:

Disharmony is a long-term issue. Some people in the state, particularly from the Middle Belt were independent people. But with the coming of colonialism, emirs and traditional rulers who were Muslims were imposed on them as overlords. This enhanced a lot of injustices in the past and people are now calling for self-determination. But the former masters do not want this kind of independence. Those seeking for this self-determination are non-Muslims. They are Christians or traditional worshippers. The Muslim feels that Islam is all-embracing so anybody who does what is contrary is seen as a deviant and this leads to a high level of intolerance. For Muslims, the society should be guided by Islamic injunction, implying that people in the state must behave in accordance with the tenets of Islam. This is utterly impossible in a state like Kaduna that is multi-religious.

It is not only the non-Muslims who blame colonialism for the state of the situation, Muslims also have a negative perception of the system that Christians claim has favoured them. It is therefore not surprising that Ustas Mohammed Ashafa traces the roots of Muslim-Christian conflicts to colonialism. According to him the interruption of Islamic civilisation in Northern Nigeria and the entrenchment of Western civilisation, which is at odds with the cultural norms of Islam and has left a lasting impact on the region:

Before the advent of colonialism these groups co-existed peacefully. Of course there were minor issues like slavery but there was no compulsion for people to become Muslims. But after the colonial masters left there was incitement within the various groups. The non-Muslims were led by the Westerners to believe that they were being subdued by the far North and therefore, they were their enemies. But they failed to remember that it was the colonial masters who fashioned this system of subjugation. The identification of the now Christian Middle Belt with Western Christianity led to their identification by the Muslims as their enemies. It is the case of the friends of our enemies becoming our enemies. So there is no trust between

the two communities. It is very apparent even in the support given to international events: Christians are sympathetic to the West and Muslims to the Middle East because of the cultural affiliation of the two communities.

When I took Harold Blackburn, a former colonial officer, to task on the colonial antecedents of these conflicts he told me that it is easy to judge the past from the present and hold colonialism responsible for all the woes, which is a wrong approach to life. He maintained that:

The whole world goes through a process of development, so that what was considered correct in the past is considered incorrect today. The British administrators did their best in the situation they found themselves and retired without enriching themselves in any way. With the benefit of hindsight, British colonial policy will score above average. As with every other situation, colonialism is blamed for the problems of the colonies but it is decades since independence, so such a debate is not tenable. The truth of the situation is that African leaders have been substandard and have failed their people. Every other thing considered it is pertinent to note that the foundation of such crises is tribal and not religious. The latter only provides the required platform for the ethnic groups. Many riots begin as ethnic for days before metamorphosing into religious ones.

Councillor Onyeze goes along with Mr. Blackburn's assumption in reiterating the ethnic basis of the conflicts:

Essentially it is ethnicity but sometimes it is branded as religious. Most conflicts are as a result of longstanding grievances that are not religious. By the way some families have members who are adherents of both Christianity and Islam and they co-exist without difficulties. Ethnicity is what bothers people here in the North, though in the process the crises take religious colouring. Many of the perpetrators of the crises act out of ignorance of their religions because religion transcends ethnicity.

Commenting on Muslim-Christian conflicts in Plateau State, Fr. Cletus Gotan also emphasised on the ethnic factor, underlying the seemingly religious conflict:

I have always refuted the idea that the conflict was religious; it was purely ethnic. But in Northern Nigeria, ethnicity is always tied to religion. Majority of the tribes here who are non-Muslims are basically Christians, whereas those who are Muslims are basically Hausas. So you can see that when there is any quarrel between let say the Birom man and the Hausa man both look into their religion for support. So something that begins as a tribal misunderstanding ends up with a religious colouring.

Mr. Rodzin Dimka states that different dynamics may be at work in the manifestation of the conflicts elsewhere, but the one in Plateau State was purely ethnic in nature. He explains:

The crisis in Jos of September was purely ethnic in nature. Unfortunately, due to the incidental divide of the Birom and the Hausa-Fulani into Christians and Muslims, respectively, it assured a religious undertone. There has been a lot of political agitation in the past between these two ethnic groups, especially with respect to Jos-North Local Government. The Hausa-Fulani claim that they settled in Jos-Central, which happens to be the most commercial area in Jos, for over a hundred years but they failed to make a distinction between settling and coming into a virgin territory. The native insists that they only gave them the place to settle and not as a permanent residence. This pent up tension between the two groups finally exploded in the wake of two unrelated events: a girl who passed by the Muslim praying ground and was rude to them, and the appointment of a Hausa-Fulani as the Poverty Alleviation Programme Chairman for Jos-North Local Government area. The natives protested on the guise that he was not one of the initial nominees for the job. The Hausa-Fulani threatened bloodshed if he was removed from the list. This protest eventually escalated into the September mayhem.

Plateau State is one of the few states in the North where Muslims are in the minority but where they continue to assert their right to participate in political issues; the same rights are denied non-Muslims in those states where Muslims constitute the majority. Ethnicity might have served as the platform for the conflict but at the end of the day those who do not belong to the ethnic groups involved in the conflict were also attacked in Plateau State on the basis of their religious identity, like the Ibos and Yoruba. More so, the

poverty alleviation programme, which sparked the conflict, has a tremendous socio-economic import in the estimation of the people.

Rev. James Movel sees the conflicts as resulting from political interference by the military in the governance of Nigeria and the culture of violence this has precipitated. Since people could not agitate according to civil norms under dictatorial regimes, violence became the norm in redressing socio-economic issues:

The conflicts also have a political overtone and this is not helped by the fact that Nigeria has been under military regime for so long and most of these rulers show favours to those from their area and those who felt marginalized, in their quest to even-up, usually resort to violence at the slightest provocation. So in some sense, these conflicts could be seen to be resource-based as people strive to make sense of who controls the country's resources, since those at the helm of affairs are only interested in bettering the lot of their people. The injustice encourages this selfishness and prevents the sharing of scarce resources for the common good.

The militarisation of Nigeria has had a significant impact on the way people approach conflicting issues. Confrontation is often preferred to dialogue; it is most times a survival of the fittest.

Alhaji Isah Kufena situates the cause of the conflicts in the attitudes of the elites from both the Muslim and Christian sides of the divide, who engineer the conflicts by taking advantage of the economic deprivation of their people:

Some people think that they are now enlightened and have accumulated enough resources so they go about their constituencies telling the people that they are oppressed (and this happens across the Muslim-Christian divide) due to either their religious or ethnic affiliations. Unfortunately, those in rural areas are not enlightened and they are poverty stricken so once they are given a small amount of money they embark on the destruction of lives and property. When one looks at the past, one sees that there was peaceful co-existence. So the recent troubles are engineered by the rich and powerful in the society and when the crises are over, they unite across the divide either in Abuja (national capital) or London and indulge themselves together. They are unaffected by those that are killed because their children are completely

unaffected; if they are directly affected probably these crises would have been a thing of the past. Secondly, unemployment among the youth makes them vulnerable to violence. Once they are offered a meagre amount of money, they jump on the bandwagon without a second thought.

It is interesting to note that the elitist class who usually benefit from these conflicts are united across the religious lines, but in seeking legitimation they present themselves to their constituencies as rivals out to protect the interest of their religion.

Bishop Joseph Danlami Bagobiri, the Chairman of the Commission of Interreligious Dialogue of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Nigeria, claims that the conflicts result from the efforts of the beneficiaries of the feudal system that was perpetuated by the colonial masters, which reduced non-Muslims to "hewers of wood and fetchers of water" in states where they are citizens. He therefore blames the Hausa-Fulani politicians for the current conflicts:

Those who engineered, hatched and gave birth to and are perpetuating these clashes are the Northern Hausa-Fulani Muslim politicians and those among them who feel that they have nothing to offer in order to retain their relevance politically except to exploit the religious sentiments of the populace and non-educated masses within their constituencies to protect their selfish interests. I often say that the *imams* did not initiate this nor the *sheiks* or the *mallams* but the politicians. It is the politicians that started it and if the *sheiks* and *imams* came at a certain point, they came at a much later point but they didn't initiate it. Unfortunately, the feeling of superiority by the Hausa-Fulani Muslims does not help the situation. From our experience, they will always imply that if you want peace, when they step on you, then you must not speak out. The moment you try to complain that they have stepped on you, they will say that you don't want peace.¹

¹ Bishop Joseph Danlami Bagobiri, "My Experiences in the North", *The Voice*: 42-44. Felix Ekuagbere, Ed. 41 (June 2003) p. 42.

So the elites might have started the process in the past to seek religious legitimacy for their selfish political ambition, but the religious leaders who claim to represent their people more adequately have now hijacked the process.

Professor Jega appreciates the complexity of the dynamics involved in the conflicts. He is of the view that the political calculation of the elites is responsible for the conflicts but he also notes the contribution of the detachment of ordinary Nigerians from the political process in favour of religion:

... as I earlier said there is a lot of intolerance, impatience, misunderstanding of difference and there is a lack of accommodation. And over and above that, there is a lot of the use of religion or the manipulation of religion by the elites in their own political calculation in order to generate popularity and support in their own individualistic agenda. So I believe that all of these things I have mentioned are responsible for crises: intolerance, insensitivity, misunderstanding, lack of accommodation and then elites' manipulation of popular sentiments. I think the sense in which the devastated economy has contributed is in terms of people withdrawing. When the economy forces you to disengage from the state then you look for an alternative platform. People then move into religious fervour and religious activism and when they move with this fervour then there is intolerance, there is lack of understanding, and this obviously reinforces the pre-conditions for conflicts and crises and this has happened a lot.

Hajia Kwaku establishes a link between the conflicts and the religious manipulation of the elites, who can sponsor any policy that could gain them cheap popularity in their constituency:

We have been living side by side before the conflicts; why has the situation degenerated all of a sudden? Definitely politics in Nigeria is in a very pitiful state and politicians can go to any extent to get what they want because they are in office to serve their selfish interest. So if they feel that any policy they adopt will gain them popularity, they embark on it without evaluating the negative benefits it will bring to the society. The situation has so degenerated that I don't foresee an immediate solution to the conflicts but we depend on

the grace of God to resolve the conflicts and this will take a long time because it is connected to the overall degeneration in the society.

The apathy of people to politics and a preference for religious activism forces politicians to play the religious card sometimes. The politicians use religious symbols extravagantly to attract the people, whose immediate constituencies have become their religions.

For Professor Nkom, religious conflicts also revolve around the competition for power over the North, with Northern Muslims increasingly being challenged by those from the Middle Belt who are largely Christian:

The first thing is that these conflicts do not result from differences in theology or dogma. It used to be possible for the two religions to co-exist before fairly harmoniously without what we are experiencing now. The thing is really competition for power. There was a time when Islam held almost an unchallengeable sway of power over the North: political power, economic power, and social power. Following from the colonial policies that literally made the Northern Muslim areas no go areas for Christians a situation, which reinforced the power of traditional authority in the North and unfortunately bringing Christian areas under its influence. We had a situation where Islam felt that it had a natural and God-given mandate to control power in the North without challenge. Then we had the situation where Christianity continued to expand in the Middle Belt area and began to even erode some of the traditional areas in the Middle Belt where Islam held sway. And with education and with the kind of marginalisation that Christians suffered in the past, Christians in the Middle Belt areas began to effectively challenge against the status quo. And I think that really is the basis of the conflicts that we are seeing.

Ustas Ashafa also reveals that the competition for power is at the root of the conflicts when he takes into account the positions taken at the panel of inquiry set up to look at 'Shari'a Riots' in Kaduna State:

When a panel was set up to investigate the crisis, no one mentioned the issue of *Shari'a*, instead the Christians were agitating against their political marginalisation and demanding for political independence through the

creation of chiefdoms; seventeen chiefdoms resulted from the agitations. But the Muslims insist that the *Shari'a* is their way of life and the federal constitution allows the state assembly to implement laws suitable to two-third majority of those in any given state, so the question of the *Shari'a* implementation is in line with the constitution. Religion is just being used as a scapegoat and is manipulated as a means of acquiring power in the North. We need to deconstruct history and stop teaching future generations hate and bitterness maintaining that a given class dominated their ancestors.

Without doubt, the bitter historical encounters of the two groups in Northern Nigeria calls for a healing of memory, in a manner akin to a peace process, and cannot be merely wished away in the manner that Ustas Ashafa is suggesting. Dr. M. G. A. Raji introduces a new dimension to the issue when he attributes the conflicts to the persistent failure of Muslims to make the distinction between Christianity and the West:

Muslims in Nigeria have also continually failed to make the distinction between Christians and colonialists. So whatever obtains is seen as Christian: be that government, education and so on. Incidentally, many Western values are founded on Christianity. It is not uncommon to hear people asking, why are we resting on Sundays instead of Fridays? This became very apparent during the OIC debate and until now Muslims are not convinced that there is any distinction between Western civilisation and Christianity.

We investigated the underlying reason for this misidentification in our study of the advent of the Europeans into Northern Nigeria in chapter two.

Chief Musa argues, from a seeming knowledge of the Bible and the *Qur'an*, that the conflicts are completely non-religious in nature. According to his observations:

These religious conflicts in Nigeria have no religious basis. People simply want to manipulate religion to achieve their selfish aims. There is no religion, either in the Holy *Qur'an* or the Holy Bible that directs people to go and fight, kill and bomb and destroy their neighbours. So people are simply camouflaging with religion to gain their political, economic and ethnic aims. Ethnically, the major tribes always want to suppress the minority and this is a basis for conflicts. These are usually based on the distribution of scarce resources. People are not simply fighting each other because they differ in

language or culture but because everybody is trying to safeguard the scarce resources for his own group.

Consequently, all other factors lead to the socio-economic factor, expressed in the inadequate distribution of resources. Fr. Kukah makes a case in this regard:

The consequences in social relations is that communities are no longer as peaceful because poverty leads to other unintended consequences, the manifestation which we see in all religious riots, communal clashes - all these things are part and parcel of the struggle of the ordinary Nigerians to improve conditions. So it also means that if you wish to understand what has been going on which we wrongly continue to term as communal clashes or religious clashes, you have to understand it within the context of people's struggle for survival. It does have an effect on religion and this goes on everywhere. It is not a strange thing.

So the conflicts are basically resource-based. We might already have noticed that apart from the political manipulation thesis, ethnicity continues to be advanced as the chief factor in the conflicts. Understood in this context, ethnicity has nothing to do with cultural assertion, but it negatively congeals in tribalism to become a means of contesting for the scarce national resources for one's own ethnic group.

Alhaji Umar argues the point, from the Islamic perspective, that nothing in the religion lends foundation to the conflicts, which in his opinion are largely tribal in orientation:

Even Islam prohibits conflicts among the religions because it regards religion as a personal matter and no one can be made to change his religion. If this were so, the prophet could have changed the situation but since he did not I don't think anybody can do so. Every one is free to practise his religion, the only thing is that it cannot prohibit people from inviting others to come to their religion but this must be done in a peaceful way, so that you can increase the number of your followers without causing problems or difficulties. With violence, you cannot attract anybody to your religion but with peace, you can easily invite people to your faith. Tribalism is the main cause of these conflicts and religion has nothing to do with it. There were similar

orientations in the past, but the situation has been deteriorating with the passing of time, particularly in our democratic dispensation.

Alhaji Yakassai believes extraneous factors, rather than a religious one account for the crises bearing in mind the long-term co-existence between Muslims and Christians, for example in a place like Jos, Plateau State. He contends:

So I think all these conflicts are largely economic and brought about by greed and ethnicity in the effort of one tribe to gain advantage over another tribe. Religion is then employed but strictly speaking there is nothing religious about the conflicts because Christians never force Muslims to be Christians and Muslims never force Christians to be Muslims. They all go to their churches and mosques separately and thereafter go to the market together. There is no instance throughout the history of Nigeria where a Muslim forces non-Muslims to become Muslims or where non-Muslims force a Muslim to abandon his religion. And no conflict has arisen from a forced conversion. Also what has emphasised the differences between Muslims and Christians is the disruption of the normal democratic process. If we allow democracy to thrive, things will turn around because most candidates require the support of both Muslims and Christians in their constituency, irrespective of their religious affiliation. And therefore, they themselves will assist in uniting the people since it is in the interest of their political ambition.

Optimistic as Alhaji Yakassai sounds about the democratic process, some people think it is itself imbued with a conflicting agenda that seeks religion as a safe harbour from which to engage those who do not belong to their side of the divide. We shall see below that Alhaji Umar relates the aggravation of the crises to the current democratic dispensation.

Barrister Adehi, though maintaining that the conflicts could be traced to the period prior to independence, maintained that it was intensified at the onset of the OIC debate. He makes the point that:

At each opportunity Muslims drive home the point that Nigeria has to belong to the OIC and so also with the Christians who insist that it was wrong for Babangida to have dragged Nigeria into the OIC since Nigeria is not an Islamic state.... But there is the issue of ignorance on the part of the masses, which the ruling class take full advantage of, by playing on their religious

sentiments. If any Muslim wants to cause disunity in any organisation now, the best weapon to use is religion. The same applies to the Christians. I believe that the next elections will be conducted along those lines: the noise is already being made about the emergence of a Christian president versus a Muslim president. Even Aso Rock (the presidential villa) itself is an object of controversy. It was built by a Muslim and inhabited by Muslims who did not see any need for a chapel within but when Obasanjo came and built a chapel, it became a controversial matter. But the truth is that there is a mosque so why can't there be a chapel?

The complication of the issues involved in these conflicts manifests in the predicament and ignorance of most of those who engage directly in the rioting, according to Mrs. Adeboye:

The major problem of Muslim-Christian conflicts is from our leaders because after the conflicts when you try to analyse the cause, you find out that even those who participated cannot explain why they took part. They only maintain that they were directed to take part, without identifying those who directed them. If there is greater awareness especially in the North, I don't think we will find such problems. I think in most cases, the motive for these conflicts is political, especially in Kano, and lack of awareness from the ordinary youth. And also one cannot rule out the impact of the economy when the youth are unemployed, they are open to anyone who invites them to take part in violence.

The urchins who participate in rioting may not know its initial cause but many of them benefit through carting away the belongings of those who flee for their lives. The impression that is being created in them, with every passing conflict, is that it is an opportunity for unhampered looting.

Mr. Salami maintains that the religious nature of Nigerians has largely helped to assure peace in the face of what he refers to as 'occasional turmoils', which to my mind plays down the gravity of the conflicts. In any case, speaking of his experience he makes the case that:

I live in a part of Kano that is predominantly Muslim and I have been in this particular place in the last 20 years and I have not had cause to regret living with them. We exchange food during our festivals and I think religion is really helping us to make the sort of community that God expects of us. There are some other Christians who may not be happy with Muslims but I think it is because of their own individual attitudes. My own neighbours are very friendly and when they are mourning as Muslims I join them, so also when they are celebrating. They see me and my family going to church from time to time, they know I am a Christian and they don't harass me. The occasional turmoil and difficulties I think are prompted by economic and selfish reasons and not religious reasons.

So he concludes that Muslims and Christians are not conflicting as a result of differences in religious affiliation but because of political and economic factors.

Dr. Rufai Inuwa maintains that the ordinary people are susceptible to being manipulated by the elites due to their socio-economic deprivation and their ignorance on religious issues, since many of them merely give allegiance to their religion without having an in-depth knowledge of religious issues. He argues:

The cause of Muslim-Christian conflict in Northern Nigeria is due to the elites who manipulate the poverty stricken condition of the masses for their selfish aims. The elites, who know the religion, manipulate the masses using religion as an instrument for self-aggrandisement. It is very obvious that the common people do not know their religion deep enough and they are therefore subject to the manipulative scheme of the elites. Poverty is widespread and people see the crises as providing opportunity for them to loot people's property. At the end of the day, there is nothing religious about the conflicts. This becomes very evident when one looks at the location of these conflicts. They are usually situated in the urban areas. In the rural areas, people embark on communal projects jointly, irrespective of their religions. But in the urban areas, people have no basic relationship with each other that cuts across their religious differences.

The point he has made with regard to the urban locations of the conflicts is one that requires careful study beyond the scope of this dissertation. Yet it suggests to us the importance of urbanisation as a factor in Muslim-Christian conflicts. Analysed in simple terms, the social dislocation that accompanies migration to the urban areas makes the

urban poor more vulnerable to the socio-economic situation than their rural counterparts. Besides, lacking a safety net, they also have to compete more fiercely for scarce resources.

II. RELIGIOUS FACTORS

Some interviewees argue, however, that though other factors may be involved in the clashes but they are largely religious in nature. Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama, the Catholic Archbishop of Jos takes this stance. He enumerated the non-religious factors that might have fanned the flames of the conflicts, but he insists that religious fanatics at both ends of the spectrum are to be blamed for the persistent Muslim-Christian conflicts. He contends:

When we talk about religious clashes in the North, it primarily has to do with the adherents of the Islamic faith and adherents of the Christian religion. And for quite some time, there has been a history of peaceful and harmonious co-existence between these two religions. But, somehow, in the recent past, relationships have been far from cordial and if you should ask me why? My one theory is that with the introduction of the *Shari'a* Islamic system, there have been a lot of ill feelings. *Shari'a* existed before now, nobody had any problem with that but the new type of *Shari'a* which has been introduced in most parts of Northern Nigeria has created tension, suspicion and many times, it has led to mutual hostility. And the simple reason is that the Christians feel *Shari'a* is an attempt to perhaps minimise or diminish the strength of Christianity.... In different parts of the Middle Belt, even though the clashes that have taken place, are of an ethno-religious type, I would say without fear of contradiction that the introduction of the *Shari'a* Legal system brought about all these, because there is fear, there is apprehension and there is fear of domination, there is fear that Christianity could be easily suppressed and completely annihilated or marginalized. So people are reacting to this and sometimes their reactions go beyond reasonable limits. You have Muslim fanatics and Christian fanatics, they don't agree and they resort to violence and destruction of lives and property, all in the name of religion. So, if you

ask me what is the cause of these clashes remote or immediate, I would certainly say the introduction of the *Shari'a* has brought them about.²

Fr. Mamman is of the view that fundamentalists are the catalysts of the religious conflicts because they generate intolerance:

Fundamentalism is not just among Muslims and we cannot say that all the religious crises we have had are caused by Muslim fundamentalists, Christian fundamentalists have also contributed to the conflicts by the way they preach and the way they carry out programmes without being sensitive to the people who are in the place. So Christians too have a share in the blame. Fundamentalism is a very dangerous thing not only in Islam but also in Christianity. When you become a fundamentalist you no longer tolerate any other person and you want things to be done in your own way. I suppose that the ignorance of religion pushes people to be fundamentalists. If one really understands one's religion, one will be open to other people but the fact that people are not knowledgeable in their own religion, they are very itchy if people do anything that threatens to bring down the worth of their own religion. Again the way that the preachers of these religions present the religions to their adherents can lead to fundamentalism.

Professor Olofin places fundamentalism in global perspective and traces the origin of the conflicts within Islam in the 1980s to their eventual escalation to include Christians. He says that prior to the 1980s religion was not a factor in popular discourse:

The starting point was intra-religious within Islam, like the Maitatsine riots of 1980 and so on. It was not until the Iranian revolution of the early 80s that the militant groups started to face the non-Muslims. Then the students, especially here in Bayero University Kano, started demonstrating and writing: "Islam only" in our campus here. And then also the desire of some people to have their own say, which followed also at Kafanchan in 1987. The conflicts built up to take an inter-religious dimension. It has been escalating and becoming worse with the downturn in the economy and polity. So I think that is the genesis of the conflicts. Because I remember that when I first came to the North, no one was talking about whether you are a Muslim or a Christian but these all started in the 80s.

² Archbishop Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, "The Genesis of the Jos Riot", *The Voice*: 15-18. Felix Ekuagbere, Ed. 41 (June 2003) pp. 16-17.

He, maintains, however that the issue has now gone beyond religion and people are manipulating the religious factor to score political and socio-economic points.

Architect Sagab blames the teachings of religious leaders, which are largely polemic in nature for preparing the ground for conflicts:

The first thing that I believe causes these conflicts, is the preaching of hatred. If you go to any mosque today, you hear the preaching that the other religion is bad, that people in that religion are trying to subvert us to convert people from our religion to their religion, etc. So what happens is that the people whose ability to have their own opinions is not well developed simply stick with these ideas believing that they define the situation. I mean if one has been in situations like this then one can understand how potent such persuasions are.

Referring to his temporary conversion to Marxism in his university days, he maintains that he is able to understand how people could take information from those they respect without adequate processing:

In a situation where you come to tell someone whose opinion is not well developed that the Christians are trying to subvert Islam, and people can be very intelligent in the way they put this across, with the same zeal that I thought socialism was the best system, that is how I will take the teaching to be and most of our people have minds in this state or even lower than how mine was at that time. That is why the generality of the flock will believe things that way. That is why on the slightest provocation, you find people butchering themselves. Because their minds have already been developed to accepting that they are dealing with people who hate them. So once someone calls for violence, people respond immediately because it never ceases to amaze me how much damage is done when there is any religious fracas.

And some of these opinions of the leaders, which their followers see as divine directives, are not based on correct doctrines as Rev. Movel observes graphically:

Most of the conflicts are engineered by ignorance of each other's faith across the denominations. A good example is that Islam teaches that when there is

an eclipse of the moon, people should go and pray to avert disaster but instead of that many Muslims often resort to attacking drinking places, and even places of worship. So this ignorance is part of the cankerworm that has been eating away peace in the region. Northern Nigeria is a region where the two faiths meet and both are striving to show supremacy.

Rev. Ojo, while not dismissing the influence of other factors in the conflicts, lends credence to this struggle for supremacy when he maintains that Muslims do not welcome conversion from Islam to Christianity because it constitutes a threat to them:

I believe that the rate at which Christianity is penetrating into the Muslim community constitutes a kind of threat for them. We have seen many instances of the conversion of their children to Christ. And after many attempts to reconvert them, they are killed and these are not stories but real occurrences. I believe that Christianity constitutes a threat to the Islamic community and their reaction is to toe the line of the persecution of Christians.

No one can doubt the existence of religious factors in these conflicts, even though it is always difficult to ascertain where it begins and where other factors take over. Or where other factors end and religion comes into the theatre of conflict. The arguments over the implementation of the *Shari'a* reveal the complexity involved in Muslim-Christian conflicts. While some people, mostly Christians, dismiss it as a political tool that Muslims engage to negotiate their political marginalisation, Muslims do not see it that way. So if one is analysing a crisis that has to do with *Shari'a*, one cannot for certain maintain that it is purely religious or political. Other issues like the OIC contain the same ambiguity because of the relationship between politics and religion for Muslims, which we considered in chapter two.

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This chapter set out to establish the cause of Muslim-Christian conflicts in Northern Nigeria, with the aim of unravelling the underlying dynamics for the mutual exclusivity between adherents of the two religions. Establishing these dynamics is essential for exploring the possibility of fashioning a common religious programme for the transformation of the region's socio-economic situation, which the liberation method requires. What comes across in the various positions of my respondents, is that many factors: political, socio-economic and ethnicity, weave together into the ugly tapestry of conflicts. It is here that the theoretical exploration of Islam and Christianity in Northern Nigeria, in chapter two, becomes relevant in resolving this sub-problem.

The position that the two religions occupy in the region as contradictory but self-contained traditions in the region, gives us some insight into the intermingling of the different factors that engineer conflicts. Their adherents do not acknowledge an epistemological crisis and tend to draw differently from their faiths in times of stress, be it of a political, socio-economic or ethnic nature. That is why even though people stress the fact that these conflicts are not religious, they are still defined as such. The conflicting and mutual exclusivity of Christianity and Islam in Northern Nigeria will be revealed more strongly in the proposal of two contradictory programmes of liberation in our next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FASHIONING A COMMON LIBERATION PROGRAMME

In this chapter I shall explore the final sub-problem, which inquires into the possibility of fashioning a common religious programme of liberation drawing from Muslim and Christian sources in Northern Nigeria. We have demonstrated in the last chapter that Islam and Christianity, are so influenced by their context but this enables them to also shape and influence non-religious issues. This has led their adherents to see in these religions adequate but exclusive coping mechanisms. The side effect of this is the refusal of Muslims and Christians to acknowledge an epistemological crisis. Since they perceive their respective religions as being adequate, their tendency is to dismiss the other religion in a manner that exacerbates conflicts. Having established the all-embracing but divisive role that Islam and Christianity play in the region, can they still provide a common liberation programme? I shall explore this possibility in this chapter.

I. COMMON MORAL VALUES

Some of my interviewees believe that a common programme of liberation is possible and hold this position because, according to them, Islam and Christianity share some basic ethical and moral principles from which such a programme could be distilled. They reason that if the two religions share so much in common, it naturally follows that they could collaborate in a campaign against the vices that have bred injustice and poverty in Northern Nigeria.

Archbishop Jatau argues the feasibility of such a programme and the benefits with which it would endow society:

Yes, first of all the Ten Commandments are the same for Christians and Muslims. And in our conscience we are aware at least in its rudimentary sense that it is better to do good than to do evil. So coming together to dialogue on how we can pool our resources together will do a lot of good for the society.

The necessity for dialogue in the process implies that even though these values may appear similar they may not be so in reality. Dialogue is therefore required for a common appreciation and implementation.

Rev. Movel maintains that in the face of gross dissimilarities between the two religions, there are many areas of congruence that could be viable starting points for interreligious collaboration. In fact the Inter-faith Network, that he represents, was putting together a peace declaration for Muslims and Christians on the day I went to interview him and his counterpart. He asserts:

There are certain issues that are based on humanity that both faiths propagate. Injustice is seen from the perspective of both faiths as something that is evil. If we collaborate to address the situation we can influence the transformation of the situation. In such areas, we can work together. But coming to our religious ideologies, even though we have areas of similarities, we also have areas of dissimilarities so incongruent that we can never agree on them. But we need to bring to the knowledge of our respective religious communities areas that we can agree on like justice, security and good governance. It is in this respect that the inter-faith mediation centre, in conjunction with the bureau for religious affairs and the Coventry cathedral, is working on a peace declaration.¹ This is suppose to be a document for other peace activities and

¹ The full text of the peace declaration is included in appendix 5 of this work. The declaration was launched with pomp at the Murtala Mohammed Square on August 22, 2002. The naïve optimism that attended the signing of this document, in the presence of the Rev. Canon Andrew White of the Coventry Cathedral, the official representative of Yasser Arafat and a notable turn out of traditional rulers, was dashed with the outbreak of riots that led to the cancellation of the Miss World Beauty pageant in November 2002. This only goes to show that it is easy to get people together to proclaim publicly peace and mutual understanding but it is difficult to get them committed in real life situations.

will serve as a cord, to bind us together towards addressing issues of common interests and benefits to our society.

His faith in the peace declaration arises from a perception of the common ethical principles in Islam and Christianity that advocate peace and denounce injustice and violence.

Councillor Onyeze also believes that fashioning a common programme is feasible, if awareness is created about what Muslims and Christians share together. Fr. Mamman reiterates this common morality that prevails in Islam and Christianity by stressing the mutual denunciation against vices that obtain in society. He observes:

It is possible to fashion a common programme because every religion preaches accountability, they are also against bribery and corruption, fraud and embezzlement. Even the traditional religion exalts and exonerates people who are honest and sincere in their dealings and are able to manage whatever is entrusted to them. So the traditional religion, Christianity and Islam all champion these values and therefore if they can come together and work out a programme, that will help the government to improve the socio-economic situation of this country. The problem will be whether our leaders will be prepared to listen to what these different religions are saying because people get to power and forget that they are Muslims or Christians or Traditionalists and do what they like. Yet it is possible that these religious bodies come together to fashion a common programme.

He points out that Nigeria's pluralistic nature should be a source of blessing and not a burden. He further argues that if Nigerians could de-emphasise their differences and attachment to their religious identity and focus on what make them Nigerians, formulating such a programme would be possible.

The implication above that plurality does not necessarily lead to conflict, is further elucidated by Fr. Kukah. He shows how the United States of America capitalised

on its diversity to become a global force. He points out that the inability to fashion a common programme is not the result of diversity but of the failure of leadership:

People say that Nigeria is not making progress because of religious differences but some of the convulsive societies in the world today share just one religion. Belonging to one religion has not stopped the confusion that you find in Iran or a lot of other Muslim countries. So it is not about just having one religion. It is really a function of leadership... the inability of a leadership to emerge that can really become quite neutral in addressing very many issues. Since that kind of leadership has not emerged it is almost impossible for us to say that we can wish our differences away because the existence of our differences and the tensions that arise from them is literally a *fait accompli*.

So fashioning a common programme from the different religions is a possibility but the process depends on an efficient religious leadership.

Hajia Kwaku argues not only for the possibility but also for the necessity of such a common religious programme. She notes that resistance to the recent implementation of the *Shari'a* hardly relates to the vices it is meant to eradicate as to the misperception of the programme by non-Muslims. She makes the case that:

There is a common enemy confronting all the religions and materialism is indicative of this enemy and it leads to all other evils especially the abdication of religious principles and values, leading to arrogance and crime and other vices. If the religions identify this as our common enemy, it goes without saying that the only way we can solve the problem is for the two religions to come together and find out how they can tackle the problem and its attendant vices and get people back to God. It is unfortunate that the *Shari'a* programme was presented as a solely Islamic programme because it is not only Muslims that need correction. We are living together in the same community, so the corrective measures should be the same. Society is a whole entity and not haphazard. The programme should not be linked entirely to one religion but should receive a collaborative aspiration from the two religions.

She is well attuned to the situation, and insists that once a programme of reform is given a religious connotation those who are not adherents of the given religion will disown it, even if it is beneficial. She, therefore, insists that the best way out is for Islam and Christianity to collaborate in fashioning a common programme.

Barrister Adehi is also of the opinion that such a programme is a possibility, if dialogue is involved. He recalls a study group that was set up some years ago in Kano to buttress the possibility of having such dialogue:

Fashioning a common programme will entail all the different religions having a form of dialogue. I remember they tried it out in Kano here to bring an understanding between the Muslims and the Christians.² If this is done and the understanding reached is publicised both in the urban and the rural areas that we have so much in common and differ in very minor issues and worship in our different ways and there is no need for us to kill each other, such a programme will be a possibility.

In the same vein, Professor Olofin insists that Muslims and Christians tend to be blind to their common heritage. He has observed that sometimes Muslims are even closer to Catholics than the Protestants. He therefore contends:

Christianity and Islamic religion are not that divergent in their concepts. I mean the only difference between the two religions, that I can see directly, is the issue that has to do with the position of our Lord Jesus Christ. After that, I think most of the other things like, salvation, peace, doing good here on earth and what have you and worshipping one God are all the same. Even Muslims have a special place for Mary, more than the Protestant Christians. It is the way some people practise religion in our country that makes the two religions so divergent and some of these militant Islamic people all over the

² This organisation he refers to resulted from the efforts of a medical doctor who had witnessed the same enterprise in Cairo, where he studied. He extended the invitation initially to the Catholic Church but the reactions from evangelicals and Muslim hardliners have since put the organisation out of existence.

world who think that you can only propagate religion by force, which is what they started with anyway and have not changed. It is such people that show that Islam is actually at a divergent level with Christianity. Actually their concept is that of peace but their practice is that of violence. Then coming to whether we can forge a common programme, if we understand the basic principles of both religions because that is where to start.... You see a lot of Christians moving with Muslims to have deals and do business together. That means that we can also do the business of God together if we understand issues more clearly.

His concluding remark is rather interesting because Muslims and Christians seem to interact well on other issues, that has nothing to do with their identity. Once their identities are threatened - be it politically, socio-economically or ethnically - then the issues are harnessed to religion. This fact accounts for the tension and conflicts in Muslim-Christian relations, which we saw in the last chapter.

My interviewees have so far expressed the possibility of fashioning a common programme for liberation in Northern Nigeria. Yet it is pertinent to note that their focus is on the common values that Islam and Christianity share, rather than the practicability of fashioning the programme. There is no doubt that Islam and Christianity share similar values or that a common programme could be distilled from these values. Yet, the crucial issue is the possibility of implementing such a programme, thus distilled. After all, the Nigerian constitution is a distillation of those values that are considered paramount to Islam and Christianity, yet for the majority of Nigerians, it is simply irrelevant to their lives. We shall now turn our attention to some different perspectives.

II. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF A COMMON PROGRAMME

As noted by my interviewees above, areas of agreement abound between Muslims and Christians. So much for principles, in reality collaboration between Muslims and Christians in everyday life seems possible only when the principle of non-interference in

religious matters reigns. Hence, there is a kind of an unwritten agreement that no party should discuss the faith of the other. When I asked Barrister Adehi whether the impact of the socio-economic situation on Christianity applies also to Islam, he quickly informed me: "I will not know if this also applies to Islam because I try my best not to discuss religion with Muslims because of the nature of the place where I live, to avoid disagreements that could lead to violence."

Fr. Iwuchukwu reiterates this issue of non-interference with reference to what obtains in the department of religious studies where he is a member. He observes that:

Without available statistics, the attitude of people will be of non-interference: practice your religion and I practice mine. In the college here we have an interreligious committee, always headed by a Muslim anyway, but for all my years of teaching we have not held a single meeting as members of that committee. So it only exists in name. There is a great allergy for dialogue on issues of religion. But the average Nigerian is very accommodating. Otherwise, interaction would have been very limited. But you find a healthy relationship between Nigerians irrespective of their faith. So out there the common person understands that what is so important is not their faith as much as their humanness. But they are instructed to the contrary by their leaders who are unfortunately tongue in cheek leaders.

So when Nigerians talk about peaceful co-existence what they have in mind is that people should be left to practise their beliefs without engaging interreligiously, since it is taken for granted that any discussion on religious issues could spark off undue conflict. Even in schools that strive to accommodate both religions, the accommodation is achieved through the principle of non-interference. Mrs. Adeboye states what obtains in the school where she teaches:

In whatever we are doing together we allow the common things to be central. In this school for example, whenever we are assembled in the Hall, the Christians say their prayers and the Muslims also say their prayers and each group respects the other's religion. We believe this will make the students to make friends with each other because they are able to see that they belong to the same God and they are all looking for the fulfilment of their needs through him and we find out that we don't have the problem of interrelationship and they interact across religious lines. This extends to the teachers. We do not discriminate across religious lines. When we have bereavements Christians say their prayers and Muslims say their prayers irrespective of the religious affiliation of the person bereaved or the person who has given birth.

The definition of a common ground that comes across from her statement is the ability of each group to respect the other group's right 'to do its own thing'. The question of having common prayers does not even arise; it is taken for granted that two separate prayers are required.

One of the blessings of the controversy that Nigeria's membership in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) sparked is the formation of the Nigeria Religious Council (NIREC). At the height of the controversy, which we alluded to in the study of our socio-historical context, a committee was set up to advise the president on the best way to deal with the OIC issue. It was this committee that metamorphosed into NIREC. It is intriguing to see how the perception of Islam and Christianity as parallel religions is played out in this high-powered body. According to Archbishop Jatau:

NIREC has not been able to fit its bill. The organisation has two chairmen: a Muslim one, the Sultan of Sokoto and a Christian one, the chairman of CAN. It is easy to imagine that with people like this coming together the leadership can divulge to their followers, at different levels, the decisions taken by the body for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. But it is unfortunately not the case and not much has been achieved though members are on speaking terms and it is better to speak than not speaking at all. There is the possibility that someday common sense will prevail and we may strive to live with each other in peace.

It is difficult to imagine how a council that has two chairmen could forge ahead but this represents the recognition of the mutual exclusivity and paranoia existing between Muslims and Christians. Allowing for one chairman from any of the religions, even on a rotational basis, is considered an act of domination by the other religion. This may sound absurd but Nigerians do not take chances once religion is the matter under consideration.

Fr. Tanko observes that prior to his sitting on this council he always assumed that Islam and Christianity share certain concepts. While this is true in principle, he has come to learn that their conceptualisation, in the two religions, differs remarkably. He therefore contends that we cannot even begin to think of fashioning a common programme without clarifying our understanding of our shared concepts:

If the religious leaders can unite in their understanding of certain concepts like justice, peace and love (these for some may be restricted to their co-religionists) then this programme will be realisable. If they are able to agree on the definition of these concepts and are willing to educate their adherents, then there is the possibility that a generation may emerge that will eventually become more tolerant of each other. So something can be fashioned out and taught from an early stage of education so that Christian and Muslim children can have a common understanding of such concepts and not to go about contradicting each other. A generation will thereby emerge that is more tolerant. In a situation where there is a conflict in the understanding of these concepts, then a common ground even in dialogue becomes impossible. Granted human depravity is present so we do not expect to eliminate all the conflicts that exist but we can improve on the current situation. But so many religious leaders suffer from concepts and perceptions that were imbibed by them at a very early stage in life, so it is very difficult for them to shift grounds.

Fr. Tanko also observes that agreeing on the concepts is just a step in the process because of the double standard of religious leaders, which makes the reception of these concepts impossible:

We may agree on concepts and on the needs of our society at our forum (NIREC) but getting it across to the ordinary man on the street is a big problem. There seem to be a lot of double standards among those of us who attend such dialogues. We simply sign the documents ceremoniously without feeling bound by them and we go back to our constituencies behaving as if these agreements are non-existent. So different signals are sent across to the majority of the adherents.

Bishop Bagobiri notices this double standard in the attitude of some Muslim leaders:

You see relating with Muslims is very complicated because of their double standard. When you meet with them as individuals everything is okay, in any case, they will tell you not to quote them on things they tell you at that level. A very clear instance of this attitude has to do with seminars for inter-religious dialogue. Some Muslim scholars will present a paper, contributing wonderful ideas on the way to achieve peace between the religions. But at the end of the seminar, they will not give out their papers because they don't want to be quoted.³

The principle of *al-taqiyya* allows for this double standard and such Muslims may be employing it to smoothen transaction. But it is not uncommon to see the same double standard among Christian leaders, who advocate good relations between Muslims and Christians in public but preach violence and division to their followers.

Hajia Kwaku's observation that it is not only inappropriate but also impossible to implement two different programmes within the same context is a valid one. Yet those who are sensitive to the level of divergence between Muslims and Christians in Northern Nigeria insist that running parallel programmes is the only alternative. Architect Sagab states:

³ Bishop Joseph Danlami Bagobiri, "My Experiences in the North", *The Voice*: 42-44. Felix Ekuagbere, Ed. 41 (June 2003) p. 43.

Islam and Christianity are supposed to be proximate religions because we worship one God, we believe in the unity of God, but unfortunately we have always been preaching hatred between the two religions and our views have become so divergent that whenever I hear that an inter religious group has met to discuss how to sort out this issue I say this is just passing through the motion and it does not go deeper into the minds of those involved. Because really Christianity and Islam are very divergent even apart from this preaching of hatred, the beliefs have really become such as to separate the two religions wide apart.... So we have to really look and see how this programme can be achieved. But it is going to be difficult because these two religions are so divergent. But what I will suggest is if each religion on its own part makes its own contribution it will be worthwhile. Like I said if the people who are the opinion moulders, that is the religious leaders, can objectively change the opinions of their followers to believe that the two religions are not supposed to be at loggerheads with each other, that they are supposed to be religions that are together and that every human being has the right to choose the way he wants to worship, then we shall begin to see.

But, earlier on, Architect Sagab had informed me that the leaders are themselves forced to preach differences because that is the only way to express their orthodoxy. So I don't think the fault lies solely with them. They are able to mould the opinions of their followers, only within set parameters dictated by their adherents. In fact, the power that religious leaders claim to wield is determined by their popularity among their adherents, which translates as their ability to fan their entrenched beliefs. It is somehow a recursive circle.

It is interesting to note that Islam subscribes to peaceful co-existence and not to the traditional concept of dialogue, which demands the transformation of the religious traditions. Dr. Raji made this clear to me:

When you look at the last letter of Attahiru to Lugard, he makes it very clear that the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is war. So the idea of Muslims and non-Muslims cooperating will be a compromise. But with the reality confronting us, we have no alternative. The enlightened Muslims may be willing to cooperate in dialogue but not the traditionalists who have nothing to do with Western civilisation. Unfortunately the traditionalists are increasing in number. Imagine someone writing and denying that man has

ever gone to the moon...⁴ The question of dialogue never arises in the *Qur'an* as far as I can remember because Islam is to continue to spread until the whole world is inherited by God. The word 'inherited' is what is actually used in the *Qur'an* and it means until the world becomes one nation under God. Islam has been the ruling force and no force has successfully confronted or challenged Islam except in the recent times. So if that kind of dialogue becomes a necessity, it will be part of the compromise that Islam will be forced to reach. Because it is still believed that Islam can revive itself in the face of the Western civilisation. But how it will revive itself is what is not yet to be discovered.

Of course there is an alternative view to war in the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslims, even in the *Qur'an* itself, but it is non-dialogical. Dr. Ahmad expresses this view:

Allah knew that we were going to live with people who do not believe in Islam; and that is why he has made provisions for Muslims. We have a *sura* in the *Qur'an* (*Sura* of Unbelievers) where finally the prophet was asked to say to those who refused to believe his message: "...look, all you who do not believe, I do not worship what you worship and you do not worship what I worship..." and after a few verses he said, "...you have your religion, I have mine, you follow what you want to believe, I am following what I believe...." So there is no cause for violence. And there is another part in the *Qur'an*, which says that there is no compulsion in religion. The truth has already appeared very clearly: whoever wants to follow it can follow it whoever wants to follow something else can follow it. I am not supposed to force you to follow the truth even if I am on the side of the truth. And you are not supposed to force me to follow your own. We will live peacefully and you will follow what you want and I will follow what I want.

⁴ It is pertinent to point out that these traditionalists do not consist solely of illiterates. In this respect, Fr. Dan O'Brien recalls his encounter with a highly placed Muslim immigration officer who, apart from being highly educated, had made several trips to Europe and America. This officer told him that he disagrees with the assumption that human beings have gone to the moon for the simple reason that there are seven islands between the earth and the moon, with Jesus and Mohammed inhabiting the third island. He concluded that if human beings had actually gone to the moon they would have seen them on the third island. A discussion with Fr. Dan O'Brien in Cork, Ireland.

So the alternative to war is non-interference and striving in different paths awaiting God's judgement, on the last day, with respect to the right path. That is not to say that Christians are open to genuine dialogue that will disturb their belief-system and they will readily agree with him.

In fact the average evangelical does not believe that Islam has anything worth contributing to transforming the socio-economic situation. Dr. Ojo argues that fashioning a common programme is not possible within the context of Northern Nigeria and states passionately that the salvation of the situation depends largely on Christians:

It is possible in the Southern part of the country where people have tolerance for each other but not in the Northern part. It will be like the game of the cat and mouse because the way people in the North take religion is very exclusive. We see ourselves as Christians but the Muslims see us as *Kafira*⁵ and because we will not accept their religion, killing us is a passport to heaven. Our objectives are so divergent. There is a lot of deceit in the Islamic religion and my dealings with them in my official capacity have shown this in the promises I get from some of them which still remain unfulfilled. I don't know if this is religion or culture but I know that there is a lot of deceit. But we cannot look at all of them as bad people. There are some of them who are good and we cannot reduce all Muslims to bad people though it is not human goodness that gives one salvation, it is Christ and they need him. More so, in the Bible the Prophet Amos says: "Two cannot walk together unless they agree" and Paul makes it very clear that there is no relationship between light and darkness. We can live together but I think it is the ultimate and divine law of God for Christians to transform this nation to the exclusion of the Muslims.

Alhaji Umar is of the view that the Islamic programme for transformation, encapsulated in the *Shari'a*, is divinely inspired even if politicians initiated it. Since it is so inspired it alone is capable of transforming the society:

⁵ An Arabic word, which refers to unbelievers.

The *Shari'a* to us ordinary Muslims is nothing political, it is a reality. But for some of the governors it could be political. For the politicians, you cannot stop them from practising their politics in any thing they do, so if it is referred to as political it is right. But for those of us who are not politicians, we are only striving for what is the dictate of our religion, so we Muslims are welcoming it believing that it will help us more than the other means we know. The divine law cannot be compared to a human law. So we Muslims believe that it is only the *Shari'a* that can correct the vices in the society. We will not want to implement it on anyone who is not a Muslim. Have you heard any non-Muslim tried by the *Shari'a* court? We just want it for ourselves and not for any non-Muslim. People are free to become Muslims but we cannot force anyone to become a Muslim. And anyone telling you that it applies to non-Muslims is not giving you the correct facts. And its non-application to non-Muslims is not a problem because Islam came about in the midst of other religions; even the prophet Mohammed was staying with Christians and Jews and he even made friends with some Christians. Of course there was so much animosity with Jews. So a multi-religious society is not a new thing in Islam, it was the situation at the beginning and it will continue to be there till the end. Everybody should do what they can to help the situation from their own perspective and not depending on the issue of a common programme.

What comes across is the notion of multiculturalism in Islam. The dominant worldview is supposed to be Islamic, with exceptions granted to those of other religions.

Dr. Ahmad, therefore, contends that a multi-religious environment is nothing new to Islam. He makes the case that the Prophet Mohammed lived, until his death, with a Jew as his next-door neighbour even though Medina was a Muslim state and he was the head of state. He vehemently supports the idea of implementing the *Shari'a* in the same spirit:

How to practise it (*Shari'a*) in a multi-religious society is very simple. In any society anywhere in the world, there is no perfect system that gives everybody the same right. In a democracy, the majority have their way but the minority must have their protection and say. Now in personal matters, Islam does not impose the *Shari'a* on non-Muslims: on how you educate your child, how you marry, what you eat. In Kano, if you are a Christian, you can stay in your house and drink your beer and eat your pork. You are not committing any offence but you can't come out and broadcast it outside; then public morality is affected. You can buy your beer wherever you buy it outside Kano and

bring it to your house and no one has the right to investigate your house because peeping into people's private lives is a sin in Islam. And even then it is your house, you are not a Muslim and you are entitled to drink beer, the law protect you; but you are not allowed to sell it in public or to be a nuisance in public to show people that you are drinking beer. The churches are protected and you have the freedom to go and worship in them. *Allah* talks about the People of the Book and everything of theirs is protected in an Islamic state but people don't want to hear this nor tell their followers, they keep on emphasising that the Muslims are trying to convert them. And so they emphasise the prohibitions that do not apply to Christians; the law protects them.

The issue of a common programme for liberation does not arise for Dr. Ahmad; as far as it goes with him, the *Shari'a* legal system is sufficient to bring about social justice and liberation in the society. And the fact that Northern Nigeria is a multi-religious society is not of any consequence in this regard, what matters is the religion of the majority.⁶ The public sphere must be shaped by an Islamic ethos, even if the private sphere is left to the religious discretion of the individual.

The issue of a common programme therefore becomes impossible if the *Shari'a* is seen as adequate, to the exclusion of any Christian input or if the Christian mind-set of possessing the genuine programme for transformation is not open to any input from Islam. The two programmes are not open to the transformation which dialogue requires. Dr. Ahmed Rufai Inuwa is of the view that when we are dealing with religious issues, we must realise that compromise does not arise:

Also people fail to realise that religion has to do with deeply entrenched values that cannot be negotiated. I usually compare our attitude to religion with our attitude to our children. We can compromise on anything but not on our religion.

⁶ With respect to the rights of non-Muslims under an Islamic government, scholars put forth different stipulations. In Appendix 6, we have a detailed outline of the restrictions placed on non-Muslims.

It is in the light of these mutually exclusive tendencies of the two religions, which at best translates to the principle of non-interference, that some of my interviewees suggest that a secular programme, exclusive of religion, is necessary for the transformation of the socio-economic situation. The attractiveness of their position is glaring when we remember Hajia Kwaku hinting above that Christians would always suspect a programme with an Islamic connotation; and vice versa.

III. A SECULAR ALTERNATIVE?

Professor Nkom maintains that a secular programme is also necessary, apart from the mutual exclusivity of the religions, due to the multi-faceted nature of the dynamics underlying the deplorable socio-economic situation. He argues:

I don't see the various religious groups coming together to fashion a common programme in the current Nigerian context because religion has been used in Nigeria essentially as a tool for manipulation in the hands of the elites. It is in that angle that I see *Shari'a*. So I really don't see how religion, in a multi-religious context where the elites actually feast on religion as a tool for divide and rule, can provide that convenient meeting ground that can enable people to forge a common position in relation to the problems of society. A programme I, and I think many Nigerians, would subscribe to has to be non-religious in nature. A non-religious programme that is able to use certain religious values and ethics as a platform of cleansing society; what I mean here is that you need a programme that tackles different dimensions of the problems of society. We need one that will address the fundamental economic problems of society, one that is able to generate growth, create employment, improve productivity in society in general and give people productive skills. But also, in my own opinion, looking at the problems of Nigeria, you also need a programme that equally has an ethical dimension. The problems of Nigeria are such that the moral foundation of society seems to have basically collapsed. The kind of integrity, honesty, the sanctity of human life, all those values that cut across all groups when Nigeria first gained her independence and constituted a moral foundation, seem to be in tatters now. So anybody wanting to build Nigeria must employ a programme that also has an ethical and moral foundation, agenda or component. It is in that respect that I see religion playing a very, very important role and see part of the problem confronting our fight against corruption because unless the

anti-corruption struggle is itself part of a much broader agenda of the moral and ethical clean up of society, I don't see it succeeding as much as we envisage. So definitely, I will subscribe to a programme that is not necessarily religious but has a religious component to it.

The role of religion would be, therefore, to provide a moral component for this programme of reform. His position, inevitably, suggests that the religions are not sufficient to fashion a programme that is capable of the transformation desired.

On the other hand, some of my interviewees are not impressed with the suggestion that any programme other than a wholly religious one for the transformation of the society. According to Councillor Onyeze:

Any programme that will be free from religion will be morally bankrupt. Religion controls peoples' excesses that law enforcement cannot achieve. Any programme for transformation must be designed with a religious bearing. Any programme that focuses purely on political or economic consideration is bound to be deficient.

Religion must therefore be central to the programme. Dr. Ahmad argues, with reference to the penal code, that any programme of transformation must begin with what the people are familiar with and for the Muslims only the *Shari'a* can constitute such a programme because it the only law that binds them morally. He argues that:

Penal Code is not *Shari'a*, there are some elements of *Shari'a* in it but most of it is just the Western way of thinking. The West does not give any value to religion, so it is not surprising that they do not value religion in the countries they conquered. Now because the Penal Code is irrelevant to the moral values of the majority of Muslims, we find out that crime was rising but every Muslim knows the provision of the *Shari'a* and he respects them. Historically, we have passed through the *Shari'a*, then the colonial rule, the political rule, and military rule and we have got to our current situation. And throughout we have found out that only during the time when *Shari'a* was in

full play was there peace and order and orderly development in our society. Even now that the country is earning a lot more and it is richer, because there is no moral content in the system we are operating, the majority of the people are poorer, they are hungry, they are in distress. Under the *Shari'a* the ruler knows his obligations and the common man knows the obligation of the ruler because it is part of what he knows, he could hold him responsible, preach and shout at him but under the Western system he does not know his rights and the ruler himself does not feel obligated to do what is right. That is why we say look, the colonial system has failed, it has brought in corruption but worse still when we became independent, there was massive corruption because we were operating a system to which we were not loyal, spiritually and morally, the civilian and the military and now that the civilians are back, we said why not go back to the basis, to what we knew, we respected and we cherished.

The presupposition above is that only a programme, which resonates with the moral worldview of the people, can bring about liberation from injustice. Any programme short of this will not bring about the required transformation. The insistence on a religious programme for transformation is instructive, probably due to the disenchantment of people with secular programmes, which has characterised generations of administrations in Nigeria. Hence, Nigerians have become accustomed to programmes full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

The paradox is that Northern Nigeria is multi-religious and a singular religious programme for transformation will be as unacceptable as the secular one. It is definitely possible to distil such a common programme from the values of the religions. Yet, implementing it presents a quagmire and amounts to squeezing water out of stone. Alhaji Dalhatu makes this point rather strongly:

Fashioning a common programme by the different religions is not possible because the adherents of the different religions are completely committed to their own respective religions. That makes it difficult for people to respect and accept ideas from other religions other than their own. Theoretically, it is possible but the mutual suspicion and distrust that I spoke about earlier on will make it completely an impracticable project. People may pay lip service to it but only to move back to practise a different thing in concrete situations.

It is not that people do not interact in Northern Nigeria. In fact the level of interaction is high across the religious traditions, but once religion is brought into play friends could turn on each other within the twinkle of an eye. The reason is simple.

The two religions have come to embody the core identity of the people in the region. Besides that, they also operate on parallel levels. And the fact that parallel entities cannot meet is continually demonstrated in this context. A glaring example in this regard is the formation of the Bureau for Religious Affairs to ensure harmonious existence between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State. It is interesting to note that two separate bureaus had to be constituted: one for Muslims and one for Christians. Common wisdom dictates that the two religions cannot interact without conflict. Hence the general acceptance of the principle of non-interference that keeps the communities apart. Even when they have to engage, as we saw in the case of the bureau, there is always an effort to do so in an isolated manner. The insulated existence of the two communities has increasingly become the case in the location of my fieldwork: Kano, Kaduna and Jos.

IV. A TALE OF TWO CITIES

In my description of Northern Nigeria, in chapter three, I noted that the British colonial administration ensured the non-integration of the Muslims and non-Muslims through the creation of *Sabon Gari* (New Town) for the latter. This idea was not applied in every town in Northern Nigeria. While it is true of Kano, in places like Kaduna and Jos, Muslims and non-Muslims lived side by side. Unfortunately, incessant clashes between the two communities now ensure that there is a remarkable voluntary segregation, further highlighting the paralleling of Islam and Christianity in the region.

This segregation has further entrenched the fear and distrust between the adherents of the two religions. With reference to Kaduna, Archbishop Jatau maintains:

Unfortunately these crises have led to a situation where Kaduna, for example, is divided. Christians come together in areas where they feel safe in each other's company, so also the Muslims. They may interact during the day but as soon as it is dark, they flee back to their enclaves. This keeps Muslims and Christians apart and nurtures fear, distrust and suspicion and this cripples the process of dialogue.

The same situation is discernible in Jos where Fr. Gotan maintains that:

Muslims have decided to take over the area and have started naming some streets after Hausa people. This may be considered insignificant but when you consider that a part of the town is named New Jerusalem by Christians and Muslims are naming them in an Islamic fashion, it becomes a very serious issue. For now we are just polarised and people are living in pockets. Some areas are totally Christian and others completely Muslim and this lack of integration borders on mutual suspicion.

So Kaduna and Jos have now become like Kano. One of the features of Kano is that Mosques and Churches rarely exist in the same areas and are usually sited in places where either Muslims or Christians are in the majority. Dr. Ahmad describes how this is now becoming true of Kaduna:

As a result of this situation, Kaduna is divided into two: Muslim areas and Christian areas. Areas that were completely mixed are now completely separate. When you go there, in some areas you will find only Muslims and some areas you will find only Christians. If a Christian is living in a Muslim area as far as the Christians are concerned, it is his own business and if a Muslim is living among Christians it is his own business whatever happens to him, everybody is changing grounds. A lot of churches in the Muslim areas are up for sale because nobody will come to church there again. Similarly in the Christian area mosques are being abandoned. Most of Kaduna South is

now Christian, while Kaduna North and Central is Muslim. They are separated completely because of repeated violence.

The segregated existence is non-interference taken to its ultimate limit. Sadly enough, and as Archbishop Jatau notes above, the environment of suspicion and mutual mistrust that a ghetto existence nurtures does not facilitate dialogue. Kaduna also serves as an example of how the liberation programme is not practicable in Northern Nigeria. In the aftermath of the crisis, the *Shari'a* was selectively implemented in areas that are classed Muslim quarters, leaving the Christians to their own programme.

* * * * *

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the possibility of fashioning a common programme of liberation for Northern Nigeria, with the aim of resolving our final sub-problem. While some of my respondents think that Islam and Christianity share some values that could serve as the wellspring for this programme, others think that its practicability is out of the question due to the polarisation of the two communities. This led to some of my respondents suggesting a non-religious programme, which religion could inspire. Other respondents, however, reiterated the significance of religion in the lives of the people and this region, making the point that any programme that does not resonate with their religions would be obsolete. The principle of non-interference that characterises the region, which is taken to its ultimate limit in voluntary segregation, however, shatters any optimism for a common religious programme of liberation. It is therefore safe to say that even though the liberation method of interreligious dialogue is relevant to Northern Nigeria, it is not practicable.

CONCLUSION

I. REVISITING THE HYPOTHESIS

In my preface, I framed my study in terms of two related questions, which I hoped this dissertation would answer: Is the liberation method of interreligious dialogue relevant to Northern Nigeria? If this model does not function in a region ridden with poverty and injustice, what is the factor that facilitates interreligious dialogue? The research questions in my survey questionnaire and interview served as heuristic devices: conceptual jumping-off points for the critique of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue. In this sense, my primary research questions reflected my biases and prior opinions. Recognising my biased position (that the liberation method of interreligious dialogue is applicable to situations of poverty and injustices), I wanted to leave the research questions as open-ended as possible to allow my analysis to be grounded in a particular socio-historical context, Northern Nigeria, rather than in my preconceptions. I wanted to find out the relevance of this model of dialogue in that part of the world.

My data collection and analysis focused on three vital sub-problems required to answer the research question: Is the liberation method of interreligious dialogue relevant to the Northern Nigeria? What is the cause of Muslim-Christian conflicts in the region? And is a common programme of liberation, drawing from Islamic and Christian, sources possible? The result that emerged revealed that the liberation method of interreligious dialogue is relevant to Northern Nigeria. Unfortunately, Muslim-Christian conflicts in the region result because Islam and Christianity shape the ethnic, political and socio-economic lives of their adherents. Coming across as self-contained traditions, their

followers fail to acknowledge an epistemological crisis. This failure results in a form of mutual exclusivity that renders the fashioning and subsequent implementation of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue, though relevant, impossible. Even the absence of an intellectual strand of liberation theology in Northern Nigeria has not helped in the articulation of a common liberation programme, steeped in popular religiosity. On the contrary, we have two parallel popular liberation programmes.

The fundamental differences between the two religious traditions apart, the inimical relationship between the two faiths in the region fans the embers of rivalry. Consequently, the importance of appreciating this relationship in understanding the dynamics at work in the region cannot be overstated. In any case, one has to be careful not to give the impression that the two religions are watertight compartments that exclude interactions between their adherents or that their adherents possess monolithic identities. My interviewees made the point that Muslims and Christians do interact on many issues, but that common sense dictates that they exclude religion from popular discourse because it is highly volatile. In fact, Muslims attend mission schools and adopt Western values, superficially, in some respects. Christians are also influenced by Islamic civilisation and it is not uncommon to hear a Christian bearing a Muslim name¹ and donning Islamic clothing. The level of interaction and cross-fertilisation, defined by May as “common

¹ My family name for example, is Salihu it is derived from the Arabic *al-salih*, which means the righteous one. One of my sisters bears the name Raqiya and two of my brothers bear Musa and Balarabe, respectively, because they were born in a predominantly Islamic environment and my parents had no qualms about accepting those names from their neighbours.

places of day-to-day experiences” and Habermas as “unanalysable background”, is high indeed.

Unfortunately, since religion is systematically excluded from this dimension of relationship, it has not translated into the desired openness that could lead to genuine pluralism. Consequently, religion in the region is bound to up the ante instead of constituting an instrument of peace. Ironically, religion is also a victim in the process because most of the issues that spark the conflicts are not doctrinal in nature but are rather mundane and secular issues. Religion is merely invoked as an instrument used in bargaining for a share in the scarce resources in the region. The failure of the state to provide for the common people also means their disengagement from the socio-political process and a fervent engagement with their respective religions. This has in recent times significantly reversed the process of integration between Muslims and Christians in the region. This being the case, even issues of injustice and poverty are not strong enough to create a bridge between the adherents of the different religious traditions, as they seek to address the deplorable situation. Rather both Muslims and Christians turn inwards to the values of their respective religious traditions to deal with the situation in a manner that exclude those who are outside their boundaries.

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

As aforementioned, my choice of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue is deliberate. The background of this dissertation has established its significance. It is the only method of dialogue that takes the postmodern awareness seriously while still arguing for the possibility of a common ground. Knitter, its key proponent, argues that

the issues of poverty, injustice and ecological devastation, could constitute a common ground extraneous to the religions. These issues affect people across the religious divides and threaten the well-being of our planet. Hence, they cannot be safely ignored. This being the case, it is a relevant model, even in the face of postmodern awareness. Yet, the Northern Nigerian experiment has demonstrated that its relevance does not prove that the method itself or the issues it addresses are sufficient to constitute a common context for interreligious encounter. The impracticability of the liberation method of interreligious dialogue, therefore, forces us to review the dynamic responsible for interreligious encounter. Within Northern Nigeria, we realise that the failure to fashion a common programme for liberation arises from the perception of Islam and Christianity as self-contained traditions, so much so that their followers do not acknowledge an epistemological crisis.

The Northern Nigerian experience therefore demonstrates the indispensability of the acknowledging this crisis to interreligious dialogue. It is sometimes assumed that plurality, as a matter of course, leads to genuine pluralism. The region, however, presents us with a different picture. Islam and Christianity, though sharing and influencing the same public space, reveal themselves as incommensurable religious systems and their schema of permeability only manifests in polemics and violence. So while their adherents could interact on mundane everyday activities, they lack healthy interreligious interactions. Our data analysis reveals that what comes close to dialogue is peaceful co-existence and the seemingly unwritten agreement of mutual non-interference in religion. This smacks of the acceptance model of the postliberals and their 'good

neighbour' policy.² What is needed to transcend this mindset is for Muslims and Christians to realise the potentials that exist, in the rival religious tradition, for their enrichment. Only then would genuine conversation take place.

Another major implication of this study relates to the idea of establishing a common ground for interreligious dialogue. One of the major challenges from the postliberals is the realisation that religious concepts should not be divorced from the context within which they evolved and within which they are nurtured. I believe this is what Lindbeck tries to express in his cultural linguistic model of religion. Some modifications are, however, necessary because even within the same religious tradition cultural determinism abounds, so that we cannot speak of one Christian or Islamic culture. The Christian culture in Latin America differs from the one in India, for example and Christians in India may understand Hindus in that country better than they would Christians in Latin America. This is because a universal religion is such because it allows itself to be shaped by its context.

Having established this, it is necessary to take Lindbeck seriously. Religious concepts are products of a narrative and are shaped and reformulated with reference to a given context. The truth is the product of a narrative that has taken shape or has been reformulated with reference to a particular context. One of my interviewees, Fr. Tanko made it clear that his assumption that Muslims and Christians share uniform concepts was shattered in his interaction with Muslims. His experience goes to confirm that we cannot extract religious concepts from their context, in an essentialist manner, in an effort

² Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing the Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002) pp.

183-185.

to fashion common religious programmes. This is true in relation to the global ethics of Hans Küng. That this process is unrealistic is reflected in the process of reception, when none of the traditions involved in dialogue implements the fruits of such dialogues.

The presupposition of such an approach is that there is a neutral common context that could serve as a referent for the divergent religions. This shows that dialogical theologians, even when they profess a postmodern awareness, are still obsessed with the desire of fashioning a common context for interreligious dialogue. This is the goal of the liberation theologians of interreligious dialogue. Reviewing a context like Northern Nigeria and the problem it poses one cannot help but wonder if such a common context is an absolute necessity, or even a possibility in the first place? In any case, that does not mean that communication cannot take place across the different religious traditions. What it implies is that the extraction of seemingly common values and beliefs with reference to a neutral common ground is not possible. The comparative theology of religion takes this awareness on board by calling for a cross-fertilisation between the different religious traditions rather than the search, *a priori*, for a common ground.

The existence of a common ground divorced from a given tradition, a neutral ground on which the religions could encounter each other, is not true to life. For a healthy engagement, each religion must be encountered on its own ground, its own sacred space. Dialogue, therefore, requires the entrance into the worldview of a given religion to encounter the truth, both as an articulated and as a lived reality, expressed in life forms. Only after an immersion into the worldview of another religion can one appreciate its narrative, its presuppositions, its nuances and its lived form. Perhaps

Jacques Derrida's concept of hospitality³ would be helpful in this direction. He is of the view that hospitality cannot take place without the power of the host, which stems from his ownership of the arena of the encounter and the otherness of the guest, which allows for the possibility of hostility. Someone who invites another to a public place or his neighbour's house does not qualify as a host. It is the ownership of property that allows the host to say to the guest: "Feel at home."

The interesting, dimension, however is that this invitation is self-limiting because of the power of the host over his property. According to him: "When the host says to the guest, "Make yourself at home," this is a self-limiting invitation: "Make yourself at home means: please feel at home, act as if you were at home, but, remember, that is not true, this is not your home but mine, and you are expected to respect my property."⁴ So hospitality does not involve the host surrendering his property or identity to the guest. It is this tension that makes hospitality possible and also challenges the host to go beyond conventions and exercise excess:

That requires that the host must in a moment of madness, tear up the understanding between him and the guest, act with "excess," make an absolute gift of his property, which is of course impossible. But that is the only way the guest can go away feeling as if he was really made at home.⁵

³ John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in A Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997) pp. 109-113.

⁴ John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in*, P. 111.

⁵ John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in*, p.111.

It is this gift, central to hospitality, which binds the guest to the host in gratitude and makes reciprocation of hospitality possible. Even though Derrida gives power to the stranger (his alterity) he does not see the stranger as the bearer of a gift, which attracts his hosts. The Irish proverb on hospitality makes up for this deficiency and allows for the fact that the gift presented to the stranger is a reciprocation of the gift that the guest brings with him. It states: “The hand of the stranger is the hand of God.” The guest therefore does not come empty handed or incidentally, he is a carrier of a “particular gift and illumination.”⁶

Deriving from the principles of hospitality outlined above, it is safe to make some assumptions in respect of interreligious dialogue. Since a host cannot tell his guest to feel at home in his neighbour’s house or a public place, then it follows that a neutral common ground does not have a place in a genuine dialogue. The ground of dialogue is always the property of a given tradition. As we have shown in our critique of liberation, in chapter one, it is clear that liberalism is itself a tradition and the “neutral” common ground that it presents is not after all so neutral. So the even if the religious traditions acknowledge an epistemological crisis, the question of extracting their values and beliefs into a neutral common context is impossible because no such context exists in reality.

Hospitality demands that dialogue entails one religious tradition hosting another religious tradition because it recognises that it has a “particular gift and illumination”

⁶ John O’Donohue, *Anam Cara: Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World* (London: Bantam Press, 1997) p.

40. It is not uncommon in Nigeria for poor villagers visiting their better-off relations in the urban areas to take with them some agricultural produce (usually a live chicken). It is taken for granted that the visitors should not go to their hosts empty handed, irrespective of the level of their poverty.

with, which to grace it. The host tradition does not surrender its identity or its sacred space because it is the ownership of these that gives it the potentiality of a host. On the other hand, the guest tradition retains its alterity, hence posing the risk of hostility, because that is what gives it the potential of a guest. This tension in the dialogue may lead the host tradition to suspend the rules and offer its sacred space to the guest in what Derrida terms the “moment of madness” so that the guest tradition could feel truly at home but as the guest tradition cannot take over this sacred space without losing its alterity the tendency would be for it to reciprocate by inviting the host tradition into its sacred space and so the circle continues. What is discernible in the process is the existence of a network of common grounds, within which encounters between the various religious traditions could take place.

This dissertation began with the exploration of the common ground for interreligious dialogue and the generation of conflicting models that attend the search. The choice of the liberation method, that seeks to establish such a common ground, was necessitated because of its recognition of the postmodern awareness. My findings in Northern Nigeria, however, go to show the difficulty of establishing a neutral common ground, even where liberation is relevant. In the light of the postmodern awareness, even when the acknowledgement of an epistemological crisis facilitates dialogue, we cannot hope for a neutral common ground. What seems open is the existence of a network of common grounds. Summarily, my findings imply that interreligious dialogue must move from its essentialist orientation and begin a healthy appreciation of particularities, with all the challenges that this transition involves.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The Role of Religion in the Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria

Hello my name is Salihu Joseph. I am doing a Doctoral Dissertation for the University of Dublin on "The Role of Religion in the Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria." I would be grateful if you spend some 4-5 minutes answering the following questions.

1. What is the socio-economic situation in Nigeria?

Sound _____ Fair _____ Deplorable _____

2. Does the economy have any impact on the practice of religion?

Yes _____ No _____

3. Does your religion have the capacity to transform our socio-economic situation?

Yes _____ No _____

4. What is the state of Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria?

Cordial _____ Tense _____ Deplorable _____

5. What is responsible for the current state of relationship

Politics _____ Economy _____ Religion _____ Ethnicity _____

6. Would you subscribe to any socio-economic programme that is not in line with your religion but capable of transforming the current Nigerian situation?

Yes _____ No _____

7. How often do you read your Bible or *Qur'an*?

Often _____ Sometimes _____ Seldom _____

8. What would you consider the preaching of your Imam or Minister?

An opinion _____ A mere directive _____ A divine directive _____

9. Would you work on a religious project with someone who is not of your religion?

Yes _____ No _____

10. Which of following give direction to your life?

Bible/*Qur'an* _____ Media _____ Constitution _____ Family _____

11. How often do you say your personal prayers?

Daily _____ Weekly _____ At random _____

12. Would you be willing to change some aspects of your beliefs if someone of another religion gives you a reason to do so?

Yes _____ No _____

13. Do you consider the *Qur'an*/Bible to be a revelation word for word from God?

Yes _____ No _____

14. Do you think that religious revivals are motivated by the current economic situation?

Yes _____ No _____

15. If you find any teaching questionable in your religion will you be willing to give it up?

Yes _____ No _____

16. Do you think that only those of your religion can be saved?

Yes _____ No _____

17. Do you think that leaders of religious revivals are motivated by solely spiritual reasons?

Yes _____ No _____

18. Should religion be separated from politics?

Yes _____ No _____

19. The community needs to be transformed before individuals can become religious.

True _____ False _____

20. Do you belong to any social or political organisation?

Yes _____ No _____

(If yes, go to Question 20b and if no, go on to Question 21)

20b. What is the name of the organisation(s)? _____

21. Do you belong to any political party?

Yes _____

No _____

22. How did you become an adherent of your religion?

By birth _____

Conversion _____

23. If you are a Christian, have ever read the *Qur'an* and if you are a Muslim, have you ever read the Bible?

Yes _____

No _____

24. Have you ever studied any other religion apart from your own?

Yes _____

No _____

25. Do you find any aspect of your faith questionable?

Yes _____

No _____

26. Do you listen to any religious programme other than your own?

Yes _____

No _____

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the socio-economic situation in Northern Nigeria?
2. How does the situation impact on the practice of religion?
3. Can religion transform the situation?
4. In a multi-religious situation like Nigeria, can the religions fashion a common programme to transform the socio-economic situation?
5. What is cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Northern Nigeria?

APPENDIX 3

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRES

No.	Options	Teachers	A.B.U.	B.U.K.	Uni-Jos	Total
1.	Sound	0	0	1	2	3
	Fair	34	22	18	20	94
	Deplorable	19	22	29	28	98
2.	Yes	47	40	35	47	169
	No	5	6	14	4	29
3.	Yes	48	38	44	44	174
	No	4	8	2	6	20
4.	Cordial	2	2	11	0	15
	Tensed	42	40	29	40	151
	Deplorable	10	4	9	10	33
5.	Politics	21	30	18	37	106
	Economy	7	3	5	4	19
	Religion	14	4	7	5	30
	Ethnicity	7	7	18	4	36
6.	Yes	33	38	28	32	131
	No	21	8	20	16	65
7.	Often	44	31	26	33	134
	Sometimes	9	14	19	17	59
	Seldom	1	0	3	1	5
8.	An Opinion	2	5	3	6	16
	A Mere Directive	7	8	6	6	27
	Divine Directive	43	31	40	39	153
9.	Yes	38	31	34	36	139
	No	14	11	8	11	44
10.	Bible/ <i>Qur'an</i>	48	38	44	42	172
	Media	0	0	1	0	1
	Constitution	1	2	2	1	6
	Family	0	5	1	7	13
11.	Daily	48	33	40	46	167
	Weekly	0	1	1	0	2
	At Random	6	11	7	5	29
12.	Yes	13	6	5	17	41
	No	39	40	43	34	156

13.	Yes No	45 9	42 4	47 2	46 3	180 18
14.	Yes No	31 21	21 23	26 20	32 18	110 82
15.	Yes No	29 25	24 18	21 27	34 16	108 86
16.	Yes No	10 43	18 25	18 29	16 33	62 130
17.	Yes No	13 40	16 28	18 29	16 33	62 130
18.	Yes No	33 21	37 9	17 31	40 11	127 72
19.	True False	27 25	19 25	27 21	26 24	99 95
20.	Yes No	9 42	13 31	17 30	18 31	57 134
21.	Yes No	2 43	9 36	10 37	14 36	35 152
22.	Birth Conversion	45 7	38 8	46 3	44 7	173 25
23.	Yes No	24 30	22 23	39 10	25 26	110 89
24.	Yes No	16 38	23 23	27 22	23 38	89 111
25.	Yes No	10 44	9 37	4 44	8 43	31 168
26.	Yes No	38 15	30 16	42 7	41 10	151 48

APPENDIX 4

TABLE OF RESPONSES FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

I. The Relevance of the Liberation Method of Dialogue

No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	What is the socio-economic situation of Nigeria?	Sound Fair Deplorable	3 94 98	1.5% 47.0% 49.0%
2	Does the economy have any impact on the practice of religion?	Yes No	169 29	84.5% 14.5%
3	Does your religion have the capacity to transform the situation?	Yes No	174 20	87.0% 10.0%
6	Would you subscribe to any socio-economic programme that is not in line with your religion but capable of transforming the current Nigerian situation?	Yes No	131 65	65.0% 32.5%
9	Would you work on a religious project with someone who is not of your religion?	Yes No	139 44	69.5% 22.0%
14	Do you think that religious revivals are motivated by the current economic situation?	Yes No	110 82	55.0% 41.0%

II. Muslim-Christian Relations in Northern Nigeria

No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
4	What is the current state of Muslim Christian relations in Nigeria?	Cordial	15	7.5%
		Tensed	151	75.5%
		Deplorable	33	16.5%
5	What is responsible for the current state of relationship?	Politics	106	53.0%
		Economy	19	9.5%
		Religion	30	15.0%
		Ethnic	36	18.0%
16	Do you think that only those of your religion can be saved?	Yes	62	31.0%
		No	130	65.0%
17	Do you think religious leaders are motivated by solely spiritual reasons?	Yes	54	27.0%
		No	141	70.5%

III. The Feasibility of a Common Ground

No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
7	How often do you read the Bible/Qur'an?	Often	134	67.0%
		Sometimes	59	29.5%
		Seldom	5	2.5%
8	What would you consider the preaching of your Imam or Minister?	An opinion	16	8.0%
		A mere directive	27	13.5%
		A divine directive	153	76.5%
10	Which of following directs your life?	Bible/Qur'an	172	86.0%
		Media	1	0.5%
		Constitution	6	3.0%
		Family	13	6.5%
11	How often do you say your personal prayers?	Daily	167	83.5%
		Weekly	2	1.0%
		At random	29	14.5%
12	Would you be willing to change some aspects of your beliefs if someone of another religion gives you a reason to do so?	Yes	41	20.5%
		No	156	78.0%

13	Do you consider the Bible/Qur'an a revelation word for word from God?	Yes No	180 18	90.0% 9.0%
15	If you find any teaching questionable in your religion will you be willing to give it up?	Yes No	108 86	54.0% 43.0%
18	Should religion be separated from politics?	Yes No	127 72	63.5% 36.0%
19	The community needs to be transformed before individuals can become religious.	True False	99 95	49.5% 47.5%
20	Do you belong to any social or political organisation?	Yes No	57 134	28.5% 67.0%
21	Do you belong to any political party?	Yes No	35 152	17.5% 76.0%
22	How did you become an adherent of your religion?	Birth Conversion	173 25	86.5% 12.5%
24	Have you ever studied any other religion apart from your own?	Yes No	89 111	44.5% 55.5%
23	If you are Christian, have you ever read the Qur'an; if you are a Muslim, have ever read the Bible?	Yes No	110 89	55.0% 44.5%
26	Do you listen to any religious programme apart from your own?	Yes No	151 48	75.5% 24.0%
25	Do you find any aspect of your faith questionable?	Yes No	31 168	15.5% 84.0%

APPENDIX 5

KADUNA PEACE DECLARATION OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS

In the name of God, who is Almighty, Merciful and Compassionate, we who have gathered as Muslim and Christian religious leaders from Kaduna State to pray for peace in our State and declare our commitment to ending the violence and bloodshed, which has marred our recent history.

According to our faiths killing innocent lives in the name of God is a desecration of His Holy Name, and defames religions in the world. The violence that has occurred in Kaduna State is an evil that must be opposed by all people of good faith. We seek to live together as neighbours, respecting the integrity of each other's historical and religious heritage. We call upon all to oppose incitement, hatred and the misrepresentation of one another.

1. **Muslims and Christians** of all tribes must respect the divinely ordained purposes of the Creator, by whose grace we live together in Kaduna State, such ordained purposes include freedom of worship, access to and sanctity of places of worship and justice among others.
2. **As religious leaders**, we seek to work with all sections of the community for a lasting and just peace according to the teachings of our religions.
3. **We condemn** all forms of violence and seek to create an atmosphere where present and future generations will co-exist with mutual respect and trust in one another. We call upon all to refrain from incitement and demonization, and pledge to educate our young people accordingly.

4. **Through the creation** of a peaceful State, we seek to explore how together we can aid spiritual regeneration, economic development and inward investment.
5. **We acknowledge** the efforts that have been made within this State for a judicial reform and pledge to do all in our power to promote greater understanding of the reform, so that it can provide a true and respected justice in each of our communities.
6. **We pledge** to work with the security forces in peace keeping and implementation of this declaration in the State.
7. **We announce** the establishment of a permanent joint committee to implement the recommendations of this declaration and encourage dialogue between the two faiths, for we believe that dialogue will result in the restoration of the image of each in the eyes of the other.

This declaration is binding on all people in the State, from this day of 22nd August 2002 and we agree that any individual or group found breaching the peace must be punished in accordance to the due process of the law.

APPENDIX 6

THE STATUS OF THE *DHIMMI* (NON-MUSLIM) UNDER AN ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT

The *Dhimmi* is forbidden to:

1. carry or possess weapons under the pain of death.
2. raise a hand against a Muslim, even against an aggressor unjustly determined to kill him.
3. ally himself with the enemies of the Arab.
4. criticise Islam, the prophet or the angels.
5. convert to any religion other than Islam, having converted to Islam to revert to one's original religion.
6. be linked by marriage or concubinage to a Muslim woman.
7. hold a position giving him authority over a Muslim.
8. live in the same area with Muslims, in special quarters of a town, the gates of which were closed every evening or as in "Yemen" outside limits of towns inhabited by Muslims.
9. have superior houses than those of Muslims.
10. practice their religion openly, it must be in secret and in silence.
11. delay the burial of dead members. They must be buried hastily.

12. show in public, religious objects such as crosses, banners or sacred tracts, or Bibles.
13. distinguish not only by shape (length, style of sleeves), etc. but also by specific colours assigned to each group of *dhimena* (non-Muslims).
14. have the same type of tombs as those of Muslims.
15. go near mosques or to enter certain towns which would thereby be polluted.
16. have headdresses, belt, shoes, ornate saddles or similar saddles to those of Muslims – all elements or their exterior appearance being intended to emphasise their humble and object status.
17. ride horses, camels, big cars, since these were considered too noble for them.
18. ride donkeys or low-grade vehicles outside the cities and they had to dismount on sighting Muslims.
19. not to wear distinctive badges in the public baths and in certain regions were even forbidden to enter them at all.
20. walk casually in the streets, he/she must always pass to the left (impure) side of Muslims, who were advised to push them to the way.
21. walk with eyes raised. The eyes must be lowered.
22. insult a Muslim. They are obliged to accept insult without replying.
23. sit down, but they are obliged to remain standing in a humble and respectful attitude in the presence of a Muslim.
24. sit in the best places in gathering. They are obliged to leave Muslims the best places.

25. speak first to a Muslim. They are obliged never to speak to Muslims except to reply.
26. any litigation between a non-Muslim and a Muslim was brought before an Islamic tribunal where the non-Muslim testimony was unaccepted.
27. refuse digging Muslim graves for Muslims – especially in North Africa and Yemen.
28. refuse being a cleaner of public toilets.
29. kill a Muslim. The murderer of a non-Muslim is rarely punished as he could justify his act by accusing his victim of blasphemy against Islam or of having assaulted a Muslim.
30. have a right over their own land.¹

¹ Cited by Rev. Dr. Peter Bauna Tanko, “The Socio-Economic Status of Christians in the Northern States”, an unpublished paper presented at Arewa House, Kaduna.

APPENDIX 7

TREATY GRANTED TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT BY *AMIR AL-MU'MININ*, ALIYU OF SOKOTO, 2ND MAY 1853.

To continue, the Sultan [sic] of the state of the English [i.e. England] whose name [lit. his name] is Victoria, wishing to conclude a treaty (*amana*) of buying and selling [i.e. commerce] with the sultan of the Muslims, sent 'Abd al-Karim, Henry Barth. The Emir of Sokoto, 'Ali the *Amir al-Mu'minin*- having heard and understood the discourse of 'Abd al-Karim, the messenger of the Queen of England, gave his consent and granted to the English a treaty of commerce on the following conditions:

Traders from England shall travel under safe-conduct throughout the territories of the *Amir al-Mu'minin*, 'Ali, with their children, their property and their mounts and they shall lose nothing- not even a tether- as they come and go at their good pleasure. Neither in speech shall they hear that which may be loathsome to them nor shall any oppressor harm them.

No Governor in the territories of 'Ali shall lay hold of them nor shall any danger befall them. They shall return safely with their property and their honour inviolate.

If any one indebted to them delays in payment, *Amir al-Muminin* 'Ali shall recover the debt for them from the debtor.

If any of them 'i.e. the English traders' dies, the *Amir al-Mu'minin* shall extract the tenth ('*ushr*) from his property and the remainder shall be in custody of the *Amir al-Muminin* until the nearest to his territory among the agents of England 'i.e. consuls' sends for it.

They shall traffic in everything except slaves for the *Amir al-Muminin* will not allow them to purchase slaves. This is all. Peace.

Date of Inditement

23 *Rajab* 1269 (2nd May 1853).²

² This is typical of the treaty, which the Islamic regents designed and presented with respect to British commercial interest. Cited in R. E. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria 1804-1906: The Sokoto Caliphate and its Enemies* (London: Longman, 1971) p. 334.

APPENDIX 8

LETTER FROM AMIR AL-MU'MININ 'ABD AL-RAHMAN TO THE ROYAL NIGER COMPANY, C. 1899-1900

In the name of God the Merciful the beneficent, the peace of God be upon the noble prophet.

[seal]

To the Royal Niger Company Limited. The fullest regards and the purest greetings. To continue, that you may know that we have received your letter and we understand your words.

But, as for us, our Lord is *Allah* (may He be exalted), our creator and possessor. We take [i.e. go by] what our Prophet, Muhammad (upon him be peace) brought to us. As He [God] said: Whatever comes to you from the Messenger take it – the verse- [i.e. of the *Qur'an*]. Thus, we shall not change it for anything until our end. Do not send to us after this. Peace.³

³ This is indicative of the breakdown in communication, which the manifest European desire to dominate the Islamic regents occasioned. Cited in R. E. Adeleye, *Power and*, p. 334.

APPENDIX 9

THE FOLLOWING IS EXTRACTED FROM *SARKIN KUDU*, ZUBEIRU'S LETTER TO THE CALIPH

The Christians have brought war on us. We were warned and believed not, but I heard this news last year from Nupe.... Further to tell you that the rule of Christians has reached our town Yola, only but not over me as I escaped and those with me.... You will learn if *Allah* wills, of the position between us and the Christians. I will not be double-faced towards you and the Christians. My allegiance is to you by Allah and the Prophet and after you the *Imam Mahdi*. I shall not follow the unbelievers even if my towns are captured.⁴

⁴ This is indicative of the mistaken identification of the Europeans with Christians. H. F. Blackwell, *The Occupation of Hausaland 1900-1904 Being Translation of Arabic letters found in the House of the Waziri of Sokoto, Bohari in 1903* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1969) Letter 112, pp. 67-68.

APPENDIX 10

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES AND DATES

Mr. Harold Blackburn	16/7/2002
Chief Gabriel Musa	16/7/2002
Architect Sani Sagab	17/7/2002
Mrs. Matina Adeboye	18/7/2002
Barrister Steve Adehi	18/7/2002
Rev. Dr. Gabriel A. Ojo	19/7/2002
Councillor Vitalis Onyeze	22/7/2002
Hajia Fatima Kwaku	23/7/2002
Alhaji Idris Kulya Umar	24/7/2002
Mr. Sunday Salami	24/7/2002
Alhaji Ibrahim Dalhatu	24/7/2002
Dr. Ahmed Rufai Inuwa	24/7/2002
Barrister Eucharia Duru	25/7/2002
Dr. Datti Ahmad	25/7/2002
Professor Emmanuel Olofin	26/7/2002
Rev. Fr. Marinus Iwuchukwu	27/7/2002
Alhaji Tanko Yakassai	27/7/2002
Professor Attahiru Jega	29/7/2002
Rev. Dr. Joseph Mamman	05/8/2002
Dr. M. G. A. Raji	06/8/2002
Professor Stephen Nkom	07/8/2002
Archbishop Peter Yariyok Jatau	13/8/2002
Rev. Dr. Peter Bauna Tanko	14/8/2002
Rev. James Movel	20/8/2002
Ustas Mohammed Ashafa	20/8/2002
Rev. James Kabuk	20/8/2002
Ibrahim Isah Kufena	20/8/2002
Rev. Fr. Cletus Gotan	28/8/2002
Mr. Rotzin Dimka	26/8/2002
Rev. Dr. Matthew Hassan Kukah	02/1/2003