



**DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CROSS AND THE CRESCENT:  
TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE PEACEBUILDING STRATEGY AND  
TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA**

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## DECLARATION

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TO MPA AND MMA;  
MY BROTHERS CHRISTOPHER, NDUBUISI, NNADOZIE AND JUDE;  
MY LATE SISTERS OLUCHI, NGOZI AND ESTHER;  
TO MY ONE TRUE FRIEND INDEED JULIA;  
THEY HAVE BEEN MY SOURCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT  
WHICH HAS INSPIRED ME TOWARDS A POSITIVE INTERNAL DIALOGUE  
AND TO REALISE EFFECTIVE PEACE OF MIND AND HEART.

## **PREFACE**

Part of the motivation for this study is the fact that growing up in the small city of Umuahia in Abia State Nigeria, the present writer who hails from a Christian background lived together with Muslims. Many of them were friends and I enjoyed the socialization and religious ceremonies of the Muslims who were good neighbours. But never did I enter the Central Mosque at Umuahia, as the perception among us young Christians growing up is that it is a place not meant for Christians. But during my theological studies in South Africa, I was privileged to engage in a dialogue of sharing of religious experience with Muslims, which took me to worship with them in their Mosque in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu Natal. That was an eye opener that indeed it is possible and fruitful to engage in this kind of experience. Unfortunately, this experience and its potentially enriching results and ability to help in rebuilding relationships between religions are lost because of perceived mutual prejudices among the members of different religions. My intention in this study then, is to explore the importance of the different forms of dialogue as envisaged by theologians and peace builders alike in providing a strategy for realising sustainable peace in areas ridden with religious conflicts like Nigeria.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AD	-	<i>Anno Domini</i>
CAN	-	Christian Association of Nigeria
IMC	-	Interfaith Mediation Centre
JNI	-	<i>Jama'atu Nasril Islam</i>
NIREC	-	Nigeria Inter-Religious Council
NSCIA	-	Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs
OIC	-	Organization of the Islamic Conference
PCR	-	Peace and Conflict Research

**“Until there is peace between religions, there can be no peace in the world.”**

~ Thich Nhat Hanh (1995:1)

**“Reconciliation is not pursued by seeking innovative ways to disengage or minimize the conflicting groups’ affiliations, but instead is built on mechanisms that engage the sides of a conflict with each other as humans-in-relationship.... Reconciliation, in essence, represents a place, the point of encounter where concerns about both the past and the future can meet.... For this to happen, people must find ways to encounter themselves and their enemies, their hopes and their fears.”**

~ John Paul Lederach (1997:27)

## ABSTRACT AND KEY TERMS

### ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, there is a history of animosity and escalating violence between Christians and Muslims. Nigeria today is characterized by rivalries and instability engendered by the mutual prejudices and exclusivist attitudes among some members of these religions. The factors that have negatively influenced the relationship between the members of these religions can be traced in the history of the inception of these religions in Nigeria. The historical animosity between these religions is also embedded in, and influenced by ethno-political factors. While this research will look at Nigeria's problems from a religious angle, it is also important to note that, it is not often so much the religion but the use and abuse of religion for ethno-political and socio-economic ends that provokes the animosity and sustains conflict in a nation like Nigeria. Using John Paul Lederach's Integrated Model of peacebuilding as theoretical framework, this study will argue that Christianity and Islam have resources that can be used to transform animosity and conflict to sustainable peace. This research will further argue that dialogue is a mechanism that will enable the members of these religions in Nigeria to come together towards reconciliation and rebuilding their relationship. Finally, using Lederach's framework this research will critically discuss the roles of different leadership levels in facilitating sustainable peace in Nigeria.

**KEY TERMS:** *Religious Conflicts, Lederach's Integrated Model, Religious Peacebuilding, Religion, Christianity, Islam, Inter-faith Dialogue, Boko Haram, Nigeria.*

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

There is a history of religious conflicts between certain Muslims and Christians in many parts of the world. The causes and effects of these conflicts can be partly traced to the history of the inceptions of these religions which has seen Christians regarding Muslims as heretics and Muslims regarding Christians as infidels (Coward, 1985:22; Watt, 1983:3). However, apart from this historical factor, conflict between Christians and Muslims in many countries is also influenced and exacerbated by other ethnic, political, economic, cultural variables (Fox, 1999; 2000; Smock, 2008). There is also the reality that many fundamentalists affiliated to these two religions are complicit in engendering an atmosphere of animosity and violence against members of other religions (Thomson, 2012; Samson, 2012). On this, we can situate the current phenomenon of terrorism carried out in the name of religion and the discussions centering on the war on terror proclaimed by America in the aftermath of the September, 11 2001 terrorists' attacks. Some in the West do interpret the 9/11 attacks as an instance of Islamic *jihad* against America (Jacobs, 2013). On the other hand, many Muslims do see the subsequent war on terror, as a form of crusade against the Muslim world (Leardi, 2006). Furthermore, there is also the case that some do carry out violence in the name of the said religions for ethno-political and economic purposes (Smock, 2008; Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). The problem is complicated but ultimately boils down to establishing a situation of animosity between members of the two religions.

Contextually, Nigeria today is characterized by rivalries and instability engendered by the mutual prejudices among the members of these religions. In this also, there is an acknowledgement of the impact that the ethnic, political, economic, cultural variables make in aggravating these rivalries and instabilities. The resultant acrimonious relationship and conflict between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria can be seen in the examples of Kaduna-Enugu (1999), Kano (2000), Jos-Plateau (2001), ethno-religious conflicts (to mention a few cases).<sup>1</sup> These have led to the deaths of so many from both sides, namely, the Cross (Christians) and the Crescent (Muslims) and serve to substantiate the seriousness of the problem. The problem has been exacerbated by the politicization of religion in Nigeria which

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<sup>1</sup> See further Salawu (2010); Muhammad (2008)

has been attributed to pre-independence politicians like Sir Ahmadu Bello (Kukah, 1993; Enwerem, 1995; Muhammad, 2008). Today, the members of these two religions are still being used and their religious fundamentalist attitude and apparent disagreement on issues of faith, is continuously being appropriated by some politicians to foment and perpetuate ethno-religious conflicts in the country. Some politicians play on the religious and ethnic feelings of the members of the two religions, to unleash mayhem on people of other religious and ethnic backgrounds. Hence, the emergence of such violent Islamic fundamentalist sects like the *Boko Haram* (which means “Western education is sin”) in the North of Nigeria and whose *raison d’etre* keeps changing from political to religious (Maiangwa & Uzodike, 2012; Mustapha, 2012).<sup>2</sup> It can be surmised that it is because the members of these religions allow themselves to be used for ethno-political and ethno-religious purposes that their potential for peacebuilding becomes relegated and conflict becomes the status quo.

Hence, the focus of this study will be to find a basis of understanding on which the conflicting parties can come together towards rebuilding their relationship in order to realize their peacebuilding resources and potentials. Using some aspects of John Paul Lederach’s Integrated Model of peacebuilding this study seeks to present a religious peacebuilding strategy towards transforming the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. As regards the research problems and objectives of the study, the key questions and broader issues to be investigated include:

- What historical factors have led to mutual prejudices and have negatively influenced the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria? The study will explore the history of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria, in order to identify the factors that have negatively influenced their relationship and have led to mutual prejudices.
- Are there resources in Christianity and Islam which undergird their ability to reach reconciliation and rebuild their relationship towards peace in Nigeria? The study will seek to explore the resources, if any, available in Christianity and Islam which can help towards reconciliation and rebuilding the relationship between Christians and Muslims towards the task of peacebuilding in Nigeria.
- What is the best strategy towards realizing the project of rebuilding of relationships between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria towards sustainable peace and

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<sup>2</sup> According to these scholars this confusion in mission and identity of the Boko Haram underscores the underlying issue of mixing religion and politics in Nigeria which has led to animosity between the members of these religions.

transformation of the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria? The study will explore the different aspects of dialogue which will be germane towards getting Christians and Muslims in Nigeria to reconcile and rebuild the relationship between them based on the resources they have as positive peacebuilding potentials.

- Are there available structures and if any, how can they effectively contribute towards realizing the project of dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria towards rebuilding their relationship, and fostering reconciliation and peace? The study will seek to establish the available structures and how they can help Christians and Muslims in Nigeria to effectively engage in dialogue towards peace.

This research is worthwhile and necessary because in our world today there is a great need to find ways of transforming the spate of religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims which have been translated into political and ideological conflicts. In context, Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa with estimated 170 million people roughly divided between Muslims and Christians (Ploch, 2013), is bedeviled by different forms of ethno-religious conflicts which can be narrowed down as resulting from the break in relationship between the predominantly Christian and Muslim citizens of that country. There is the need to find an adequate strategy towards bringing these two religions to understand each other, reconcile with each other, rebuild their relationships, and then come together and be resourceful in the agenda of building peace in the country. This study investigates the issues and seeks to present ways forward towards realizing the needed strategy for peace. This study is also relevant as it will contribute to the discussions thus far on interreligious dialogue as a religious peacebuilding tool and its utilization in the effort at transformation of the spate of ethno-religious conflicts in a society like Nigeria.

## **1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The issue of the type of methodology being adopted in any research project has an underlying philosophical question of how can we come to know phenomena and the reality of our social world. It further leads to the questions of what constitutes a true reflection of what is being studied and how the researcher gets to that true reflection? The differing answers to these questions have highlighted the problem inherent in the project of construction of knowledge. The differing positions on the epistemological questions generally do inform the different methodological orientations which a researcher prefers in his/her study (Stoker, 1995:13). For

example, Relativists do not agree with the Positivist position that there is such thing as an objective, universal and timeless knowledge, rather for relativists truth is relative to time, place and culture (Stoker, 1995:13). According to this relativist position, to understand any social phenomena then, one needs to look at different views and conceptions of the said phenomena. Hence, the role that the researcher plays would be to try and tease out and analyze the broad meanings and understandings of such phenomena according to different groups within society (1995:13).

Qualitative content analysis methodology agrees with the Relativist position in the epistemological debate. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005:1278), Qualitative content analysis is ‘a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.’ This study will adopt a Qualitative methodology, which is a method suited when what is being studied is complex, social and is not subject to a quantitative methodology (Liebscher, 1998:669). This methodology will allow the gathering, analyzing and interpreting of different texts and perspectives on the issue of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. This research is also desktop-based and hence data collection will be done in the library and through the internet as the information needed is already available in books, journals and internet sources and need only be extracted by the researcher (Kumar, 2005).

According to Creswell (2009:17) ‘Qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand. Their interpretation cannot be separated from their own backgrounds, history, contexts, and prior understandings.’ Hence, in this study which adopts a qualitative methodology, the generated data will be utilized using content analysis procedures of textual interpretation in order to see what meanings and themes emerge. This will be guided by the theoretical framework which directs what the researcher looks for in such a process (Weber, 1990).

The qualitative method being adopted in this study is quite relevant since there is no incidence of quantitative data that is going to be encountered. However, the researcher is aware of the limitations and challenges of this methodology which is bordering on the fact that there are no conventional tests for its validity and reliability. Thus this approach depends at every stage on the skills, training, insights and capabilities of the researcher (Patton 1990:372).

### **1.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study approaches the global issue of religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims from the context of Nigeria; hence, it limits itself to looking at this issue as it plays out in that country. Hence, this research does not claim to be comprehensive in its sampling, as using a particular case study like Nigeria has its own limitations. This is so because scope and time cannot allow making a global analysis of the whole issue of conflict between religions.

The approach this study has chosen towards finding a solution to the problem of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria is limited to the religious dimension of the issue. By taking this approach, this study is not arguing that the problem is only religious. Also, this study does not attempt to make a blanket view of the hostility between these religions, nor is the study making a conscious attempt to ignore the intersection of other variables to the conflicts, for example the ethno-political variables. It is noted that the issue of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria is complex and having many intersections (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005; Gambo & Omirin, 2012). However, this study is humble in its approach as it is only a short dissertation of 20,000 words. This limitation of scope necessitates the inability of the study to sufficiently engage in the ethnic, political and other dimensions of this conflict as would be expected. This is not to say that these other variables are not important. The study will briefly engage these dimensions and where they intersect, however, as stated, the direction is the religious dimension and this is because the study envisages this religious dimension as crucial towards finding a sustainable peacebuilding strategy to the conflict.

Furthermore, this study is also limited in the contextual analysis and case studies of the different religious conflicts in Nigeria. The study may not be able to look at and analyse the different instances of religious conflicts in Nigeria. The researcher is aware of the numerous instances of these conflicts from the Jos massacres to Kaduna and Kano riots, Sharia conflicts, Christian versus Muslim conflicts all over the country, the recent Boko Haram saga, etc. (Salawu, 2010; Muhammad, 2008). As much as possible, references will be made as regards these instances of the conflicts, however, going into details in analysing the different ethno-religious cum politico-economic factors that engendered those conflicts, is beyond the scope of this study.

Also, the research is limited in the sense that it only makes an analysis of two prominent religions in Nigeria. It could be possible to look at even the different Traditional Religions in

Nigeria and their possible contribution to the issue of peacebuilding. Furthermore, the researcher is aware that there are different groups and denominations and affiliations of Christianity which includes orthodox, catholic, protestant, Pentecostals, African independent churches, etc. On the other hand there are also different groups and interpretations of Islam like the Sunni, Shi'te, Suffis, Druze, etc. in Nigeria. The scope of this study will not allow for recommendations to be made to each strand of Christianity and Islam. Hence, this study limits itself to addressing the main representatives of these two religions as can be situated in Lederach's conceptual framework of structures of leadership.

Finally, this study intends to adopt the qualitative method of research which only makes use of secondary data gathered from books, journals, newspapers, internet sources, etc. (Kumar, 2005). Considering this the study is limited in the sense that it can only make its analysis from the bulk of these sources and there is no fieldwork analysis. It makes the study dependent on the personal analysis and input of the researcher which is open to biases (Patton, 1990).

#### **1.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter has been an introductory chapter comprising the background, outline of research problem and objectives, methodology and limitations of study. The next chapter will focus on the theoretical framework and the preliminary literature review. The third chapter will look at the factors that have influenced the negative relationship between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. The fourth chapter will present dialogue as the peacebuilding tool that can help in rebuilding the relationship between the Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. In the fifth chapter there will be an analysis of the resources inherent in the conflicting parties (Christianity and Islam) which can be utilized in the effort at bringing them to reconciliation and peace. The sixth chapter will be the concluding chapter and will present the recommendations and general conclusion of this study.

## Chapter 2

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE STUDY AND THEORY**

This chapter presents the review of related literature to this study. The chapter will firstly present the review of available literature on the issue of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. The review will help situate the theoretical framework which will guide the study into the religious aspect of the conflict which the available literature does not cover. The rest of the literature review is grouped under different themes which, hinging on the theoretical framework, seeks to present the main issues teased out by the main chapters of this study.

#### **2.2 ON THE ISSUE OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA**

Trimingham (1962), Ibrahim (1991), Enwerem (1995), Muhammad (2008), and Komolafe (2012) focus on the cultural, ethno-religious and political factors that shape the Nigerian society and political system. These studies as such do not focus on Nigeria's ethno-religious conflicts and its manifestations rather they present the history of Nigerian politics. The studies hence also present the historical factors which created the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. The result of the research has been to establish the nexus between politicization of religion and the religious conflicts. Focusing on three studies by Kukah (1993), Enwerem (1995), and Kastfelt (1994), Peel (1996) looks at the problem of politicization of religion in Nigeria. Peel notes that the politicization of religion in Nigeria goes back to the way the colonialists incorporated the Sokoto Caliphate, which bears the ideals of the Islamic jihad of Usman Dan Fodio (d.1804), with other ethno-religious entities (1996:607). The problem is that in the amalgamation process the Muslim group was favored as they were allowed to maintain their political power and social hegemony while other groups did not have that privilege (Peel, 1996:607). The ethno-religious conflicts that then result stem from the fact of insecurities of the other groups; 'a notable feature of politico-religious conflict is how often all the parties to it feel themselves under threat' (1996:608).

Salawu (2010) focuses on the manifestations of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. The author presents the different manifestations of these ethno-religious conflicts and their devastating effects as they have happened in the different parts of Nigeria. The causes of these ethno-religious conflicts are multi-dimensional and the author proposes some

mechanisms of conflict management which should be put in place by the government in order to solve this problem. Ovienloba (2011) focuses his study on conflict and conflict transformation of religious fanaticism in Northern Nigeria. The author notes that ‘various scholars have often times analyzed the intrinsic values of religion in most African societies as endemic’ (2011:72). However the issue for him is that these scholars fail to take into consideration ‘the intricate historical variables that web the realities together to underpin the fecundities of conflicts in these African societies’ (Ovienloba, 2011:72). This study proposes a cultural theoretical approach to analyze the historical variables in religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria. This study further suggests that these conflicts call for social growth and transformation using Lederach’s elicitive model of conflict transformation.

Onapajo (2012) looks at the phenomenon of religious conflicts in Nigeria which is ‘situated within the context of a growing theoretical discussion on the global resurgence of religion in politics and its significance to modern politics and how this accounts for increasing manners of conflict in different states’ (2012:42). Having theoretically analyzed the nexus between religion, politics and conflicts in the State, Onapajo contextualizes the emergence of such theoretical factors in the issue of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. He proposes the ‘assignment of dignified roles for religious leaders in the constitution in order to reduce the tension that usually accompanies religious politics in Nigeria’ (2012:42). Onapajo’s study is close to the focus of the present study as it also gives attention to the religious aspect of the problem. He focuses on the influence religious leaders can wield; hence he proposes that they be brought into politics constitutionally and given dignified roles in order to help curb the menace of religious conflicts. However his proposition fails to present a sustainable peace strategy since his solution takes the religious elites into consideration leaving out the members of the religion at other levels (for example the grassroots level). Also this solution indeed leaves out the possibility to harness the utilities in the religions themselves that can be used towards realizing a sustainable peace instead of a “quick-fix” conflict resolution to which this solution can only lead. This is more so because giving religious leaders dignified roles is only meant to pacify these leaders and perhaps motivate them towards speaking for peace among their adherents. This has its merits however it still has the potentiality of leading to more politicization of religion and the clamor for which religious leader deserves which dignified role.

Aleyomi (2012) looks at the issue of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, and the impact it has on Nigerian federalism especially in the light of the increasing saga of the *Boko Haram*. His study argues ‘that ethno-religious crisis not only undermines the effectiveness of federalism to foster national unity and security, but also threatens the stability of the federation and sustainable development of the country’ (2012:127). Aleyomi further argues that the causes of these ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria are multi-dimensional and bordering from the politics of the country in general to the issues of poverty, corruption, oppression, domination, exploitation, religious intolerance, etc. (2012:138). He proposes that in order to stop the country from degenerating, ethno-religious anomalies must be strategically managed in order to sustain peace and development in Nigerian federalism. Agbiboa (2013) focuses on the issue of ethno-religious conflicts and its impact on the politics of identity in Nigeria. For Agbiboa, this is one of the factors which ‘remain the touchstones of personal identity and the albatross around the neck of a true national identity in Nigeria’ (2013:3-4). Agbiboa’s study critically examines the elusive search for a true national identity amidst persistent ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria.

Following from Agbiboa’s (2013) study, it is pertinent to assert that the issue of conflicts in Nigeria is rooted in the question of identities.<sup>3</sup> The studies so far presented in this review have focused on the different identities (ethnic, cultural, political, economic, etc.) that construct the Nigerian ethno-religious conflicts. The studies do have their merits in bringing to the discussion solutions from other dimensions of the conflicts; however, in most cases, even though the religious identity factor is acknowledged, the studies do not focus deeply on this religious variable to the conflict. The existing literature hence inadvertently does not cover such important themes as: the historical factors that led to animosity and break in relationship among members of the different religious identities in the country; resources and utilities in these religions that can help to rebuild the broken relationship among the different religious identities; possible religious peacebuilding strategies that can help in establishing sustainable peace among religions in conflict in Nigeria; etc. These according to the present researcher are crucial and have to be considered and studied in order to realize a sustainable peace in Nigeria’s ethno-religious conflicts. This is the point of entry of this study which aims to contribute to the growing literature on ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria from a religious peacebuilding perspective.

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<sup>3</sup> This can be understood from Osaghae & Suberu (2005), Ambe-Uva (2010), whose studies analyze the history of the different identities in Nigeria and the part they play in the different conflict situations in different parts of Nigeria.

The study will assert that Nigeria's religions, in their various sacred books, principles, teachings and injunctions, have resources that can be used in rebuilding relationships and reconciliation towards the project of peacebuilding. Different studies which include Fox (1999), Wink (2000), Abu-Nimer (2003), Schmidt-Leukel (2004), have also substantiated that indeed there are peacebuilding potentialities within Islam and Christianity which can be harnessed for peacebuilding. This study will argue that these resources of rebuilding relationships can be brought out through the engagement of the two religions in the project of dialogue which is envisioned by John Paul Lederach's Integrated Model of Peacebuilding. Hence, the study will focus on the aspect of *dialogue* which is conceptualized, for our purposes in this study as a religious peacebuilding tool that advocates open encounter between religions. This study will posit that this tool is germane to the project of rebuilding the relationship amongst the members of the two religions in Nigeria. The study will hence be contributing to such efforts as seen in the works of Ezejobelu (2009) and Akanji (2011:2), who agrees that 'the task...is to contribute...to the on-going search for how Nigeria will end the undesired religious conflict between Muslims and Christians and build a peaceful and harmonious society.' The work of Ezejobelu (2009) could be seen as a response to the call to contribute to the search for peace, as he also dwelt on the possibility of interreligious encounter between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria.

### **2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Theory is a fundamental aspect of any scientific research as it undergirds and gives direction to the scientific inquiry; 'it provides a framework for analysis, facilitates the efficient development of the field, and is needed for the applicability to practical real world problems' (Wacker, 1998:361). Coreil (2008:64) defines theory as 'a set of interrelated concepts, constructs, and propositions that present a systematic view of a domain of study for the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena.' As regards the components of a theory, Wacker notes that 'by definition, theory must have four basic criteria: conceptual definitions, domain limitations, relationship-building, and predictions' (2008:361). In the area of Peace and Conflict Research (PCR) theory is also very important and is central to the empirical and analytical works in this field of study as an applied social science (Akinyoade, 2012:2). Akinyoade (2012:6-7) notes that scientific study of peace and conflict started after 1945 as the looming threat of nuclear weapon necessitated such a study. However, the issues in this area of study 'have been considered and reflected upon within and outside the academia by

philosophers, religions and religious leaders, royalties, policy makers, etc.’ As a result of this, many theories in PCR have been developed from different academic fields and they include: Social learning theory; Deterrence Theory; Decision-Making Theory; Ethnic Conflict Theory; Social Conflict Theory; Peace Education Theory; Conflict Resolution Theory, etc. (Akinyoade, 2012:7).

Akinyoade classified the different theories in PCR using the core distinction issues in peace and conflict studies ‘namely defining peace; nature, causes, onset and dynamics of conflict; conflict resolution; and building sustainable peace’ (2012:8). In the first distinction issue the theories provide different understandings of the concept of peace and the conceptualization of the conditions necessary for establishing positive peace.<sup>4</sup> However, in this area, theories may remain at the level of conceptualization which leaves out the issue of how to realize the conditions of positive peace practically. The second core issue focuses on understanding what conflict is and forms of conflict (Wallensteen, 2002:13). In this area also the advantage is the ability of the theories to offer conceptual analysis to understanding conflicts, but they may also fail to provide tools to resolving the conflicts. The third core distinction issue focuses on how conflicts can be resolved. The advantage of the theories in this area is that they offer such conflict resolution mechanisms as mediation, arbitration, negotiations, etc. (Cohen, Davis & Aboelata, 1998:6). The problem with this approach is that it tends only to provide short term solutions and mechanisms of settling conflicts but may fail to provide mechanisms of resolving escalating conflicts. The core distinction issue of building sustainable peace embodies the theories of the new school that proposes the transformation approach that helps establish a long term solution to conflicts rather than a resolution approach that offers only short term mechanisms of managing conflicts (Rupesinghe, 1995; Lederach & Maiese, 2009).

Lederach’s (1997) Integrated Model of peacebuilding is situated in the last core distinction issue which is “building sustainable peace”. According to Reyhler and Langer (2006), sustainable peace is characterized by ‘absence of physical violence; elimination of unacceptable forms of political, economic and cultural discrimination; Self-sustainability; High level of internal and external legitimacy or approval, and; Propensity to enhance

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<sup>4</sup> Issues under these theories also include understanding the difference between positive and negative conceptions of peace. According to Miller (2005:55-56) positive conception of peace sees peace as ‘the condition that ensures justice and social stability through formal and informal institutions, practices, and norms’ and this is contrasted to negative conception of peace ‘which are described most commonly as the mere absence of war or violent conflict.’

constructive management and transformation of conflicts' (2006:22). The preconditions for building sustainable peace are 'an effective system of communication, consultation and negotiation, peace-enhancing structures and institutions, an integrative political-psychological climate, a critical mass of peace building leadership and a supportive international environment' (2006:22). As a result of its long term utility, this core distinction issue is chosen to be the direction of this study towards the transformation of the spate of religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. And since Lederach's (1997) framework fits well into this core distinction issue, it is chosen to be the framework that guides this study. Furthermore it is important to note that 'Reconciliation is of vital importance for the success of sustainable peace building. Reconciliation releases the necessary energy to build a new future. It requires the cooperation of the conflicting parties and involves a series of distinct but interdependent elements' (Reychler & Langer, 2006:34). Hence, Lederach's (1997) framework is relevant as "reconciliation" is core to the framework.

John Paul Lederach's (1997) framework is further situated in the CPR field of religious peacebuilding, which focuses on building sustainable peace in conflict situations by utilizing resources and mechanisms generated from religious and faith-based organizations. According to Hayward (2012:2) 'Religious peacebuilding work has evolved within a larger, decades-old discussion about the role of religion in both fomenting and alleviating conflict.' Lederach's peacebuilding is situated in this area of religious peacebuilding as his work is undergirded by his spiritual foundation in the Mennonite community.<sup>5</sup> Other religious peacebuilding models include those developed by Adam Curle (1971), Marc Gopin (2000), Scott Appleby (2000), Katrien Hertog (2010), etc. Curle's peacemaking model focuses on restructuring relationships since according to him 'peacemaking consists in making changes to relationships so that they may be brought to a point where development can occur' (1971:15). While acknowledging the role religion plays in provoking conflicts, Gopin (2000) also presents a model which can help in harnessing the potentials of coping with conflict and conflict resolution inherent in religions. He envisages that this model will demand the conscious efforts of peacemakers and theologians together with policy makers and governments.

Appleby (2000) focuses on the ambivalent role religion plays in fostering conflicts and in engendering peace. The author is of the view that the conflict between religions arises as a

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<sup>5</sup> See also the book *The Journey toward Reconciliation* (1999) in which John Paul Lederach's explores the Mennonite spiritual foundations of his work as an academic and professional peace builder.

result of the different interpretations of the “sacred” in these religions (2000:164). He asserts that the ambivalent quality of religions can provide an opening and opportunity to cultivating tolerance and openness between the members of one religion (2000:164). This is more so because ‘religions, despite the shameful record of a minority of their adherents, are strikingly accomplished in developing their own traditions of peace-related practices and concepts’ (2000:307). Hertog’s (2010) religious peacebuilding model is also situated in the concept of sustainable peacebuilding and ground field of religious peacebuilding. Hertog’s model ‘aims to develop strategies of conflict transformation which are both appealing to and inclusive of religious people’ and which seeks to ‘to empower religious actors to play a role in process of conflict transformation or peacebuilding’ (2010:xvi).

In his groundbreaking book, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (1997), John Paul Lederach develops his Integrated Model of Peacebuilding. He contends that, in order to achieve lasting peace in situations of conflict in the contemporary world, new approaches need to be developed. For Lederach ‘building peace in today’s conflicts calls for long-term commitment to establishing an infrastructure across the levels of a society, an infrastructure that empowers the resources for reconciliation from within that society and maximizes the contribution from outside’ (1997:xvi). Lederach envisages a peacebuilding model which goes beyond the traditional conflict resolution to a form of conflict transformation which is long lasting and which ‘focuses on the restoration and rebuilding of relationships and engaging the relational aspects of reconciliation as the central component of peacebuilding’ (1997:24). It is based on his *elicitive* approach which advocates situating the emergence of conflict in a particular locality and finding the resources for its transformation and peacebuilding in that same locality. In the elicitive methodology people in the conflict area are not just recipients of conflict transformation interventions; they are key resources.<sup>6</sup>

According to Fetherston (2000:204) ‘Lederach sees protracted social conflict as a system and focuses his elicitive approach on the relationships within that system. Reconciliation is, then, work on relationships and is specifically understood as situated in a specific place or locus.’ Reconciliation is the main element on which this framework is hinged; ‘the overall process of conflict transformation is related to...the broader theme of reconciliation inasmuch as it is oriented towards changing the nature of relationships at every level of human interaction and

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<sup>6</sup> See also Lederach’s (1995:55) explanation of the Elicitive Model in *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures*.

experience' (Lederach, 1997:81). Further for Fetherston (2000:205), 'Lederach's model encompasses conflict resolution, and provides it with some useful re-direction, especially towards grassroots activity and bottom-up approaches. It also suggests the importance of going beyond the resolution of issues to transforming relationships...but, importantly, of also transforming social space, structures and institutions.'

Lederach (1997) goes further to enumerate the components of his model of Integrated Peacebuilding which includes: structure, process, reconciliation, resources and coordination. Lederach sees reconciliation as an encounter. In this encounter there is a need to create space in which the conflicting parties can come together to look at the issues of conflict between them and to move on with the project of peace. Hence, the strategy that this study seeks to suggest to the Nigerian religious conflict situation is dialogue and it is situated in this framework. Under the aspect of Structure, Lederach identifies three levels of structures: top-level leadership (governments and authorities), the middle leadership (civil groups and leaders of the conflicting groups), and the grassroots level (the masses). The concept of "nested Paradigms"<sup>7</sup> adopted by Lederach is an additional approach that provides structure for reconciliation, with a focus on the relationship that exists between the parties and how the levels of leadership can coordinate themselves effectively towards achieving short and long term objectives in the task of reconciliation (Lederach, 1997:55-58). This study will make recommendations on how the different structural levels in Lederach's framework should participate in Nigeria's peace building process. The study will propose that the top level leadership will focus on system wide issues, the middle level leadership on sub-system issues and the grass roots level will focus on local issues and relationships.

Concerning Process, Lederach sees conflict as progression (it is escalating) and hence peacebuilding is a process that involves multiple interventions, roles, and functions depending on the stage of conflict being addressed (1997:84). In this study, the elements of Process and Co-ordination are implied and the implementation of the recommendations will see to their being realized. Lederach (1997:84) is of the view that 'an integrated framework for building peace and sustained reconciliation needs to reconceptualise time frames for planning and action, and link "structure" with "process".' 'There needs to be a long-term view of conflict progression, which recognises the distinction between the time-frame needed

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<sup>7</sup> This paradigm was first proposed by the peace worker and theorist Maire Dugan and it views a specific incident as part of relationship between parties. See further explanation by Wright (2004).

for responding to humanitarian disasters and that needed for building peace' (Pillay, 2006). Resources and Coordination involves financial support but also people, organisations and cultural mechanisms. For Lederach it is important to empower the people within the conflict context (1997:99-102). Empowering Christians and Muslims in Nigeria towards the task of peacebuilding will involve exploring the values in these two religions which undergirds their ability to engage in peacebuilding. This will be done through the analysis of the documents such as the "*Common Word*", and other scholarly works which highlights the resources and potentials for peacebuilding in Christianity and Islam.

Lederach's framework is chosen amidst the previously enumerated religious peacebuilding framework because it integrates some components of these previously named models especially Adam Curles (1971) "restructuring relationships" which enriches this model towards a sustainable peacebuilding project. It also embodies such religious peacebuilding principles like reconciliation and rebuilding of relationships which are germane to realizing sustainable peace in conflict societies. These are values that underpin the peacebuilding potential of both Christianity and Islam.<sup>8</sup> Hence, Lederach's framework becomes important towards constructing a religious peacebuilding strategy that can work for these conflicting religions in Nigeria. This framework hence also helps to address the weaknesses of the existing literature on ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria by making it possible to appraise the (not sufficiently explored) role that the religions (Christianity and Islam) can play in the project of reconciliation, rebuilding of relationships and peace. This framework is also preferred because it emphasizes "encounter" between conflicting parties which this study conceptualizes to be important towards transforming the religious conflicts in Nigeria. Furthermore, this model is also preferred among other religious peacebuilding models as it has elaborated components like "resources" and "structure". Building on this framework this study will seek to present the resources, which ground the parties' ability to engage in a religious peacebuilding project. The recommendation of the study will follow Lederach's analysis of the component of structure.

However, as a critique of the model, it can be observed that one of its weaknesses is that the leaders identified in the structures may represent identity groups. And notwithstanding Erikson's (1968) portrayal of identity as the intersection between individual identity and group identity, there is also the reality that identity groups may ignore individual concerns.

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<sup>8</sup> See Bouta, T, Kadayifci-Orellana, S A & Abu-Nimer, M (2005)

Hence, when the so-called leaders make decisions towards a peace agreement, it may be for the short run and there is the possibility that people at the grassroots and their interests may not be properly considered. This may leave room for unresolved animosities that can lead to more escalating violence in the long run; thus sustainable peace becomes elusive.

Nonetheless, there are studies which show that the model can be effective in transforming conflicts and establishing sustainable peace. Obiekwe (2009) and Gilleland et al. (2011) have undertaken different studies which utilize Lederach's framework in conflict situations and peacebuilding in Africa. Obiekwe (2009) in his study adapts Lederach's framework to a faith-based conflict transformation and peacebuilding approach. According to Obiekwe, Lederach's framework is appropriate in transforming the intrastate violent conflicts in Africa. For Obiekwe (2009:11) 'the central working assumption of Lederach's conflict transformation is that relationship is the locus of conflict and its long-term solution.' For Obiekwe, this insistence on rebuilding relationships through reconciliation, for the author, is important and marks Lederach's framework as a faith-based conflict transformation approach. Gilleland et al. (2011) in their study focus on investigating the possibility of a lasting peace in Liberia using Lederach's model. For these authors the question is, after the wars in Liberia and the realisation of state of relative peace; are there 'proper mechanisms put in place to address the root causes of the previous conflict and prevent the peace from destabilizing'? (2011:2) Hence, in their study they used Lederach's framework to evaluate the ability of the nation to sustain lasting peace focusing on the stakeholders and the ability of the nation to rebuild relationships (2011:7). These works establish the relevance of Lederach's peacebuilding model in both transforming ongoing conflicts and monitoring the effectiveness of sustainable peacebuilding projects in post-conflict situations. This study distinguishes itself from the above studies by adapting the model to the Nigerian religious conflict situation. The aim is to explore a strategy (encounter) which is also envisaged by Lederach (1997) towards the transformation of the religious conflicts in Nigeria and the realization of sustainable peace between Christians and Muslims in that country.

#### **2.4 ON THE AMBIVALENT ROLE OF RELIGION IN CONFLICT AND PEACEBUILDING**

Adopting Lederach's framework is also important as it is a peacebuilding model which is developed from a religious and theological background.<sup>9</sup> As already asserted this study looks

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<sup>9</sup> See further Wright (2004).

at the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria from a religious perspective, seeking to present the role religion can play in establishing sustainable peace. Hence, this study takes note of the numerous literatures and growing scholarly discussions on the ambivalent role religion can play in both engendering conflict and establishing peace.

Küng (2005) and Best (2001) focus their works on the role religion plays in engendering conflict in different parts of the world. Focusing on the Monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Küng (2005), analyses the role that these religions have played engendering conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to Küng (2005:254), ‘Today, all three are accused, as “monotheistic religions”, of being more inclined to use force than “polytheistic” religions or “non-theistic” religions (such as Buddhism).’ Furthermore, for Küng it is the case that accompanied by ethnic factors, these religions do contribute to the incidence of violence in the world today as can be seen in such places as ‘Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Sri Lanka, India, Nigeria’ (2005:253). Küng asks, ‘Could it be that aspects of violence are inherent in every religion as such, and that monotheistic religions, because they are bound to a single god, are particularly intolerant, non-peaceful and ready to use force?’ (2005:254). Using the context of Northern Nigeria, Best (2001:63) argues that ‘religion is becoming a divisive issue, and constitutes a growing flash point.’ Best ‘suggests that social scientists and conflict analysts of different persuasions have traditionally neglected the role of religious and ethnic identity in conflict’ (2001:64). Some conditions make it possible for religion to engender violent conflicts. These conditions include ‘fundamentalism, intolerance and lack of mutual respect, threats and threat perceptions, the emergence of a conflict issue, the lack of enforcement of law and order’ (2001:65). Given these conditions, religion ‘can be and often is a source of conflict in terms of identities, religious issues, and the various roles it plays in conflict’ (Best, 2001:65).

Conversely, Haynes (2009), Kronish (2008), Curaming (2012), Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana, and Abu-Nimer, (2008), Halafoff (2006) in their different studies focus on the role that religion and faith-based organisations play in peacebuilding. Haynes (2009) concentrates on the role religion plays in conflict, conflict resolution and peacebuilding in developing nations such as Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia. As regards the role that faith-based organisations play in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the three countries, Haynes further asserts that ‘available evidence indicates, that the norms, values and teachings of various religious faiths – Christianity, Islam and Buddhism ... can demonstrably inspire and

encourage devotees to work towards resolving conflicts and develop peace via utilisation of explicitly religious tenets' (2009:72) Using the context of Jewish and Muslim relations in Israel, Kronish (2008) argues 'that there has been too much focus on the negative aspects of religion and not enough on the positive' (2008:225). Kronish contends that there are positive aspects of religion as seen in the efforts by the major religions in the Middle East to work towards peace through interreligious encounters. This aspect of encounter and dialogue exemplifies the positive element in religion. It also highlights the contributions by religions to peacebuilding in Israel. Curaming (2012) situates the concept of peace in a religious/spiritual setting: 'Peace is a spiritual concept; peace seen as a secular construct has had a poor record of accomplishment' (2012:35). This assertion underscores the role that religion can play in the pursuit of peace.<sup>10</sup> Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana and Abu-Nimer (2005) in their work, focus on the positive role(s) of religion—that is, faith based organisations—in building peace. Through their research they were able to establish that: 'faith-based actors—to different degrees, with varying levels of success and in various ways—have contributed positively to peace-building' (2005:ix). Halafoff (2006) focuses on Multifaith peacebuilding which develops as a result of an increasing awareness of growing religiosity and increase in religious diversity (2006:1). Halafoff situates the advent of multifaith peacebuilding efforts in the pluralistic paradigm of world religions which posits that the world as a globalized "mobile world" is faced with a reality of different religions.

## **2.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter presents an appraisal of available literature on the problem of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. It is noted that while there are numerous literature which focus on the ethno-religious conflicts, most of them approach the discussion from the ethno-political, cultural, economic, etc. variables of conflict. Hence, while the available literature does acknowledge the religious variable, not much work has been done to sufficiently interrogate the role religion plays in the conflict. This marks the point of entry of this study which seeks to present a religious peacebuilding strategy to transforming the conflicts using a theoretical framework situated in the area of religious peacebuilding in PCR. This chapter also presents review of literature on the ambivalent role religion plays in peace and conflict. The next chapter will focus on the factors that have led to animosity between the religions in Nigeria.

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<sup>10</sup> This can further be seen in the significant role religion played in the Truth and Reconciliation commission in South Africa. See further Shore (2009) who examines the various roles Christianity and Christian actors played in influencing the directive and effectiveness of the TRC.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **THE CROSS VERSUS THE CRESCENT: ESTABLISHING THE HISTORICAL FACTORS THAT HAVE LED TO ACRIMONY BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM IN NIGERIA**

### **3.1 ON THE FACTORS THAT HAVE NEGATIVELY INFLUENCED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CONFLICTING PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

Although this study addresses a problem of conflict in contemporary times, it is important to trace the sources of this problem in history. Watt (1983:1) affirms that for such a study ‘which is chiefly concerned with the meeting of Islam and Christianity in the present, it is important to look briefly at the way in which contemporary attitudes have been shaped by the past.’ Looking at how contemporary attitudes have been influenced by the past is necessary because as Lederach (1997:34) notes ‘Reconciliation...is focused on building relationship between antagonists. The relational dimension involves the emotional and psychological aspects of the conflict and the need to recognized past grievances and explore future interdependence.’ Thus, the project of this chapter is to situate the problem of animosity and acrimonious relationship between Christians and Muslims in history. This chapter will then make a historical investigation of some of the factors that inform the actions of these conflicting religious parties in Nigeria.

### **3.2 THE CROSS VERSUS THE CRESCENT IN HISTORY**

#### **3.2.1 ORIGINS OF THE TWO RELIGIONS**

##### **3.2.1.1 Christianity**

Keating (2009:1) defines Christianity as ‘the name given to that definite system of religious belief and practice which was taught by Jesus Christ in the country of Palestine...and was promulgated, after its Founder’s death, for the acceptance of the whole world.’ Kesich (2007:27) places the origin of Christianity between the time after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ (AD 33) and the time of the call and conversion of Paul (ca. AD 35). According to Young (2008:1) ‘the death of Jesus by crucifixion, together with his resurrection from the dead, lies at the heart of Christianity.’ The New Testament summarizes the mission of Jesus thus: God so loved human beings that God could not see humans perish, hence God sent Jesus to come and save them through their belief in Christ and the message of salvation he brought (John 3:16). Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God; ‘a Christian is someone who...believes that Jesus is not merely a prophet or an exalted moral teacher, but

in some unique sense the Son of God, and the Messiah' (Jenkins, 2002:2). According to Ankerberg & Weldon (2004:8)

The central beliefs of Biblical Christianity are summarized in six points...1. The one True God is an infinite, personal, triune being who is holy, loving, just, merciful, immutable, and true; 2. The Judeo-Christian Bible comprises God's only revelation to mankind as the literal, inerrant word of God; 3. The basic problem of mankind is one of moral failing (sin), or missing the mark of God's holiness; 4. In infinite and self-sacrificial love and mercy, God provided the perfect solution to man's dilemma in the person of Jesus Christ; 5. The salvation God offers does not need to be worked for or earned by our personal righteousness...6. The eternal state is permanent. God gives everyone sufficient information for salvation, but it must be personally appropriated.

The above are the guiding tenets of Christianity as taught by Jesus. Jesus' teachings and actions brought him in confrontation with Jewish leaders who had him arrested and tried for supposedly blaspheming against the Jewish religion and the temple (John 18:12-14). Jesus was later brought before Pilate on other charges which include proclaiming himself the king of the Jews. He denied this charges in front of Pilate and Pilate did not find reasons to crucify him but the threat of a Jewish riot forced him to proclaim the death sentence (John 19:12-15). Jesus was crucified on a cross and the cross for Christians then becomes the symbol of their salvation in Christ.

During his life, Jesus gathered followers whom he taught and later sent on a mission to convert people. Hence Christianity started as a missionary religion which aims at conversion and bringing people to follow in the way of Christ. The followers of Christ during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD were called followers of the way and they were persecuted by both the Jewish elders and the Roman Empire. However, in spite of the persecutions, the Christian religion thrived and even became a State religion when Emperor Constantine through the Edict of Milan (313 AD) legalized Christianity.<sup>11</sup> This gave Christianity an institutionalized status and its leaders became officials in the Empire. It is then understood that the different parts of the then Roman Empire were under Christianity and hence 'Christianity acceded to a territorial view of religion' (Sanneh, 1999:93).

Two thousand years of history of Christianity in the world has seen divisions of this religion because of doctrinal and hierarchical disagreements.<sup>12</sup> These disagreements have yielded different sects and strands of Christianity. The most prominent are: Catholicism, Orthodox

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<sup>11</sup> See further Willems, K E (1993) whose study focuses on Emperor Constantine's policies and edicts that created a Christian Roman Empire.

<sup>12</sup> The present study is aware of this complex history however suffice it to just note this reality as scope and space for this study cannot allow the presentation of this history.

Christianity, Protestantism, Anglicanism, African Independent Christian Churches, etc. In Nigeria these strands of Christianity and more can be found.

### **3.2.1.2 Islam**

According to Rogers (1975:65) 'Islam originated in Arabia in 610 A.D., when the prophet Muhammad first revealed his visions to the world.' Mohammed (570-632 CE) understood himself to have had a vision and mission from God to proclaim God's name and to bring people to believe in God (Shiraz, 2004:xxii). According to Ankerberg & Weldon (2004:20) 'Muhammad claimed he received supernatural revelations from God (Allah) through the angel Gabriel. These revelations were written down by others and compiled into a book called the Qur'an...the Muslim Bible.' For Muslims, the Quran is the last revelation from Allah and Mohammed is the last revealed prophet (Surah, 25:1). Islam commands obedience to Allah and the central beliefs of Islam can be understood from the Quranic injunction: "O you who believe, believe in God and His Apostle and the book which He has sent down to His Apostle, and the scripture He has sent down formerly. Whosoever denies God and His angels and His Books and His Apostles and the Last Day has strayed from the Truth" (Surah 4:135).

Summarily, the central tenets of Islamic faith include: faith in Allah, Angels, The Holy Books, the prophets, predestination, and the day of judgement (Ankerberg & Weldon, 2004:20). Judaism and Christianity and their teachings, which were also found in the Arab world of Mohammed's time, had their influence on Mohammed (Finnegan, 1952:485).<sup>13</sup> These teachings and his private revelations make up the contents of the Quran which controls the life of Muslims. The Crescent is the symbol of Islam and most scholars are divided on its actual meaning; however, the fact is that the symbol has become significant in Islam.<sup>14</sup>

At his death in 632 AD Mohammed did not name a successor and the subsequent power struggle among his followers led to the division among Muslims between the Sunni and Shiite groups. The Sunnis support the custom of awarding leadership to a pious Muslim to succeed Prophet Mohammed hence they supported the Caliphate of Abu Bakr. The Shiite

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<sup>13</sup> The present study is aware that in spite of the fact that Judaism and Christianity were found in this area at this time they both predate Islam. Latourette (1975:4) places the origin of Judaism before 650 BC and hence it significantly predates and is the source of Christianity and later Islam.

<sup>14</sup> Boutros (2012) is of the view that the symbol of the crescent had a great importance in the ancient pre-Islam paganism epoch, as it was the symbol of the Moon God for the Pagan religion of the Arabic Peninsula which was later conquered by Islam and Islam appropriated this symbol from this time.

group on the other hand supported Prophet Mohammed's cousin's Caliphate because according to them he is rightfully Mohammed's successor by bloodline.<sup>15</sup> However, these two groups still hold the same understanding of the Muslim faith as proclaimed by the Prophet Mohammed and as enshrined in the Quran. The two groups and other different strands can also be found in Nigeria today.

It is important to note here that like Christianity, Islam is also a missionary religion which holds in esteem the enterprise of conversion. Mohammed engaged on a campaign of Islamization and bringing all within the Arab world of his time to submit to Allah. Watt (1983:1) affirms that 'through the preaching of Muhammad in the early Seventh Century AD, Islam came into being in a region in which certain Jewish and Christian ideas were circulating.' This picture is also reflected in the Nigerian situation during the advent of Islam in the area known today as Northern Nigeria through the *jihad* of Uthman Dan Fodio.

### **3.3 ESTABLISHING THE FACTORS THAT HAVE NEGATIVELY INFLUENCED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM IN NIGERIA**

#### **3.3.1 BRIEF HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM IN NIGERIA**

##### **3.3.1.1 The Advent of Islam in Northern Nigeria**

Islam made inroads in the Central Sudan States<sup>16</sup> between 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Century AD during the era of the Kanem Bornu Empire. Trimingham (1962:115) affirms that 'Islam...was establishing itself between 1085 and 1240 when Ibn Sa'id's account shows that the religion was firmly established among the ruling class.' However, even though Islam arrived at this time in that region, there was no large progress as to the islamization of the area. The visible progress and proper islamization of that region was during the 19<sup>th</sup> century *jihad* of Uthman Dan Fodio. Nolte, Danjibo and Oladeji (2009:10) affirms that 'while Islam has been entrenched in precolonial Hausa cities for centuries, many other Northern groups converted to Islam in the wake of the Nineteenth century Islamic *jihad* under Uthman dan Fodio (1754-1817).' According to Komolafe (2012:1), 'the ostensible religious objectives of the *jihad* were to bring Islamic reforms to the state and its populace and to oppose the oppression, corruption, self-indulgence, and technical offences against the Islamic code by the ruling Hausa-Habe families of the time.'

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<sup>15</sup> See further Blanchard's (2010) study on Islam's Sunnis and Shiites.

<sup>16</sup> This is the area in which present Northern Nigeria falls; which at the time includes 'the region stretching between the Songhay of the middle Niger and Waday lying beyond the Lake Chad, which is orientated partly towards the Niger and the partly towards Lake Chad' (Trimingham, 1962:104).

Dan Fodio's *jihad* and islamization of the area of present-day Northern Nigeria, was out of religious conviction but it also had a political nuance. The *jihad* effectively signalled and installed an Islamic leadership and politics within the areas he conquered (Paden, 2005:25). Politics and religion became intertwined in this area as the Islamic prophet and social reformer Uthman Dan Fodio deposed pagan chiefs; 'swept all Hausa rulers off their thrones and established Fulani hegemony in most of the present day Northern Nigeria' (Alao, 2010:7). Furthermore according to Komolafe (2012:2)

Dan Fodio imposed a Fulani administration in consonance with his vision of Islam. That is, a constituent of emirates that would recognize the religious and political leadership of the Caliph or Sultan of Sokoto. Under Dan Fodio's theocratic structure, no socio-political, economic, or religious decisions had legitimacy without the Sultan's approval.

The advent of the British colonialists during the middle 19<sup>th</sup> Century signalled the halting of the islamization vision of Uthman Dan Fodio. However, by then there had been an inroad in some of the Yoruba communities excluding the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria, who were initially converted to Islam as a result of links to Malian Islamic trading communities (Nolte, Danjibo & Oladeji, 2009:10). Another area not covered by Dan Fodio's *jihad* was the community and tribes of the Middle Belt area (Komolafe, 2012:2).

### **3.3.1.2 The Advent of Christianity in Southern Nigeria<sup>17</sup>**

The successful Christian mission into the area which constitutes present-day Southern Nigeria came with the advent of the British explorers to the area around the River Niger. However, according to Ezegbobelu (2009:23) 'the initial effort to bring the Christian gospel to Nigeria dates back to between 1472 and 1621, when the Portugal (sic) Kings, Alphonso, John II, Manuel and John III launched a pioneer missionary enterprise in the Kingdoms of Benin and Warri...Portuguese Priests were then sent with merchants in 1472 to bring the gospel to the Kingdoms south of present Nigeria.'<sup>18</sup> That mission failed as a result of the Portuguese explorers' interest in trade and not really in missionary activity and also because most of them died of malaria (Ezegbobelu, 2009:23).

Missionary hopes were rekindled with the coming and return of the ex-slaves from Sierra Leone in the person of Bishop Ajayi Crowther whose Church Missionary Society (Anglican)

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<sup>17</sup> The description in this section will be limited to the advent of mainline Christian faith in the South and Eastern Nigeria. This is because it is almost impossible to undertake in this limited paper a historical description of the advent of all the churches and contemporary Christian sects in Nigeria.

<sup>18</sup> Hiskett (1984:202) also notes that the early Portuguese Missionaries' presence in the West African coastal areas supported by Pope Nicholas V's Bull was also part of the Catholic Church's effort at forestalling Islam in that region.

mission started in the region around 1857 (Baur, 1994:49). The Catholic Niger Mission comprising of Igboland and the Benin area also started in the late 1880s. The Society of African Missions Missionaries and the Congregation of the Holy Ghost are the major missionary congregations who followed the Niger River into the interior reaching the then Benin Kingdom on the west and the Igbo villages on the east of the Niger (Baur, 1994:147). This signalled the presence of Christian missionaries in the area of Southern Nigeria. The missionaries later made inroads in the Igbo hinterlands and the Middle Belt area. The South West area had already witnessed the advent of Protestant Christian missionaries who were mostly freed slaves from Sierra Leone, Latin America and Brazil (Ezegbobelu, 2009:23-24).

### 3.3.2 PROSELYTIZATION AS A FACTOR THAT LED TO MUTUAL ANIMOSITY

From the foregoing historical description we see how Christianity and Islam came to be in the different areas which were later incorporated into the Nigerian nation. The country had already been religiously demarcated by the advent of these two religions in the areas as the Muslim North and the Christian South. We note that these two religions thrive in the mission to convert. This brings us to consider Proselytization which is also a factor in the Nigerian ethno-religious conflicts. Abimbola (2010:308) notes that ‘the competition between Christianity and Islam for converts...has resulted in violent conflicts in Africa...between the adherents of these two religions. Three of such violent clashes occurred in Nigeria within the last six months, leading to the massacre of thousands of people.’ An-Na’im (1999:5) describes proselytization thus:

To its proponents, proselytization is about people’s freedom to propagate their own religious commitments in an effort to reach out and share with others the merits and benefits that the religion is held to generate and sustain in the individual and communal life of believers. Proselytization is also represented as a religious imperative for believers to pursue for their own personal salvation and self-realization.... The underlying claim is that target groups would probably “see the light” if only they were allowed to hear the message or observe the living example of the believers.’

The above was true of the missionary activities of these two religions in Nigeria. The Islamization campaign of Uthman Dan Fodio can be understood in this light and his successors continued his legacy which is now being played out in the politics of the country as a hidden agenda.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand the Christian missionaries had the intention to expand and to bring in more converts but their agenda was halted by the Colonialists who

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<sup>19</sup> This can be inferred from the statement of Sir Ahmadu Bello, which points to an agenda to turn the Nigerian nation to a kind of Islamic fiefdom (see *This Day Live*, 1 October 2012, “A Peep in the Past”).

reached an agreement with the Northern rulers to forestall any such inroads into the Islamic Northern region (Trimingham, 1962:230; Salamone, 2010:52).<sup>20</sup> The Northern rulers were afraid of the Western culture and education which the South had already embraced.<sup>21</sup> The British Colonialists' partiality contributed to the ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria as their partiality resulted in the animosity between pre-independence politicians (Trimingham, 1962:229; Sanneh, 1999:92).

### 3.3.3 THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE FACTOR IN THE ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

Sanneh (1999:92) notes that 'the Western colonial encounter with Muslim Africans strengthened their political resolve and offered them the resources and prestige of an organized modern state. Yet the mixing of religion and politics in that fashion implicates both of them, with religion becoming a tool of control and politics a cover for intolerance.' Muhammad (2008:122) further affirms that 'the sowing of the seed of antagonisms between Islam and Christianity dates back to pre-independence period when the British colonialists embarked on the policy of protecting the Muslim North from the "destructive influence" of the Christian South but went ahead to amalgamate the two into one political entity.' In 1914, the then British Governor Lord Lugard amalgamated the then Northern and Southern Protectorates to form the entity Nigeria. Hence, the Muslim North and Christian South were brought together into a pre-independence politics which was characterized by ethno-religious power play. The pre-independence and early independence politics in Nigeria can be identified as the root of politicization of religion in Nigeria. For example, Sir Ahmadu Bello had a vision of realising the legacy of Uthman Dan Fodio of the expansion of an Islamic State. Hence, Kukah (1993) and Enwerem (1995) affirm that Ahmadu Bello is guilty of further entrenching politicization of religion in Nigeria. He formed the *Jama'atu Nasril Islam* (JNI), an Islamic congress whose *raison d'être* was to participate and bring in Islamic agenda

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<sup>20</sup> We can understand the reason behind this as being the reality that religious freedom and proselytizing is not allowed in Islamic states as Apostasy is also abhorred by the Quran (Surah 4:89). Furthermore, in the Hadith we read "If a Muslim discards his religion, he must be killed"(Bukhari 52:260). However, Mandour (2010:886) is contrarily of the view that Islam guarantees freedom of religion as in Islam 'no one is forced to renounce his religion in favor of another faith.'

<sup>21</sup> Hence, we can understand the ideology guiding the more recent *Boko Haram* group; this group's name came from the Islamic belief that Western education is sinful. According to Danjibo (2010:7) 'In Hausa language, the word "*boko*" is an equivocal term which means either "Western" or foreign; while the word "*haram*" is an Arabic derivative meaning "forbidden". Piecing the two words together '*boko haram*' means to forbid everything Western and Western education.' The founder of this group (Yusuf), who became a Quran scholar and preacher, criticized other Islamic scholars and their preaching as being watered down through western influence and education. He mobilized his followers along the teaching that Western values run contrary to Islamic values hence the need to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria and introduction of Sharia (Danjibo, 2010:7). The coming into existence of this group buttresses the point of the issue of politicization of religion in Nigeria.

of the Northern people in the politics of the new nation (Komolafe, 2012). Hence, the agenda they brought forward to the negotiation table during the period of pre-independence was greatly influenced by their Islamic agenda.

Furthermore the political mobilization of the Northern people was underpinned by religious motivations and ensuing religious agitations. This is so because ‘regardless of nature of the society, Islam encourages Muslims to hold on to its principles by allowing the Holy Quran...to be their guide...Islam allows for a spiritual relationship between religion and politics’ (Oguntola-Laguda, 2008:128). For the Christian Southern politicians, it could not be said that religion was so much a tool for them as to their mobilization on ethnic lines and affiliations.<sup>22</sup> Oguntola-Laguda (2008:128) affirms that ‘Christians in Nigeria would rather not get involved in politics.’ However, the problem emerged when representatives of the different regions came to discussions regarding how to move the new nation forward. Onapajo (2012:48) suggests that ‘the political consciousness of the Christians was ignited and sharpened by the “challenge posed by Islam”.’ Hence, there was political power play going on within this time as the politicians were divided along both religious and ethnic lines. This sets the pace for the subsequent power play in Nigeria down through the years after independence. Sadly, up to today this is the underlying factor in Nigerian politics which results in conflicts as people can no longer distinguish religious from political issues. This is because as it is ‘to most Nigerians, religion and faith are important aspects of everyday life as it (sic) controls the laws, how people think and act, what you believe, and what you value among others; in fact, religious considerations have created a situation of (unnecessary) state’s veneration of religious groups especially, Islam and Christianity’ (Muhammad, 2008:122). Hence, religion becomes ‘a potent political force that cannot be ignored in any national issue be it foreign or domestic while it continued to be manipulated in furtherance of the objectives of politicians’ (Muhammad, 2008:122).

### **3.4 FACTORS THAT HAVE NEGATIVELY INFLUENCED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM IN NIGERIA: AN APPRAISAL**

#### **3.4.1 ON THE ISSUE OF MUTUAL ANIMOSITY BETWEEN THE TWO RELIGIONS IN HISTORY**

From the historical analysis made so far, we can deduce that the break in relationship between Christians and Muslims dates back in world history. The mutual animosities can be

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<sup>22</sup> This further underscores the importance of the ethnic factor in the Nigerian ethno-religious conflicts, an area in which there have been numerous studies already conducted as noted in the literature review.

understood as coming from the doctrinal views of these two religions which in most cases contradict each other. The contradictions attack the core beliefs of these religions which no one religion is ready to allow. The next source of the break in relationship between these two religions can be found in the agenda of the two religions to proselytize; this often tends to lead to violence.<sup>23</sup> An-Na'im (1999:2) affirms that 'proselytization is often an explicit or implicit element of religious conflict in all parts of the world, usually overlapping and interacting with other factors.' Furthermore according to An-Na'im (1999:5) 'proselytization is by definition the effort of believers in one religion to change the spiritual and material conditions of perceived unbelievers. Otherwise, the social, economic, and political transformation of convert communities may not occur as claimed in the sacred histories of proselytizing religions.' This then is the source of conflict as the community that supposedly needs conversion will always resist any such move to destroy whatever belief system they already have. In the Nigerian context this is the case among the Middle Belt communities who resisted the Hausa-Fulani Islamic hegemony (Komolafe, 2012); hence the ethno-religious conflicts which still persist in the Jos-Plateau areas of the Middle Belt of Nigeria.

#### 3.4.2 ON THE ISSUE OF POLITICIZATION OF RELIGION IN NIGERIA

Nigerian pre-independence and post-independence politicians can be accused of having done the Nigerian nation a disservice. Their inability to distinguish a religious from a political agenda is at the root of the conflict in Nigeria along ethno-religious lines. The rate at which religious euphoria was raised among Islamic and Christian adherents both in the North and South respectively, led to people being mobilized along those lines and always ready to take up arms against the other in the fight for supremacy in Nigerian. That factor is always there and today it is seen in the generation of conflicts by pseudo-religious fundamentalist groups like the *Boko Haram*. The *Boko Haram* saga underscores the underlying problem of animosity between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria which has been used as a political tool. The violent onslaught of this group has been exacerbated by the 16 April 2011 election of a Christian, Goodluck Jonathan as the president of the country. Mustapha (2012:2) affirms that 'some school of thought suggests that northern political forces, unhappy with southern Christian President...have deliberately fuelled the carnage that has characterised Boko Haram.' Maiangwa and Uzodike (2012) in their report also note that '*Boko Haram* insists not only on dividing Nigeria into north and south but also on placing the whole country under the

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<sup>23</sup> Though this can be said to be explicit in Islam with the different agenda of "conversion by the sword" it is not so much so with Christianity.

shari'ah law. It has also demanded the conversion of President Jonathan to Islam as *conditio sine qua non* for dialogue and ceasefire.' Hence, it is clear that politicization of religion is an issue in the Nigerian society but it is an issue that is consequent on the animosities between these religions in history.

### **3.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter has endeavoured to explore the problem this study seeks to respond to. The effort has been to establish the historical factors that have led to acrimony between Christianity and Islam in Nigeria. Historical encounters and misunderstandings have conditioned some of the adherents of these religions to become mutually prejudiced against each other. It is this mutual prejudice that is then played on by political elements in order to foment conflict. The idea then would be to try and solve the problem of mutual animosity and break in relationship between these two religions. Realizing this will lead to the desired result that the religious conflicts generated by the politicization of religion will be transformed. The adherents of these religions will realize that what unites them and leads to mutual love and acceptance is more than what causes conflict between them. By realizing this, they will be careful and take steps to collaborate with each other in dialogue and to the realization of peace.

The aim in the next chapter is to posit a way forward by analysing the values that constitute and ground the ability of these two conflicting religious parties to contribute to peacebuilding in Nigeria. This agrees with Lederach's (1997:87-88) view that conflicting parties should not just be seen as recipients of peacebuilding interventions; they are also to be seen as resources to transforming the conflict they generate. Powers (2010:322) also notes that 'strategic peacebuilding insists that we go much deeper than quantitative measures of religion's role in conflict, that we avoid treating religion as an easily categorizable monolith, and that we understand both the negative and positive roles of religion on conflict and peacebuilding.' Hence, the next chapter will go beyond stating the problem of religious conflict generated by the animosity between Christianity and Islam and look at the resources towards peace and the role that the religions can play in the task of peacebuilding in Nigeria.

## Chapter 4

### **AN ANALYSIS OF THE RESOURCES AND SPIRITUAL TENETS THAT UNDERGIRD PEACEBUILDING EFFORTS AND THE REBUILDING OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN NIGERIA**

#### **4.1 ON THE ABILITY OF THE RELIGIONS TO BE RESOURCEFUL TOWARDS PEACEBUILDING**

The previous chapter dealt with the factors that have negatively influenced the relationship between Christianity and Islam and led to mutual animosity between them. Having identified the problem the next question to be answered is how to tackle this problem. The first step towards answering this question will be to establish the internal resources that are available in these conflicting parties upon which a possible peacebuilding effort can be hinged. This chapter in essence focuses on the ability of Christians and Muslims in Nigeria to be resourceful and help in realizing the needed peace. The essence of doing this is to present a tool of conflict transformation and peacebuilding by looking at the agents of conflict themselves as Lederach envisions. Following the footsteps of Heft, 2010; Walsh, 2012; and Curaming, 2012, this chapter will argue that the resources that are available and can lead to a strategy of dialogue towards reconciliation and rebuilding of relationships between these conflicting parties can be found in the teachings of these religions.

The call on these religions to the task of peacebuilding then is valid. It is also premised on the fact that if it is the case that these religions are motivating and mobilizing forces that engender conflict, then they also can be looked into for the solution of peace in the conflict they generate. This call for these religions to participate in the agenda of peacebuilding is important because ultimately we may decide to use every available political conflict transformation strategy, but when it comes to the issues of faith, there is reluctance on the part of the religions to allow the state to control them through the use of legislation. Hence it is imperative that for an adequate solution to the crisis of conflict caused by these two religions in Nigerian socio-political history, then we have to go back to the drawing table with these two religions and engage their potential for peacebuilding, thereby undercutting any strategy which may be regarded by these parties as a double standard from the government.

#### **4.2 RELIGION AS CENTRAL FORCE THAT MOTIVATES AND MOBILIZES PEOPLE**

Huntington (1996:66) asserted that ‘in the modern world, religion is a central, perhaps *the* central force that motivates and mobilizes people.’ Historical and contemporary realities corroborate Huntington’s (1996) claim; religion has been used as a force to motivate people to engage in both conflict and peace efforts. For example in Nigeria there are many instances of religiously motivated conflicts: Kaduna-Enugu (1999), Kano (2000), Jos-Plateau (2001), ethno-religious conflicts, etc. (Muhammad, 2008; Salawu, 2010). The most recent is the *Boko Haram* saga that has become a threat to the stability of Nigeria. Considering the amount of conflict generated by religion, the critics of religions tend to dismiss religion as irrational and as based on emotions (Bhiku, 1999:63). This view comes to the fore in discussions regarding the role of religion in the affairs of the State. However, it should be noted that there are premises for and against this pejorative view of religion. Although some analysts may ignore or dismiss religion as irrelevant, events in which the religious element features, for example, as seen in the political mobilization of people along religious lines, demonstrate that religion has a great impact upon and control in the lives of people (Geertz, 1973; Olupona, 1991; Lawuyi, 1991).

Defining the concept of religion has become quite controversial. According to Harrison (2006: 133) ‘because of the problem and widespread disagreement regarding what “religion” actually means...some go so far as to question whether there is anything at all distinctive about religions, hence, formulating a definition of “religion” that can command wide assent has proven to be an extreme difficult task.’ This assertion notwithstanding it is possible to find definitions from different areas of study which will ultimately assert that religion is an actual reality which is at the centre of people’s life. Tillich (1963: 4) defines religion as ‘the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of life.’ The idea of “ultimate concern” is at the core of this definition as religion here is seen as an ultimate value under which other concerns come; it is the state that qualifies all other concerns and which controls other aspects of the life of the person. Geertz (1973: 90) defines religion as ‘a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.’ Important to note is that, for Geertz, religion involves a system of

symbols which have effect on the emotional aspect of people and their moods and motivations. This definition becomes important in the process of understanding how religion can have the effect it has on people and makes them to construct reality according to the precepts of their religion. For Panikkar (1999(a):185),

the word religion encompasses...threefold aspects: religiousness or the human dimension concerning ultimacy, wherever one may believe this ultimacy exists; religiosity or the social institution (not necessarily an organisation) in which the religious dimension of human life is embodied; and regionalism or the more or less closed system of ultimate beliefs pertaining to one particular collectivity.

In this, Panikkar emphasizes the human dimension of seeking what he calls “ultimacy” and this ultimacy can be in God or any value which the human person holds as an ultimate value.

The human ability to believe in the ultimate reality is justified in many ways by the different religions. In such justifications there is, almost always, no way of verifying empirically such faith and beliefs. However, this is not to suggest that faith should be dismissed as unreal or lacking efficacy as far as human behaviour is concerned. The dismissal of things such as faith in contemporary but ever secularizing society may in fact be problematic as people of faith will in most cases want to assert that faith which is at the core of their being. For example, initial attempts at explicating the “clash of civilisations” thesis focused on the perceptions associated with apparent Islamic fear of Western secularization and the West’s fear of forced religion (Huntington, 1996:209-211). It is in this context that religious causes or elements in conflict have featured prominently in the anthropological perspective of the issue of faith.

Furthermore, the fact that religion is a central force which motivates people and which is used to mobilise political forces is evident in the perception in most Arab and Islamic nations that the war on terror (since September 11, 2001) is an onslaught against Islam, despite the claims and rhetoric to the contrary.<sup>24</sup> Hence efforts to mobilise popular opinion against American and Western policies have been anchored on zero-sum religious rhetoric and propaganda. Disagreements have been portrayed as disputes between Christians and Muslims, accompanied by the call for people of the Islamic faith all over the world to unite against the West (Huntington, 1996:209). Hence, there have been criticisms of and attacks on the United

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<sup>24</sup> It is worth to note that in spite of arguments and counter-arguments on the politics of “war on terror”, the war itself was triggered by an Islamic fundamentalist attack on the World Trade Centre on September, 11 2001.

States, a country that is seen as the epitome of Western Christian civilisation.<sup>25</sup> That individuals and groups cite religious justification for violent action points to the potentially dangerous element in religion. Other scenarios reinforce this conclusion. For example, there may be recourse to violence when people feel that their faith is under threat.

This explains why religion is such a powerful force in many states and in world politics. Instances of Christian-Muslim conflicts especially as they play out in Nigeria, show that for the adherents of these two religions, defending their faith at all cost is paramount as their faith is the utmost reality at the core of their being. Hence, religion finds ambivalent expression in the lives and actions of adherents. The lives of adherents are also controlled by the injunctions and preaching of the leaders of religious groups who in most cases are also revered. The ability of these leaders to command respect is rooted on the understanding that they are quite learned and trained in the spirituality and language of the religion (Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana & Abu-Nimer, 2005:36). Adherents may accept the views of religious leaders as inerrant interpretations of what their faith is all about. And such views may guide the actions of believers. Therefore, religious leaders can motivate and move people to wage violent resistance or even to go to war just as they may persuade individuals and groups to undertake humanitarian efforts. The religious constituency exerts enormous influence in countries where religion holds the allegiance of large segments of the population. In such countries, the religious constituency may serve as an agent for political mobilisation or even lobbying for votes. In Nigeria, for example, voting along religious lines is a common occurrence (Campbell, 2010; Aluaigba, 2013). In addition, the religious affiliations of political leaders have been sources of discord and tension within the country.

The discussion thus far leads to the key question this study grapples with. If religion is such a powerful motivating and mobilising force which has been used to foment trouble and conflicts in the world, are there any inherent traits and resources in religion that could be mobilised to constructive ends? In the following sections, this study discusses the utility of Christianity and Islam to peacebuilding. The paper argues that tapping into the potentials of peace in these religions holds the solution to the problem of religious conflicts in Nigeria as it will help these religions to work towards reconciliation and rebuilding their relationship.

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<sup>25</sup> The present study notes that it can be contested that America is seen as epitome of Western Christian civilisation. However, this perception can be understood as coming from the fact that America represents the liberal capital and perhaps an emergent Protestant ethic.

### 4.3 ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY'S FAILURE TO MAINTAIN PEACE

According to Schmidt-Leukel (2004: 4-5)

Religion in its true or pure form ... is claimed to be good through and through, lofty above all human quarrels and low instincts, entirely and solely oriented towards peace. But what renders this view immediately doubtful is the simple question of why religions could be misused so well and so often for instigating violent conflicts and wars, if they were so good, so pure, so peaceful? If it were only peace that flows from the religious spirit, then it would be a crazy idea to misuse them for promoting hatred and tensions.

The above words speak to a problem: religion, in spite of its potential for peace, has been used to foment conflict instead. If it is the case that the two religions focused on here value peace and if peace is at the root of what they teach, why have they been implicated in conflicts as opposed to serving as structures and agencies for peace? Conflict between members of these two religions detracts from the tenets advocated by their faiths. It is trite to argue that adherents have strayed from the teachings that form the core of their beliefs and allowed political and ethnic elements to influence them into unleashing mayhem on those perceived as the "other". It has to be said, however, that this problem is not peculiar to both dominant religions. Momen (1999) presents certain texts in Hinduism's *Bhagavad Gita* and Mahayana Buddhists *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* which have been used by the adherents of the said religions to justify violent conflicts in different parts of the world.

The Christian tenet of peace and non-violence has been rendered tenuous by different violent acts in history against unbelievers, so-called "heretics" and people of other religions including Islam. For example, the Spanish Inquisition (1478-1834) of the Catholic Church's inquisitorial office spearheaded the stance of violence, burning at the stake and subjecting Jews, Muslims, Protestants and so-called "heretics" of the Christian faith to inhuman treatment.<sup>26</sup> These historical scenarios raise questions about the applicability of the tenet of peace and non-violence, which is at the root of the teaching of the Christian Scriptures. It may be argued that the institutionalization of the Christian faith post-Constantine's recognition of the religion as a state religion contributed significantly to the decreasing relevance of the tenet in practice. From that point in history, the Christian religion was effectively mixed with State politics; and when the State deployed its machinery of war against elements that were hostile to it, the Christian faith was implicated in the problem. It is

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<sup>26</sup> Apart from the Spanish inquisition there was also the Papal inquisition which started round 385 AD, with the execution of Priscillian the Spanish heretic by Emperor Maximus, to around 1633 when Galileo was brought before the inquisitorial office. See further Jones (2010) who gives a detailed history of the different inquisitions in the history of Christianity.

no wonder then that the basic tenet of love of God and love of neighbour (Matt 22:36-40), upon which the Christian faith is anchored, has been on the wane. The ensuing effect is that in most countries the tenet of love and peace and non-violence has been lost. However, despite the above, the fact remains that the tenet of love and peace and non-violence is at the root and core of the belief of the Christian religion as exemplified by Jesus its founder. If religion is a mobilizing and motivating force to change something in society, then this value of peace and non-violence which is embedded in the Christian teaching of love of God and neighbour should be revitalized so as to realise peace in religious conflict-ridden contexts such as Nigeria.

The same analysis may be applied to the Islamic religion which also upholds the value of love of God and neighbour. The call to love God and one's neighbour ought to move people to seek and preserve peace instead of waging wars supposedly to "win souls". The Islamic religion has also been implicated in the perpetuation of violence; the September, 11 attack on the USA has been blamed on Islamic fundamentalists.<sup>27</sup> The question then is what is it that makes such a religion which values love and its concomitant of peace to unabashedly fight and kill in the name of winning souls for God? It should be stated that the demonization of the "other", which stems from the exclusivist view of other religions, not only leads to fundamentalism, but also provides convenient justification for violence. In this regard, Islamic fundamentalism has been cited as a factor in religious conflicts as some adherents interpret Prophet Mohammed's *jihads* and some Qur'anic injunctions (for example Surah 2:190; Surah 4:74-75) to perpetrate violence in an attempt to "win souls".<sup>28</sup> The Challenge for these two dominant religions then is to go beyond the historical and contemporary failures and harness inherent potentialities, especially to their tenets, for peace-building. The analyses to follow will show that these religions possess the fundamentals (e.g. the injunctions) that could motivate adherents to work for reconciliation and peace. The peacebuilding potential and resource of these religions is premised on the fact that the tenets, scripture and principles embedded in them may be mobilised towards constructive ends, especially for the purpose of reconciliation, rebuilding of their relationship and peacebuilding.

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<sup>27</sup> See Huntington's (1996) presentation on Islam's inclination to violence.

<sup>28</sup> See Kramer (1996) for a detailed report on Islamic fundamentalism.

## 4.4 FUNDAMENTAL VALUES REINFORCING CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM'S POTENTIAL FOR PEACEBUILDING

### 4.4.1 CHRISTIANITY AND THE TENET OF LOVE AND PEACE

The Christian Scriptures have many references in which the injunction is to seek peace and non-violence. Jesus Christ himself was known to have preached peace on earth and have encouraged his followers to learn to love their enemies and to turn the other cheek when hit on one cheek (Matt 5: 44-45). In the New Testament, we note that Jesus took up the Old Testament injunction of the love of God (the *Shema*, Deut 6:4) and extended it to the love of neighbour:

Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12: 29-31; Matthew 22: 34-40).

Furthermore, peace and love of God and neighbour is the central theme of the teaching of Christ and he is the one who said blessed are the peacemakers (Matt 5:9). For Jesus and later his disciples, love of God and love of neighbour is important for strengthening both the relationship between human beings and with God. It is the injunction for peace and the call for a pacifist attitude to violence that was evident in Jesus' preaching on restraints for his followers when they wanted to rise up in arms as the Roman soldiers came to arrest him (Matt 26: 50-52). This pacifist attitude is also evident in the time of the persecution of the Christians by the Roman Emperors; many Christians were known to have been killed as martyrs of the religion.<sup>29</sup> These are the accounts of what is found in the Christian scriptures on the stance of the Christian religion on issue of peace and non-violence.

Apart from the scriptural tenets that show that the Christian religion has values of peacebuilding and non-violence, there are numerous studies that do substantiate this point. Heft (2010) focuses on Christianity's attitude to war and peace throughout history in order to see how Christianity contribute to creating a culture of justice and peace for the world. Having analysed the thoughts of some Christian thinkers, the author concludes that Christianity's attitude to war and peacemaking have evolved dramatically over time (2010:328). Their attitude and teaching is now more favourable to upholding the culture of justice and peacemaking and Heft further hopes that much of Christianity can contribute

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<sup>29</sup> See Further Ekeke (2012) whose study focuses on the persecution and martyrdom of Christians in the Roman Empire from AD 54 to AD 100. The author advocates that Christians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century learn from this attitude and eschew violence and retaliation (2012:188).

more to creating this culture (2010:331). Walsh (2012:39) re-iterates the view that Christianity's emphasis on love of God and neighbour is understood as the essential prerequisite for building a world of peace and justice. Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana, & Abu-Nimer (2005) also enumerate the values in Christianity that undergirds their peacebuilding efforts. For these authors, 'the basis of Christian peacebuilding is formed by Biblical teachings that refer to Peace (shalom); peacemakers; being created in the image of God; the unconditional love towards God and people; confession and repentance; reconciliation and forgiveness' (2005:13).

#### 4.4.2 ISLAM ON THE TENET OF LOVE AND PEACE

Islam is also a religion which values peace and love. This is a basic tenet of the Islamic religion and that which controls adherents' lives and their dealings with people around them. This theme of love of God and neighbour as found in Islam is expressed thus:

Of God's unity, God says in the Holy Qur'an: Say: He is God, the One! God, the Self-Sufficient Besought of all! (Al-Ikhlās, 112:1-2). Of the necessity of love for God, God says in the Holy Qur'an: so invoke the Name of thy Lord and devote thyself to Him with a complete devotion (Al-Muzzammil, 73: 8). Of the necessity of love for the neighbour, the Prophet Muhammad...said: None of you has faith until you love for your neighbour what you love for yourself (in Volf, 2010:28).

In the above quote, it is clear that in the Islamic religion there is a potential for peace as love of God is paramount and the prophet Muhammad unequivocally pronounced that no one could have faith in God without love for neighbour. The injunction to love God and one's neighbour is necessarily tied to the tenet of peace and non-violence. If it is the case that one truly loves God, then one should also extend that love to one's neighbour; the two aspects of love are not mutually exclusive, they are necessarily tied to each other. This injunction is at the root of Muslims' love for their neighbours as exemplified in one of the Pillars of Islamic faith, namely the Zakat, which is a call to all Muslims to contribute and offer something to the poor and those who are less privileged in society. This is a pillar in the Islamic religion which is not taken for granted. For example, in the month of Ramadan, all believers have to contribute towards charity based on love of neighbour and love of God (Surah 21:73).

Abu-Nimer (2008:5) in his study which focuses on framework of *Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam* looks at the work of two Islamic scholars (Hashimi and Sachedina) who enunciate the Islamic principles that clearly provide a strong base for a solid peacebuilding approach in Islam. 'According to these principles, human nature is to aspire to peace and not to war or violence. Humans seek harmony with nature and other living beings;

in addition, humans can learn to be peaceful and change their wrongdoing since they are born innocent and not evil' (Abu-Nimer, 2008:6). Also while focusing on the conflict between Jews and Muslim Arabs in Israel, Yablon (2010:343) notes that '...Islam views peace as part of the religious aim to realize God's kingdom on earth.' Furthermore according to Yablon 'One origin of the word Islam is *Salam* which means "peace" [and in] 'the Quran (e.g., 60:8), relationships with non-Muslims should be based on justice, mutual respect, and cooperation' (2010:343-344). For Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana, & Abu-Nimer (2005) the Islamic principles that relates to peace includes: *Salam* (peace); *Tawhid* (unity of God and all beings); *Rahma* (Compassion); *Fitrah* (individual responsibility to uphold peace); justice, forgiveness, vicegerency and social responsibility (2005:11-12).

#### 4.4.3 "A COMMON WORD"

A common teaching on the love of God and neighbour is the motivating factor that should lead Christians and Muslims to the task of dialogue towards reconciliation, rebuilding of relationship and peacebuilding. Based on this realisation, Islamic leaders around the world wrote an open letter to Christian leaders in 2007, inviting them to cooperation as a step towards peacebuilding. The letter, *A Common Word between Us and You*, has drawn responses from both Christian and Islamic scholars. The number of responses it attracted showed the importance of the call to the task of peacebuilding that is extended to these two religions which have been implicated in conflicts.<sup>30</sup> In the foreword to the book edited by Volf et al (2010), which focuses on the responses to the *Common Word*, the former Prime Minister of Britain, Tony Blair notes that

The significance of religion in this world and in the lives of billions of people is something we simply cannot ignore or write off as a vestige of antiquity. Faith in God guides and gives meaning to the lives of billions of people around the world, myself included. Yet none of us can at the same time ignore the potential for conflict between religious populations – not limited to but including Christians and Muslims (2010: ix-x).

Blair's comment suggests that religion and its impact in contemporary society cannot be ignored; its potential for conflict has been utilised in many cases to precipitate or sustain conflicts. However, the essence of Blair's assertion is to bring out the influence of religion which, in spite of its potential for conflict, can also be utilised to promote peacebuilding. This is why according to Blair the letter *Common Word* is crucial as it allows Christians and

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<sup>30</sup> The Letter was positively received by Christian leaders and they in turn gave a "Christian response to 'a common word among us and you'". See Yale Centre for Faith and Culture (2008).

Muslims, embroiled in religious conflict, to understand the potential of peace in their religions and bring it to the task of peacebuilding going forward. Blair (2010: x) adds that

With the momentum of globalization, countries and cultures are being drawn closer and closer together with astonishing speed, creating a world that is becoming ever more interdependent. As such, not only peaceful coexistence but active cooperation between Christians and Muslims – who together comprise about 55% of the earth’s population – is a necessary component in making the 21<sup>st</sup> century work more humanely and the earth a better place for all its inhabitants....as “a Common Word” reminds us, active cooperation with one’s neighbours, grounded in mutual love and respect, is part and parcel of being a Muslim or a Christian....Christians and Muslims are called to compassionate cooperation with other (sic), regardless of their particular religious affiliation, not in spite of their different faiths, but because of their respective faiths. The shared commandments to love God and to love one’s neighbours are at the core of both religions.

Blair’s remarks convey important points which are crucial to the theme of this study. In this “global village” in which cultures intersect and people are dependent on one another, peace is paramount. The impact that the war on terror has had on the global economy and how religious tensions with and in major oil producing countries impact on the prices of the commodities such as oil serve to illustrate the importance of peace to sustaining normal living conditions. The second point from Blair’s comment is the assertion that active cooperation, love and respect of neighbour are important values in Christianity and Islam. This factor underscores participation by faith-based actors in peace building processes. It necessitates cooperation between religious actors with a view to eschewing all forms of violence while promoting peace. The next section will discuss how the resources of peace in Christianity and Islam can be mobilised for peacebuilding.

#### **4.5. THE POSSIBLE ROLE OF CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN PEACEBUILDING**

On the role of religions in peacebuilding Schmidt-Leukel (2004:3) asserts that

The issue of war and peace is...deeply embedded in the teaching and doctrines of the major religious traditions of the world. Building on their specific sources of religious insight – wisdom, enlightenment, revelation – they have provided basic explanations of the existential, cosmic, and at times even metacosmic roots of violence and war. And drawing on the same sources, each of them has proclaimed peace...as an ultimate value.

The above assertion further lends credence to the availability of the utilities of peacebuilding in the world’s religions including Christianity and Islam. The missing link, one would say, is the lack of courage among the members of these religions to make this potential and resources for peace a reality. Hence, the role that Christians and Muslims can play in peacebuilding involves the willingness and courage to bring the esteemed values and

potentials of peace, to work for peace among people of all nations. The role Christians and Muslims can play in the task of peacebuilding in Nigeria will involve the practical presentation of a common front and a resolution to work for all that augurs well for reconciliation, rebuilding of relationship and peace as the teachings of the two religions implore its adherents to. The influence of the teachings of these religions could change the hearts and minds of adherents and move them towards a particular orientation. Historically, the leaders of these two religions have mobilized their adherents to action for political purposes (Enwerem, 1995; Falola, 1998; Onapajo, 2012). The role that these religions can then play in the task of peacebuilding in Nigeria is to reverse the trend. This mass mobilisation towards violence needs to be replaced by the positivity of reconciliation and peace based on an effective framework of religious peacebuilding (Haynes, 2009; Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana, & Abu-Nimer, 2005). In working proactively for peace, the religions are able to use the forces which move them to conversion to bring their adherents to understand the value of love of God and neighbour. When this value is emphasized in interpersonal and inter-religious interactions, this will effectively move adherents to work for peace and for all that which leads to peaceful coexistence between members of different religions.

The impact of fundamentalists in the two religions should not be forgotten in the project of bringing the two religions to their supposed task of peacebuilding. Effective faith-based peacebuilding by these religions in Nigeria requires that religious scholars and adherents eschew interpretations (of texts) that can be construed as justifying violence against fellow humans.<sup>31</sup> Effective peacebuilding by religious actors is dependent on harnessing the positive elements and resources in these religions. In this regard, it is absolutely imperative for Christians and Muslims in Nigeria to uphold the value of love and peace in their teachings and actions as this will help in establishing a cordial relationship between them.<sup>32</sup> The approach is to accentuate the positive elements in these religions while the negatives – those elements that precipitate or sustain conflict – be addressed through multi-pronged initiatives such as education and social activism. This approach takes cognisance of the complementarity of faith-based and secular peacebuilding.

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<sup>31</sup> It is pertinent to re-assert that while this study focuses on the religious motivation for violence, it acknowledges the existence of other factors that precipitate and perpetuate conflict. These factors are, broadly speaking, ethnicity, psychological, social, and political. An examination of these other factors is beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>32</sup> This point takes into account Schmidt-Leukel's (2004:7) study, which focuses on what steers religions towards conflict. Violence and conflict in which religion is implicated is attributable to an *exclusivist attitude*, which increases the tendency of mutual suppression. *Personal conviction* by some adherents of the need to convert others... by all means may also provide justification for recourse to violence.

#### 4.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Religion's influence in the public sphere has remained strong despite the reality of secularization which anthropologists and sociologists have articulated in the literature.<sup>33</sup> In particular, Christianity and Islam have a big role to play in the task of peacebuilding as they share in the values of love and peace. It is important to adopt these values for there to be reconciliation and rebuilding of the relationship between Nigerian Christians and Muslims. The resources to realise the needed strategy towards peace are predicated on the values of love and peace in these religions. The inability of these two religions to entrench the values of love and peace can be attributed partly to the politicization of religion and the influence of fundamentalists at the both extremes of the Cross and the Crescent Moon. This negative factor notwithstanding, these religions can play a decisive role in promoting peace in the world and in Nigeria in particular.

Peaceful coexistence of people in a multi-religious and pluralist contemporary world like Nigeria calls for inter-religious dialogue and a shared understanding of the love of God and neighbour. According to Rouner (1999:2), '[a] paradox is reflected in the relation between religion and peace. Religion has probably been the single most significant cause of warfare in human history and, at the same time, the single most significant force for peace.' Notwithstanding its complicity in conflict, it is time that these religions reassert themselves and the resources in them and contributed towards the realisation of peace. In line with this expectation, it is imperative that religious actors give expression to the injunction to love God and fellow humans. From a theological perspective the path to peace, where the dominant religions have been complicit in conflict, lies in dialogue. The move towards dialogue is perhaps buoyed by the commonality of the value of love and peace in religions. This is an important factor that could move religious actors towards harnessing the resources and potential for peace in their faiths for the purpose of reconciliation, rebuilding of relationships and peacebuilding. Lederach incorporates encounter and dialogue as being necessary towards reconciliation of the parties in intrastate conflicts; 'reconciliation as a locus creates a space for encounter by the parties, a place where the diverse but connected energies and concerns driving the conflict can meet, including the paradoxes of truth and mercy, justice and peace' (1997:35). The next chapter focuses on dialogue as the best strategy towards bringing Nigerian Christians and Muslims together for the project of peacebuilding.

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<sup>33</sup> See Wilson (2003) and Bruce (2003) for a sociological discussion on the incidence and process of secularisation in contemporary societies.

## Chapter 5

# **“Dialogue” as an Effective Peacebuilding Strategy towards Reconciliation, Rebuilding of Relationship between Christians and Muslims and the Transformation of Religious Conflicts in Nigeria**

### **5.1 TOWARDS THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN NIGERIA**

In spite of the fact that certain Christians and Muslims are complicit in engendering conflict in the world at large and Nigeria in particular it is also the case that given the right atmosphere their potential and resources for peace can come to the fore. Members of both religions are known to have also engendered peace and work to better conditions of social injustice and suffering in many parts of the world (Bout, Kadayifci-Orellana, & Abu-Nimer, 2005; Haynes, 2009). The previous chapter has analysed and established the resources in these religions that enable their ability to achieve such good deeds of justice and peace. The resources for peace in these religions are rooted in the values of love and other values which the founders of the two religions, their sacred books and the principles in them hold in esteem. Their ability to bring these needed values to the forefront of the project of reconciliation and rebuilding their relationships with one another is possible in the spirit of openness. For Volf (2010:25), the “Common Word” initiative ‘holds the potential for providing a good platform for Christians and Muslims together to engage great and troubling problems facing humanity today.’ Hence, the most strategic and pragmatic way to realize the project of bringing the potential of peace in Christianity and Islam to bear will be in their ability to freely engage each other in the different aspects of encounter. Lederach (1997) envisions that this encounter is necessary for the paradigm he proposes towards the reconciliation of conflicting groups. Lederach asserts in the second quote of the Epigraph of this study that , ‘reconciliation is not pursued by seeking innovative ways to disengage or minimize the conflicting groups affiliations, but instead is built on mechanisms that engage the sides of a conflict with each other as humans-in-relationship’ (Lederach, 1997:26).

This chapter will focus on dialogue as that strategy which will help in engaging the sides to the Nigerian religious conflicts as humans in relationships. According to Gülen (2006:1) ‘Dialogue means the coming together of two or more people to discuss certain issues, and thus the forming of a bond between these people. In that respect, we can call dialogue an activity that has human beings at its axis.’ This study agrees with this assertion and hence this

chapter will argue that dialogue is the best strategy towards realizing the peacebuilding project in the incidence of religious conflicts in Nigeria. This chapter will further advocate that the members of the religions should be open to the project of Interreligious Dialogue in its different forms. This strategy will go a long way to realise reconciliation and rebuilding of relationship between the members of these religions. Anderson (1984:188-189) affirms that dialogue is a ‘means of getting to know one another better...and of exploring some of the pressing problems that face us all, in the contemporary world, in the light of what each of these faiths may be able to contribute to their solution.’

## **5.2 UNDERSTANDING DIALOGUE/INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

According to Langmead (2009:2) ‘In its broadest sense dialogue is all about respectful conversation in which two or more parties share what they believe while open to learning from each other.’ Knitter (1985:207) defines dialogue as ‘the exchange of experience and understanding between two or more partners with the intention that all partners grow in experience and understanding.’ For Samartha (1981:99) dialogue is ‘an attempt to understand and express our particularity not just in terms of our own heritage but also in relation to the spiritual heritage of our neighbours.’ On its own, Interreligious Dialogue is a concept that defines the encounter between religions that come together to better understand each other through different means and in order to foster an atmosphere of peace. For Banchoff (2012:204) interreligious dialogue ‘refers to communication and interaction with other religious traditions in a cooperative spirit...its primary aims are not to prevail over the other but to reduce conflict and promote understanding and cooperation across issues of common concern.’

Dialogue is an effective strategy which can allow the members of the religions in conflict to come together to an encounter of reconciliation and of rebuilding of relationships as Lederach (1997) envisions. Vroom (1989:28) affirms that ‘such encounter, as well as mutual action to foster humanitarian goals, can be seen as a great help in coming to real mutual understanding...it is easy to see that a dialogue without encounter and sympathy is not very fruitful.’ The different forms of dialogue as we shall see later are quite relevant in establishing avenues in which the members of these religions can come together to engage in the project of peacebuilding in their communities. Embracing dialogue will enable them to learn how not to allow ethno-political factors to overshadow their peacebuilding potentialities and resources based on the love of God and neighbour.

Furthermore, Mandour (2010:888-889) enumerates the aspects of dialogue which makes it an effective tool in peacebuilding. They include: the recognition of the basis of equality of the religions, mutual respect, joint cooperation and tolerance. But most importantly dialogue leads to tolerance and acceptance of the other who may not necessarily agree with one's faith and those doctrines that may lead to mutual prejudices among people of different religions. Mandour (2010:889) further asserts that 'there is no doubt that such a tolerant atmosphere paves the way for establishing trust and promoting cooperation between the two parties. Such an atmosphere could ultimately lead to the expansion of the scope of cooperation...so that all may cooperate in laying down the foundation for peace and stability across the world.' Ezegbobelu (2009:93) also affirms that 'dialogue is essentially entering into a conversation with someone who thinks differently...interreligious dialogue usually begins when members of different religious affiliations voluntarily decide to meet one another...when both are ready to accept one another.' This makes dialogue a potent tool for peacebuilding and a strategy which will lead Christians and Muslims to go beyond the issues that cause conflicts.

Dialogue is a strategy which brings those whose relationships are broken into the project of reconciliation. This process also engages its participants in an encounter which opens them up for more understanding of each other. This strategy further encourages its stakeholders to work for those things that lead to the peace and progress of the human society. 'Dialogue believes it can advance along the way to truth, by relying on the subjective consistency of dialogical partners... Indispensable prerequisites for such a dialogue include a deep human honesty, intellectual openness and a willingness to forego prejudice in search of the truth...' (Ezegbobelu, 2009:91). These make dialogue an effective strategy towards creating an atmosphere of peace among members of different religions in conflicts in a country like Nigeria. Dialogue starts within; it starts first as an internal realisation and conversion of the heart towards realising the sacredness of the other. How this conversion of the heart can come about is when the members of the religions open their mind and heart to the injunctions, teachings and principles of peace in their religions. Stein (2014) affirms that that internal dialogue is very important to a religious community that wishes to engage in interreligious help the religious community to counter exclusivist and hostile discourses within the community. According to Panikkar (1999(b):xvii) internal dialogue (which he also calls intra-religious dialogue) is very important because it helps the religions to struggle with both the angel and the *daimon* in their religions in order to be open towards understanding other religions which they encounter. Ramble and Raja (2009:4) also notes that 'without a dialogue

within oneself from different perspectives it may be difficult to extend it to the other.’ This is so because in order to enter into dialogue with others ‘one may have to recognize within oneself the presence of different perspectives, beliefs and views that are in constant dialogue with each other’ (Ramble & Raja, 2009:4). In summary, dialogue is a strategic tool which can be deployed in the peacebuilding project because it is in essence a deferential exchange between people in an atmosphere characterized by mutual understanding and respect, cooperation and tolerance.

### **5.3 FORMS OF DIALOGUE**

Fitzgerald and Borelli (2006:140) identify four forms of dialogue: dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of discourse and dialogue of religious experience.

#### **5.3.1 DIALOGUE OF LIFE**

This form of dialogue involves the open meeting of the members of different religions on the level of everyday encounter. This is the form of dialogue which John Paul II talks about when he asserts ‘we Christians and Muslims must be people of dialogue [which] means, first of all, “dialogue of life,” a positive acceptance, interaction and cooperation by which we bear active witness as believers, to the ideals to which God has called us;’ that ideal is to live in harmony with each other (quoted in Sherwin & Kasimow, 1999:67). For Fitzgerald & Borelli (2006:148) ‘one of the aims of dialogue is to allow people to live in harmony and peace, despite their differences.’ This form of dialogue brings the members of the religions to sharing of life experiences and living together in harmony. Dialogue of life is not anything official; it is the call to the adherents of the different religions to be aware in their encounters with their neighbours to thread carefully with respect of one another despite their differences in religious beliefs. It calls for openness that leads to day to day peaceful co-existence of the people of different religions who live in the same community.

#### **5.3.2 DIALOGUE OF ACTION**

In the dialogue of action, the religions come together to engage in actions aimed at contributing to the well-being of society. In this form of dialogue the members of different religions come together because they have heard the call of the suffering of others (Knitter, 1994:244). It is a form of dialogue which is informed by the values of love and charity for God and neighbour. Hence in this form of dialogue religions come together conscious of their call to contribute to solving humanitarian crisis and to engaging in projects for the growth of

their societies. This form of dialogue has seen stakeholders and members of these two religions engaging in faith based organizations towards helping people in different forms of life crisis. The tasks undertaken in this form of dialogue include peacebuilding projects. Curaming (2012) reports an example of this form of dialogue as it happens in the “Bishops Ulama Forum” in the Philippines. This kind of forum is an interreligious initiative to promote peace and it arises because ‘religious leaders and ordinary followers of varied religions in the world have long realized the importance of collaboration for the promotion of peace in society’ (Curaming, 2012:37).

### 5.3.3 DIALOGUE OF DISCOURSE (THEOLOGICAL EXCHANGE)

According to the document *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991, no. 42) dialogue of theological exchange is, ‘where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other’s spiritual values.’ This is the type of dialogue which happens on the intellectual level. It is a kind of official dialogue which calls the theologians and scholars in the different religions to come together to look at the issues of doctrinal differences. It involves a relook at the sacred books and teachings of the two religions and the effort to clarify doctrines, beliefs and ethics (Carr, 2007:3). These efforts are ultimately geared towards reaching a proposition as regards the intellectual understanding of the beliefs and doctrines of the different religions on particular issues which seem to cause mutual exclusivism and conflict. However, in this form of dialogue there is a possibility of emergence of the exclusivist and inclusivist factors, which do not allow this form of dialogue to reach its full maturity of finding a peaceful understanding. Fitzgerald and Borelli (2006:140) affirm that in this form of dialogue ‘there is a danger of defending one’s own position and attacking that of the other by any means.’ Discourse dialogue hence has been criticized for not being able to reach a desired value of peace. However, Fitzgerald and Borelli are of the view that ‘theological dialogue between Christians and Muslims will only be fruitful if it aims at clarification rather than refutation and includes a real attempt to appreciate the logic of the others position’ (2006:140). This form of dialogue also demands authentic listening and ‘authentic listening requires a total openness...it requires each partner to presume the truth of the others position: “I can never understand another’s position as he does...unless I share his view...”’ (Knitter, 1985:208).

#### 5.3.4 DIALOGUE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

In this form of dialogue the adherents of the religions in conflict encounter each other on the level of sharing of spiritual experience. According to the document *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991, Chapter 42) in dialogue of spiritual experience ‘persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute.’ Hence, this is a form of dialogue which calls for openness as the adherents of the religions meet to share their understanding of spiritual worship, prayer, and spiritual exercises. In this form of dialogue those spiritual tenets established by the *Common Word* are tested. In it the members of the two religions can come together in worship and in listening to the leaders of the religions in teasing out those spiritual values of love and peace which lead to peaceful co-existence. It is also an avenue used to encourage a spirit of peace among the religions. This is seen in the example of Pope John Paul II, who

undertook with great seriousness to invite representatives of the world religions to make a pilgrimage of prayer to the City of Assisi on January 24, 2002. They came together to pray for the end of conflict and the promotion of true peace, and together, especially Christians and Muslims, declared before the world that religion must never become a cause of conflict, hatred, and violence. The Multi-Faith Day of Prayer...was truly a powerful gesture of solidarity with all people who yearn for the end of hostilities, the cessation of wars...the creation of a global peace (Curaming, 2012:38).

The above is the seed of peacebuilding which arises from the dialogue of sharing of religious and spiritual experience. It leads the members of the religions in conflict to realise their true potential for peace in the world. This can be achieved through sermons, and catechesis from their spiritual leaders (for example, Pope John Paul II) encouraging adherents of the religions to freely engage in this kind of spiritual exercise with members of other religions both for the purposes of spiritual enrichment and fostering peace.

#### 5.4 APPRAISING THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF DIALOGUE FOR THE NIGERIAN SITUATION

The four forms of dialogue are quite appropriate in transforming the spate of religious conflicts in Nigeria, as they will bring the conflicting parties to an encounter towards reconciliation, rebuilding of their relationship and fostering peace. Dialogue of discourse is important and can help where there is a spirit of openness and respect to listen to one another but as asserted above this is not always the case. This form of dialogue has the ability to reach a deadlock between the theologians of the two religions as they cannot reach an

agreement. However, the opportunity that it offers towards an encounter which demands openness and respect is important and will lead to a situation where in spite of one's belief, one is open to listen to the other and talk to the other with respect even though one does not believe and may not be able to eventually believe. Also in the possibility that a consensus on shared discourse is reached, this form of dialogue becomes very helpful in realizing understanding among the members of the religions and in fostering an atmosphere of peaceful co-existence on which the other forms of dialogue can grow.

The other three forms of dialogue are also very important and relevant to the Nigerian situation.

Dialogues of life, of action and of sharing of religious experience are forms of dialogue which are quite basic and which will allow a closer relationship between the religions especially at that grassroots level. They will bring the adherents of the religions to engage in the project of reconciliation as Lederach (1997) envisions and effectively lead the conflicting parties to the realisation of their resources and potential for peace. These forms of dialogue will bring Christians and Muslims in Nigeria to those practical aspects that get them to come to know one another on a deeper practical everyday level. This is important because religious conflicts, as experienced most times for example in the North and Middle Belt of Nigeria, do not really come from theologians or from a theological debate that went awry. The conflicts are generated and fermented among the grassroot members of these religions but always because of perceived mutual prejudices which exist among. Also, when it comes to religious conflicts which are motivated by political and ethnic factors, it is the members at the grassroots that carry out violence on one another; burning churches and mosques.

Hence, to realize dialogue towards reconciliation and rebuilding of relationships, Christians and Muslims should engage more in those forms of dialogue which bring them closer to respect themselves as people of God. Also 'there must be on-going discussions and dialogue to alert citizens to the necessity of good neighbourhood and common destiny' (Ezegbobelu, 2009:153). Engaging in the dialogues of life, of action and of sharing of religious of experience will help realise this and allow the adherents to meet each other on practical levels of life and spirituality and this helps in realising peaceful co-existence. It will help to practically establish those values and resources which this study has earlier analysed that will lead to actualizing the potential of peace among the members of these religions in Nigeria.

From the analysis presented in Chapter Three, we note the factors that negatively affected the relationship and led to mutual antagonism between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. It is first rooted in the animosity between these religions right from the history of their different origins in Nigeria and to their different encounters which has been rife with exclusivist tendencies resulting in mutual prejudices between them. This has been exacerbated by the colonial factor which helped entrenched the use of religion as a tool to achieve ethnic, political and economic ends. Lederach's (1997) paradigm offers a way out of this problem through an integrated peacebuilding approach which incorporates dialogue which will bring the conflicting parties (in this case Nigerian Christians and Muslims) to an encounter that will lead them to be more respectfully sensitive to one another and to learn to discuss the issues and distinguish religious from ethno-political problems in Nigeria. Religious issues can then be amicably resolved through different forms of encounter and the political issues tackled differently using other forms of secular peacebuilding strategies such as political settlements and credible elections, good governance and public administration, constitutional reforms that recognises the equality and rights of different ethnic groups, etc. (Toole, 2006:7).

## **5.5 SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED RELIGIOUS PEACEBUILDING STRATEGY**

According to Mandour (2010:889) 'Dialogue...is not an end in itself but it is a means to achieve tolerance, which in turn promotes culture exchange, common understanding, and positive and peaceful coexistence, and consolidates the roots of mutual cooperation in all spheres and at all levels.' This summarizes this religious peacebuilding strategy towards transforming the religious conflicts in Nigeria; dialogue is effective towards realizing peace as an end in the religious conflicts in Nigeria. Reflecting on Hans Küng as a leading proponent of interreligious dialogue, Cobb (1999:169) notes that 'Küng understands the purpose of dialogue in a broader context...This context is nothing less than the total global situation of the present. He presents interreligious dialogue as an indispensable element in dealing with this situation.' This situation is presented by interreligious conflicts in the contemporary world which also has its manifestation in the Nigerian society and threatens to disrupt its unity.

Hence interreligious dialogue is presented in this chapter as a strategy to this problem of religious conflicts in Nigeria. This religious approach to peacebuilding is important because Nigeria is a religious nation; the members of these religions will be able to relate to this approach. Dialogue offers different avenues for religious encounters towards reconciliation,

rebuilding of relationships and peace based on the value of love of God and neighbour which are resources in these religions. In the dialogue of discourse the leaders and theologians of these religions meet to seek consensus on doctrinal issues and other theological disputes. In dialogue of life the members of these religions will come to realize that their neighbours deserve respect, love and dignity. In the dialogue of action, the members of these religions based on the value of love and peace also come together to engage in action towards any project that leads to reconciliation and the progress of the society they live in. Peacebuilding is one such project and in their coming together in the dialogue of action, the members of these religions then work together actively to realise the value of peace in their societies. Coming together in this form of dialogue will also enable the members of these religions to actively contribute towards a faith-based response to any humanitarian crisis in Nigeria.<sup>34</sup>

Dialogue is a tool that can be deployed in the project of religious peacebuilding and conflict transformation in situations of conflict among religions. It is important towards the rebuilding of relationships among conflicting religions. Banchoff (2012:204) affirms that ‘when people of different faiths exchange views and engage in dialogue, they typically seek to identify differences and commonalities and build greater understanding. But they are not doing politics as traditionally understood: the pursuit of interest, the building of coalitions, and the struggle over office.’ Hence, when they come together in any encounter of dialogue, the members of these religions develop an affinity that goes beyond political, ethnic and religious animosities which causes problems and learn to live together in peace as they know it is important to the invaluable project of helping their society. This is what Anderson (1984:188) means when he asserts that ‘...our contact may leave us both changed and for the better, not the worse. This can be, and often is, the result of almost any genuine encounter with some other person.’ Engaging in the dialogue of sharing of religious experience will enable Christians and Muslims in Nigeria to respect each other. It will also lead to openness as one comes to understand the spirituality, tenets and those values other religions hold in esteem.

## **5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter presents a religious peacebuilding strategy which has affinity and is coherent within Lederach’s (1997) Integrated Framework for peacebuilding. This religious

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<sup>34</sup> Example of this kind of faith-based response is seen in the emergence of the faith-based organisation *Gift of the Givers* in South Africa. The NGO was established by Dr Imtiaz Sooliman in 1992 on the instruction of a Sufi Sheik and spiritual teacher, Muhammed Saffer Effendi al Jerrahi. Since it started the faith-based NGO has helped people in different parts of the world, who met with different disasters, with humanitarian aid. See further Gift of the Givers website available at <<http://www.giftofthegivers.co.za/>>.

peacebuilding strategy is proposed because the variables in the kind of conflict being studied are religions. Schmidt-Leukel (2004:8) notes that

There is, after all, the ideal of peace, harbored and cherished in all the world religions. Thus for the sake of peace they may at least accept the virtue of tolerating one another. But there is hope for much more. The age of global inter-religious dialogue has already led significant numbers of faithful members of all the major religion (sic) to discover that they have much more in common than they once believed: existential values, guiding moral principles spiritual insights.

Derived from the insight in the above assertion, the aim of this chapter has been to present dialogue as an effective religious peacebuilding strategy which Christians and Muslims in Nigeria can freely agree to and engage in for the purpose of peaceful co-existence. This is important because as Sampson (2012:106) notes:

In view of the perennial religious tensions between the two dominant religious groups in Nigeria, there is a sustained culture of mutual suspicion and unhealthy rivalry between them. The introduction of sections 38(1) and 10 into the Nigerian Constitution, which have guaranteed freedom of religion and prohibited the declaration of state religion respectively, has done little to attenuate the frequency of religious conflicts, as ... veneration of the two dominant religious groups has helped in heightening the underlying tensions and rivalry. Thus conflicts between Nigerian Christians and Muslims have often manifested in violent inter-religious violence.

The above highlights the problem in using a pure political strategy towards resolving the religious conflicts in Nigeria. Hence, the humble proposal and focus of this study has been to find a religious peacebuilding strategy that can be acceptable to the members of these two religions. This chapter conceptualizes that strategy as dialogue; the role of Christians and Muslims in the task of peacebuilding in Nigeria can be realized in their effort at different forms of dialogue which will help them to establish a better relationship. These forms of dialogue are important as they can help Christians and Muslims in Nigeria to eschew all negative attitudes and mutual antagonisms between them. Finding the good in the members of other religions with whom they live side by side with in community and hence establishing a peaceful reconciliation can be realized in the courage to enter into encounter with members of these other religions at different levels. The next chapter concludes this study by utilizing the component of “structure” in Lederach’s (1997) Integrated Model of peacebuilding, to make recommendations as to how this effective religious peacebuilding tool can be realized in the Nigerian situation.

## Chapter 6

### **RECOMMENDATIONS AND GENERAL CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1 TOWARDS REALISING DIALOGUE BETWEEN NIGERIAN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS**

The previous chapter presented dialogue as a religious peacebuilding strategy which will help the religions in conflict to realise their peacebuilding utilities. This chapter focuses mainly on how this tool can be effectively used in the Nigerian situation. The discussion in this chapter will be based on the component of structures in Lederach's (1997) framework. The effort will be to situate the different forms of dialogue at the different levels of leadership and the peacebuilding approaches in these different levels. The recommendations will be directed at the different leaders at the different levels as they can be found in the Nigerian society. The last part of this chapter will provide a summary of this study and a general conclusion.

#### **6.2 STRUCTURES FOR REALISING DIALOGUE AMONG NIGERIAN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS**

##### **6.2.1 STRUCTURE AS A COMPONENT IN LEDERACH'S FRAMEWORK**

In trying to establish the overall framework for peacebuilding Lederach (1997:37) presents "Structure" as a conceptual framework for sustainable peace in intrastate conflicts. The structures are called levels of leadership which Lederach thinks of as a pyramid. The structures of leadership according to Lederach include the top-level, middle-range and the grassroots. These levels of leadership also translate to three approaches to peacebuilding which include: "top-down" approach, "middle-out" approach and "bottom-up" approach (1997:44).

##### **6.2.1.1 Top-Level Leadership/"Top-Down" Approach**

The top-level leadership includes the key political and military leaders in the conflict and according to Lederach 'in an intrastate struggle, these people are the highest representative leaders of the government and opposition movements' (1997:38). The important characteristics of this level of leadership are that they are highly visible; they are generally locked into positions and under pressure to maintain their position; and finally these leaders have exclusive power and influence (1997:39-40). These characteristics of the Top-Level Leadership lead to a "top-down" approach to peacebuilding. Furthermore, in this approach:

peacemakers are eminent figures who possess public profile; the goal in the approach is to achieve negotiated settlement between the principal high-level leaders in the

conflict; the peacebuilding approach at this level is often focused on achieving a cease-fire or a cessation of hostilities as a first step to resolving conflict; and finally the top-level approach makes some concrete assumptions about the order and time frame for peace' (Lederach, 1997:44).

### **6.2.1.2 Middle-Range**

The role of the Middle-Range leadership in the transformation of conflict is to coordinate the long run and short run aspects of conflict transformation. This is so because the Middle-Range leadership assumes the vantage position between the top-level leadership and the grassroots. They have direct access to both the top-level leadership and the grassroots; the Middle Range leadership also motivate these two levels towards working together. Transformation of conflict is achieved through the "middle-out" approach; the actors in this level radiate the process of transformation of conflict outwards using their mid-level influence to other actors. According to Lederach (1997:46), this approach is 'based on the idea that the middle range contains a set of leaders with a determinant location in the conflict who, if integrated properly, might provide the key to creating an infrastructure for achieving and sustaining peace.' The leaders include 'persons who function in leadership positions within a setting of protracted conflict, but whose position are defined in ways not necessarily connected to or controlled by the authority or structures of the formal government or major opposition movements' (Lederach, 1997:41).

### **6.2.1.3 The Grassroots**

The grassroots leadership includes the masses that are at the base of the society (Lederach 1997:42). Lederach notes that, at this level, 'life is characterized in particular in settings of protracted conflict and war, by a survival mentality. Leaders in this level are people who are involved in the day to day activity in the conflict areas. The leaders also include 'people who are involved in local communities, members of indigenous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) carrying out relief projects...' (1997:42). Furthermore, at this level conflict is very well felt and 'people understand intimately the fear and suffering with which much of the population must live...' (1997:42-43). Lederach also notes that at this level 'grassroots leaders witness first-hand the deep-rooted hatred and animosity on a daily basis' (1997:43).

Grassroots approaches to peacebuilding according to Lederach are "bottom-up" and involve all programmatic peace efforts. The "bottom up" approach can also involve efforts to develop a process that builds on the traditions and religious affiliations of the people as was the case

in Somalia (1997:52). All faith-based approaches to peacebuilding which focus on the masses that are directly affected by the conflict, can be included in the category of programmatic peace efforts.

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS A RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN NIGERIA: WHAT ROLE FOR THE DIFFERENT LEVELS?**

#### **6.3.1 THE TOP-LEVEL LEADERSHIP IN THE RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA**

In the Nigerian situation of religious conflicts, the top-level leadership can be seen as all those political elites who would like to maintain their religious convictions and who have played major roles in the politicization of religion. The latter, as we have ascertained, is a major factor that negatively influenced the break in relationship between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. It is a fact that politicians from the different extremes of the Cross and the Crescent have in one way or the other contributed to the religious conflicts. The examples of such abound and can be seen in the controversial statement made by Sir Ahmadu Bello as regards Nigeria being a legacy of Uthman Dan Fodio's Islamic campaign;<sup>35</sup> the bitter debate on the incorporation of Nigeria into the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) by the Babangida administration in 1986; some Northern politicians' adoption of the sharia law which resulted in religious conflicts in these states; etc. (Falola, 1998; Komolafe, 2012). These have been sources of misunderstanding between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and have also negatively affected their relationship especially as they play out in the politics of the country. These examples make Lederach's Top-Level leadership relevant to the Nigerian context.

The "top-level" approach to peacebuilding in Nigeria can be realised in the effort at dialogue between Christian and Muslim political elites. The form of dialogue that can work in this level is dialogue of action. In this, the political leaders should engage in a conscientious effort towards realising elusive peace in Nigeria. It demands that they utilize their visible positions and enormous influence to play the needed role of engendering peace. The politicians in Nigeria should engage in some peacebuilding projects which can be alongside faith-based projects towards getting their supporters both at the middle level and the grassroots to work towards peace. They are in a better position to do this as they are revered and in most cases their words are respected. Establishing such a dialogue of action strategy is very important to realising a "top-down" approach to peacebuilding in Nigeria.

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<sup>35</sup> See *This Day Live*, 01 October, 2012.

The example of this kind of top-down effort towards peace is seen in the establishment of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), which the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo provided support for in 1999.<sup>36</sup> This needed support for the council which was provided by a top visible and influential Christian politician like Obasanjo reflects a top-down approach to peacebuilding. It is to be noted that in doing this, Obasanjo as a politician realises the importance of peace and the negativity of engendering conflict in the name of religion. Hence, this should be the example that politicians in Nigeria should emulate. They should endeavour to use their visibility, influence and ability to command control to initiate avenues in which the conflicting religious parties in Nigeria can come together to dialogue in order to rebuild their relationship and to engender peace in that country.

However the top-down approach should not just end in establishing avenues to realize dialogue of action. The top-level leaders should also see to it that for effective and sustained peacebuilding and rebuilding of relationship between Christians and Muslims they should supervise the projects like NIREC established towards realising dialogue among the religions. Ezegbobelu (2009:159) bemoans the failures of NIREC; criticizing them for becoming a "Gala Club" of prominent Nigerian religious leaders, who meet occasionally at Nigeria's most costly hotels to enjoy themselves. To pacify the masses, one or two statements are issued to reassure the helpless citizens that the causes of the conflicts and violence are being looked into' (2009:155). He further laments the fact that NIREC has not been effective in initiating 'active projects that impact cordial relationships among diverse religious groups' (2009:159). The author's criticism follows the likes of such criticism by Governor Shekarau of Kano State, who accuses NIREC of inefficiency and bemoaned that the organization and its activities have not made any positive impact on resolving the conflict between Christians and Muslims in the country.<sup>37</sup>

NIREC can play a better role in resolving the issue of acrimonious relationship between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. This can be realized if the religious leaders who are its members and the politicians from the different religions spearhead the project of dialogue. Firstly, this study recommends that this organisation should be at the forefront of organising and moderating dialogue of theological discourse among the leaders of the two religions. This

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<sup>36</sup> NIREC involves leaders from the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA). See the *History of NIREC* available at <<http://www.nirecng.org/history.html>>.

<sup>37</sup> See *Daily Trust*, March 2008 available at <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200803030331.html>>

is in view that a consensus reached on the theological level will help to a better understanding among the leaders of the religions (middle level) and subsequently to the members at the grassroots.<sup>38</sup> This strategy has the potential of creating harmony and the value of peace as the leaders of the religions meet to tease out doctrinal and other theological problems that have led to acrimonious relationship between the religions. Secondly, this study recommends that NIREC should organise and moderate another form of discourse aimed at bringing the politicians to a form of discourse with the religious leaders in which the issues of politicization of religion in Nigeria should be teased out and its evils named and condemned. This form of dialogue of discourse will be an avenue through which politicians and religious leaders in that country reach a positive agreement on how to effectively distinguish religious issues from political issues in that country. It is in this forum that the disagreement on the issue of a secular versus non-secular constitution for the country can be discussed fruitfully.<sup>39</sup> It is here that the issue of the need to sustain a secular constitution, which does not play into the bias of one religion to another, can be discussed and ways forward presented.

This is important as we note that part of the problem of politicization of religion in Nigeria stems from this whole argument and debate on the constitution. Onapajo (2012) suggests allocating positions to religious leaders in the constitution as a way of realising peace. This is a positive stance however, it is better to start more of such organisations like NIREC that promote religious dialogue in its various forms instead of creating political offices for religious leaders. The issue is not that religious leaders want political power, but that there is a break in their relationship which is influenced by lots of factors as have been traced in the history of the religions in Nigeria. In bringing religious leaders and politicians together NIREC, and any other organisation established with the view of transforming these religious conflicts, become more effective. Their job in realising a religious peacebuilding strategy in Nigeria involves engaging in active dialogues of action and discourse with themselves and the Nigeria politicians who are adherents of their religions.

### 6.3.2 THE MIDDLE-RANGE LEADERSHIP IN THE RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

At this level we can situate the different religious leaders in the different areas of Nigeria in which the intermittent eruption of religious conflicts are rife. The leaders here include the

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<sup>38</sup> From the literature it looks like NIREC is not connected to the middle and lower levels. The strategy of coordinating dialogues of discourse can help in establishing this needed connection as NIREC can then have access to the middle level religious leaders who themselves can reach the grassroots easily.

<sup>39</sup> See Komolafe (2012) on the issue of secular versus non-secular constitutional debate which has led to a Constitutional crisis in Nigeria.

different bishops, priests, imams, ulamas, etc. in different religious communities in Nigeria. They do have a big role to play in realising the effort at rebuilding the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria through effective religious dialogue. Lederach (1997:51) notes that the middle-out approach is strategic as religious actors at this level serve as the link between the top and the grassroots in the agenda of peacebuilding. Hence in the effort towards realising a strategic religious peacebuilding in Nigeria through dialogue, these leaders in the Middle-Range level are very important and their job is crucial. Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana, & Abu-Nimer (2005:15-17) note that these people are important in realising a faith-based strategy to peacebuilding because in most cases they are the educated ones in the spirituality and demands of their faith. The masses hear it all from them and they are a very strong motivating force to engendering conflict on the one hand and establishing peace on the other hand. It is these leaders whose words move the people to action and hence we have seen that in some of the religious conflicts in Nigeria the religious leaders in the communities play a crucial role through their injunctions and preaching.

The extent to which the middle-out approach can work in Nigeria can be seen in the example of the story of Pastor James Wuye and Imam Nuryan Ashaffa in Kaduna State. These two were sworn enemies as a result of their religious convictions and their status as upper level leaders of two religio-political groups in Kaduna State.<sup>40</sup> They trained local militias to intimidate and kill members of the other's religion.<sup>41</sup> However, according to Griswold (2010:22), these two religious leaders later found ways of reconciliation and peace by rebuilding their relationship utilizing the resources and tenets of peace and love found in their religions. Having realised the need to build peace among the members of their different religions in their communities they engaged in dialogue of action and founded a faith-based organisation called Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC), 'which seeks to resolve crises between these rival groups' (2010:22). It could be surmised that this group was established to help these middle range leaders realise the role Lederach accorded the middle-range to coordinate the long-run and the short-run visions of transforming the religious conflicts in some

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<sup>40</sup> Mohammed Ashafa was then a leader of a militant Islamic group in the North and the secretary General of the Muslim Youth Councils while James Wuye was also involved in militant Christian activities and served as the Secretary General of the Kaduna State chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria. See further the profile of the Imam and the Pastor prepared by Ashoka Innovators available at <<https://www.ashoka.org/fellow/mohammed-ashafa>>.

<sup>41</sup> See the article "Once Enemies, a Pastor and an Imam wage Peace in Nigeria" in the *Global Post*, March 10, 2014. Available at <<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/nigeria/140219/pastor-and-imam-once-enemies-wage-peace-nigeria>>.

communities in Northern Nigeria. The effort of this group and their leaders (the pastor and the imam) has seen them transforming their violent community (Kaduna town) into a peaceful one. It has also seen them engaging in different faith-based projects towards bettering their community and healing broken wounds and relationships between the members of the two religions both in their community and other parts of the country. For example in November, 2004 and by invitation of the administrator of Plateau State, the duo carried their religious peacebuilding message of dialogue to the religious conflict ridden town of Yelwa-Nshar.<sup>42</sup> This goes to substantiate the importance of dialogue as a peacebuilding strategy towards rebuilding the relationship among Christians and Muslims in Nigeria.

The recommendation is that religious leaders in the different areas of conflict in Nigeria should learn from this example. Religious leaders in Nigeria have a crucial role to play in realising the project of rebuilding the relationship between these conflicting religions in Nigeria. They can do this by engaging in the different forms of dialogue especially the dialogue of discourse and the dialogue of life. The religious leaders are best suited to engage in the dialogue of discourse because they are well trained in the theology and doctrine of the different religions. This study has earlier asserted that any consensus reached on theological and doctrinal disputes will go a long way to rebuilding the relationship between members of these religions. Hence, the recommendation is that Christian and Muslim religious leaders in different communities should engage in open discussion and discourse on theological doctrines which lead to exclusivist attitudes in these religions. The aim of this discourse is also to create more avenues for better understanding of these religions' spiritual and theological resources that can help the members to develop the conscience of working towards a peaceful co-existence with members of other religious groups.

The fruits of a consensus reached on shared theological and doctrinal tenets, principles and resources can help in improving relationship among members of these religions and can subsequently lead to a successful dialogue of life. Hence, this study also recommends that at this level, the religious leaders should help coordinate and encourage the different avenues of day to day encounter between members of these religions living in their communities. They should encourage their adherents to learn to be cordial with people of other religions with whom they live in the same community. It is their duty to communicate to the grassroots members that Christians and Muslims do share same word of love of God and neighbour and

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<sup>42</sup> See Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana, & Abu-Nimer (2005); Griswold (2010)

encourage them to then endeavour to live in harmony and peace with members of the other religion. It is also the duty of Nigerian religious leaders to engage in dialogue of action and in different projects to realise religious peacebuilding. The onus is on them to engage the leaders of the other religions in their communities to a dialogue of discourse and sharing of religious experience. These strategies lead to a peaceful co-existence and sustained peace in their communities. However, it is worthy to note that groups like the *Boko Haram* may not be amenable to this strategy of peace as their violent actions and fundamentalist stance show that perhaps they do not want peace and to engage in dialogue. The challenge for the leaders of the religions will be to work with government towards getting them to a form of discourse to understand their grievances and see ways of responding to these positively towards peace.

### 6.3.3 THE GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP IN THE RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

Lederach (1997:42) notes that the grassroots ‘represents the masses [at] the base of the society. Individuals at this level are involved in the day to day activities in the conflict areas.’ Hence, at the grassroots level in the Nigerian religious conflict are the adherents of these religions who bear the brunt of the religious conflicts in Nigeria. They are the ones who feel the fear and suffering that characterise conflicts around them and witness first-hand the deep-rooted hatred generated by the conflicts on a daily basis (Lederach, 1997:43). They are Christians and Muslims living together in different communities in the country; and the irony is that when there is any form of provocation the members at this level turn around to unleash mayhem on each other. Most often the case is that the grassroots members are used by those at the Top and Middle-Range because of their political and economic whims to foment conflict in the name of religion. They are financed and supplied with arms by politicians, wealthy individuals, traditional rulers, etc. who may have other ethno-political motives different from religious to unleash mayhem on people of other ethno-religious background (Krause, 2011). They are mobilized easily as they have the utmost respect for these Top level actors who in most cases represent them in the politics of the country at large.

However, the grassroots level members of these different religions have a role to play in realising the project of establishing sustained peace in their communities and in the Nigerian civil society at large. Because of their well-positioned place which enables them to have a day to day meeting and interaction with members of other religions whom they live with in same community; they are suited to engage in dialogues of life, of sharing of religious experience, of action. But the dialogue of life and of action are envisaged to be more effective

at this level, because they will help towards rebuilding relationships between neighbours of different religions and in improving their lives as humans living close to each other. Dupuis (1991:235) sees the dialogue of action as dialogue of “praxis” and affirms that this form of dialogue is important towards achieving humanitarian, social, economic and political goals. Hence, encouraging grassroots level leadership to engage in these forms of dialogue is a worthwhile venture as it will not only help in establishing peace among them but also help in creating human, social, economic and political progress in their communities.

This study then recommends that Christians and Muslims at the grassroots level engage in the dialogue of action and dialogue of life. They should be helped by their leaders at the middle-level who have the role of encouraging these forms of dialogue basing them on the resources and tenets of their religion. The middle-level leadership (because of their revered position as teachers and theologians of the religion) should be able to interpret for these members the resources of peacebuilding in their religions (Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana, & Abu-Nimer, 2005)). This will help in rebuilding the relationship between Christians and Muslims living together and conscientize them to make the potentials and resources of peace in their religions to become a reality. On the dialogue of sharing of religious experience, the religious leaders also have a task to encourage the grassroots leaders to engage in such things as sharing of religious experiences, engaging in prayer meetings, organizing and having visits to other religion’s worshipping places, felicitating with them in their different religious ceremonies. These are the basic aspects of dialogue which help in rebuilding relationships among conflicting parties and this is the recommendation to the grassroots Christians and Muslims in Nigeria towards reconciliation and sustainable peace.

Furthermore, in his study which focuses on empowering the youth as peacebuilders in religious conflicts areas like Jos, Mecha (2013:4), first bemoans the fact that the youths who are part of the grassroots level in the conflicts are often neglected in the project and efforts towards peacebuilding. The author however, establishes that the youths often play constructive roles (often in the shadows) in the peace processes (2013:4). Taking into consideration this assertion and the reality that youths do make up the grassroots level of Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, this study makes a recommendation that youths in different communities affected by religious conflicts should not be neglected in the proposed peacebuilding strategy. They should be mobilized in the process of dialogue of action as peacebuilding actors and this also should be co-ordinated by top-level and middle-range

leaders. The ability of the youths to be resourceful peacebuilders as Mecha (2013) establishes, should be the bases of their involvement in a grassroots level dialogue of action between the youths of the different religions.

#### **6.4 SUMMARY AND GENERAL CONCLUSIONS**

The Epigraph of this work, first presents the wise words of the Tibetan Monk Thich Nhat Hanh which establishes the nexus between peace in the world and the peace among the religions of the world. These words rightly bring to our awareness that religion is a force that has engendered conflicts thereby substantiating Huntington's (1996) assertion that the role of religion in the clash of civilizations is a reality in our contemporary world. In Nigeria the wise words of this Monk are even truer as Christians and Muslims in that country are complicit in the ethno-religious conflicts which have bedevilled the country. However, the assertion that, if there is peace among religions, there will be peace in the world, also presents the encouragement towards encouraging all efforts towards a religious peacebuilding strategy especially as needed in Nigeria. In order to realise such a strategy, this study adopted Lederach (1997) model which envisages that encounter between conflicting parties is germane towards achieving reconciliation and the rebuilding of relationships among them. Hence, this study has posited that the best way to finding sustainable peace in the situation of religious conflicts in Nigeria will be in getting the religions to engage in the project of reconciliation and rebuilding of relationships through different forms of dialogue.

Many factors account for the acrimonious relationship between certain Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. It can first be traced to the mutual exclusivism and resultant mutual prejudices which have existed between these religions in history. It can also be traced to the politicization of religion which was entrenched by Nigerian politicians right from pre-independence times. These negative factors have in many ways impacted negatively on the relationship between Christians and Muslims in the country. The effort at rebuilding of relationship, reconciliation and peace among these conflicting religions in Nigeria can then be started by looking at the religions to see their resources which can help in this needed project towards peace. This is in line with Lederach's (1997:55) view that parties in conflict should not be seen as just receivers of peacebuilding interventions but rather also as having its resources. Following from these, the effort is to see how, in spite of the fact that religions and indeed Christians and Muslims are complicit in the conflict; they can be resourceful in the effort at rebuilding, reconciling and peace. The resources are found in the assertion that

there are indeed peacebuilding potentials and utility in Christianity and Islam found in their sacred books, teachings, tenets, principles. These teachings point to the call of the members of the religions to love God and humanity and to cherish peace. This is to say that in these religions the tenets of love and peace are paramount and these can serve as the needed resource towards reconciliation and rebuilding of relationship among Nigerian Christians and Muslims.

The problem is that there are not enough avenues to realize the effort at utilizing these resources towards reconciliation, rebuilding of relationship and peace between these conflicting religions in Nigeria. This study has presented dialogue which is a tool of religious peacebuilding and tried to integrate it within Lederach's peacebuilding framework towards strategic peacebuilding in Nigeria. Using Lederach's conceptual framework of peacebuilding towards reconciliation, the study has suggested that dialogue in its various forms be established following the structures of leadership as Lederach has presented. The best way to bring out the peacebuilding potentials and utilities of peace among the religions in conflict in Nigeria according to this study is through dialogue. Ezegbobelu (2009:91) notes that 'dialogue seeks truth by trusting another. It is the optimism of the heart and not necessarily the optimism of reason in the case of dialectics.' This optimism of the heart is needed towards the effort at resolving the religious conflicts in Nigerian; the way to peace through reconciliation between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria is through dialogue. Dialogue emanates from the need to reconcile conflicting parties and the need to establish peace among them. Hence this study has suggested that dialogue in its various forms be established and used as a tool towards getting the conflicting religions in Nigeria to encounter one another at different levels. According to the renowned Islamic peacebuilding leader Gülen (2006:3) 'if we start our efforts for dialogue with the belief that "peace is better"...then we must demonstrate that we are on the side of peace at home and abroad.' Finally, this study notes that there is always the reality of disjuncture between theory and practice; this may also be a factor in realising or not realising the findings and recommendations of this study.

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