



The Journal of **Living Together**



Faith Based Conflict Resolution:

EXPLORING THE SHARED VALUES IN
THE ABRAHAMIC RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

2015-2016
Volumes 2 and 3

ISSN 2373-6615 (Print) | ISSN 2373-6631 (Online)

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Faith Based Conflict Resolution: Exploring the Shared Values in the Abrahamic Religious Traditions
The Journal of Living Together
Volumes 2 and 3, Issue 1
ISSN 2373-6615 (Print); 2373-6631 (Online)
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Publisher's Note:

The official publication date of the Journal of Living Together Volumes 2 and 3 is Fall 2017. For cataloguing and research consistency, and to maintain the sequence and continuity of our publication, this journal issue will be archived as a 2015-2016 publication. The Journal of Living Together will be current in 2018.

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International Center for Ethno-Religious Mediation
11 W. Prospect Avenue, 3rd Floor
Mount Vernon, New York 10550
United States of America

Accepted authors will be notified by email.

Published by the International Center for Ethno-Religious Mediation (ICERM), New York, the *Journal of Living Together* is a multi-disciplinary, scholarly journal publishing peer-reviewed articles within the field of ethnic conflict, religious or faith-based conflict and conflict resolution, with emphasis on mediation and dialogue.



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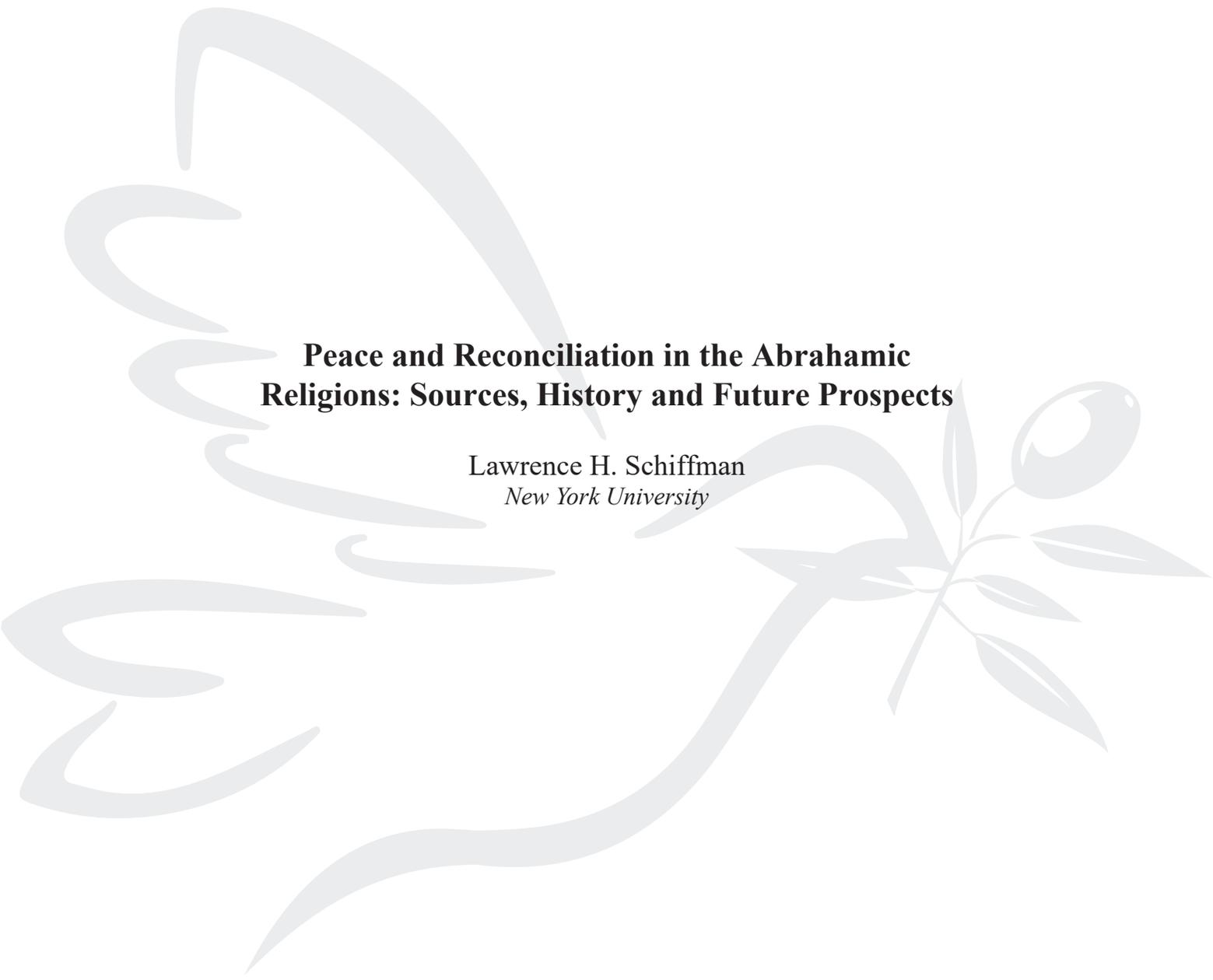
Editor's Note

Welcome to the second and third volumes of the *Journal of Living Together*. This peer-reviewed journal is interested in and attempts to reflect all the various aspects of peaceful relations. Thus, articles, book and literature reviews, and didactic essays on the state of a topic relating to peace are welcome. The journal also invites contributions from across the disciplines and grounded by relevant philosophical traditions, and theoretical and methodological approaches. In addition, a positive or broader conceptualization of peace is embraced; in a world of positive peace, not only is war absent, but human rights are also promoted.

The views expressed in the contributions are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the journal or the International Center for Ethno-Religious Mediation (ICERM). Contributors can consult this volume for the journal's style or send a request to the ICERM at the following URL: <<https://www.icermediation.org/contact/>>. The journal will appear annually. Its frequency of appearance will increase as it becomes necessary.

I pray that you will find what appears in these pages not only intellectually stimulating but also useful for promoting peace in the world. I look forward to your feedback and contributions.

In Peace Always
Abdul Karim Bangura
Editor-in-Chief



**Peace and Reconciliation in the Abrahamic
Religions: Sources, History and Future Prospects**

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Abstract

This paper examines three basic questions: First, the historical experience of the Abrahamic faiths and the role of peace and reconciliation in their evolution; Second, the resources in these religions for peace and reconciliation, by which we mean to refer to traditional beliefs and texts that encourage peace and coexistence; Third, what we need to do today, in terms of deepening peace and reconciliation among religions and how religious teachings can play a central role in resolving conflicts between nations.

***Keywords:** Judaism, Christianity, Islam, history, conflict, conflict resolution, peace, reconciliation, justice, resources*

Introduction

Our subject is extremely important in light of a widespread fiction that seems to underlie much diplomatic activity. This fiction holds that religion really has nothing to do with either the conflicts going on in our world or with the possible solutions to these conflicts. In a certain sense, what we are describing here is a result of the process of secularization that denies the role of religion in modern times. People seem to think that religious wars are a thing of the past. A further assumption is that when the actors in the given conflict claim that religious issues motivate them, they are in fact masking underlying social, economic or political factors that must be the real cause, since it cannot be religion.

The danger of this approach should be obvious. The reality is that numerous conflicts in our world actually are religious in nature, some completely so, and others partially so. The failure to consider religious issues in seeking solutions to these problems may often be the cause of failure to bring about reconciliation. Put simply, if a conflict really is religious, the easiest way to bring about reconciliation will be through dealing directly with the religious issues. This approach seems to elude peacemakers in virtually all such situations. Instead, interreligious dialogue is generally consigned to those of us who already get along and who seek to cement positive relationships through this medium. While this is certainly a worthwhile activity, it would seem apparent that religion actually does lie at the base of many conflicts and, therefore, that mediation and reconciliation could be sought through addressing the underlying religious issues.

Moreover, there is often a confusion of the ideas of peace and reconciliation with absolute justice. Peace and reconciliation usually can be attained through a willingness to accept compromise. Compromise, as taught to us by the ancient Talmudic sages, is not the same as absolute justice. Reconciliation may mean a willingness to accept the fact that injustices occurred in the past from one or another party and that, despite this injustice, we are willing to go forward in the spirit of peace and even friendship. Further, often reconciliation and even peace may be achieved even without the resolution of the problem. A simple example may be taken from modern day Jewish-Christian relations. Judaism and Christianity have fundamental disagreements and yet, even so, an amazing reconciliation is taking place in which, at least in most parts of the world, antagonism has been set aside despite past wrongs. Further, there are conflicts in which justice may never be achievable. Often, the victims of conflicts are long since dead and we can only hope that our descendants will be able to achieve reconciliation. My point here is that those who seek absolute justice as a means to the ending of conflicts will never succeed.

In accord with these assumptions, we will be devoting our time to three basic questions: we will first deal with the historical experience of the Abrahamic faiths and the role of peace and reconciliation in their evolution. We will then discuss the resources in these religions for peace and reconciliation, by which we mean to refer to traditional beliefs and texts that encourage peace and coexistence. Finally, we will discuss what we need to do today, in terms of deepening peace and reconciliation among religions and explore how religious teachings can play a central role in resolving conflicts between nations.

Historical Reflections

In order to understand the potential for peace and reconciliation among the monotheistic faiths, it will be necessary first to look at something of their history to understand the problems faced. We will consider the three faiths in the order of their historical development, that is, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Judaism

The Hebrew people begin essentially as nomads who in the 13th century BCE conquered and took control of the land of Canaan. Clearly, this conquest was an act of war, but very soon the prophets of the Hebrew Bible began to speak of peace, not only for Israel but for humanity as a whole, as an ideal closely linked to the messianic era. However, with the destruction of Northern Israel in 722 BCE and that of the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 BCE, these dreams became part of the everyday, here and now hopes and aspirations of the Jewish people. One cannot underestimate the impact of these events on molding the fundamental character of the Jewish people and the Jewish religion. In the aftermath of these terrible catastrophes, peace and reconciliation, whether between family members, neighbors--Jews and non-Jews--or nations, became a fundamental norm of the Jewish religion.

After this dual destruction, the Jewish people were dominated in turn by the Persians, Hellenistic Empires, and Rome. The Greco-Roman era was punctuated by a series of three armed revolts, one to successfully establish the Hasmonean Empire and two unsuccessful attempts to assert independence against the might of the Roman Empire. The lesson of the two failed revolts was for the Jews a sign to accept domination by foreign powers. They then lived in the Middle Ages as second-class minorities under Christian and Muslim domination. Throughout this period, they were victims of various kinds of legal, economic and religious discrimination and even of anti-Jewish violence as anti-Semitism became more and more a regular part of their lives. The modern period was expected to bring with it equal status and religious freedom. However, in Europe, beginning in the eighteenth century, the Jews faced the new racial anti-Semitism that eventually culminated in the Holocaust. Muslim modernization and the rise of the Zionist movement led to an increase in *dhimmi* anti-Semitism and eventually, in the aftermath of the establishment of the State of Israel, to the largely complete expulsion of Jews from the Arab countries.

While unbelievably reconciliation is taking place between the Jewish people, the Jewish state and those countries and peoples that slaughtered them during the Holocaust, the same cannot be said for the Jewish and Israeli relationship with Muslims and Muslim countries. Israel and the Arab states fought a series of wars that further deepened their hostility. Nonetheless, the futility of war led some Arab nations to enter into peace agreements with Israel. The current state of long-term conflict with and rule over the Palestinians remains an enormous obstacle to reconciliation. Attempts at reconciliation have worked partially with some other countries, but this reconciliation is not for public consumption and many of the citizens of these countries remain openly hostile to Jews and to Israel. At the same time, attempts of Jews and Muslims to reconcile and to cooperate outside of the Middle East have had only limited success, and that primarily around

fighting against the prohibition of circumcision and ritual slaughter in European countries.

Christianity

Christianity began as a peaceful religion seeking to establish the kingdom of God here on earth, that is, to create a world in which love, peace and reconciliation would be the dominant values. The attempt to spread this message in the ancient land of Israel in the first century resulted in the crucifixion of Jesus by the Romans and the persecution of his followers. These followers, however, against great opposition, eventually succeeded in spreading Christianity, that had been accepted by very few Jews, throughout the Roman Empire. Christians continued to suffer religious persecution until Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine in 325 CE. However, it was not long until the now politically dominant Christians, primarily in the guise of the Byzantine Empire, undertook violent efforts to force pagans and sometimes Jews to accept Christianity. In between such excesses, Jews were exposed to persecution and treated as second-class citizens. Synagogues were often vandalized and at times Jewish practice and the study of Torah were prohibited by Christians.

One would have expected that the successful spreading of Christianity would have led to a toning down of these anti-Semitic persecutions, but this did not happen. Christian Europe was the scene over and over again of efforts to relegate the Jews to second-class citizenship, to limit their religious freedom and to despoil them economically. Further, occasional blood libels and other such accusations, such as poisoning the wells, led to large-scale outbreaks of anti-Semitic violence and murder. Religious violence was indeed marshaled by Christians to force the conversion of others. From the era of the Church Fathers through the Middle Ages, the Crusades, and the Inquisition, Christians put Jews to death for their unwillingness to accept Christianity. Muslims were also attacked by Christians in the Middle Ages during the Crusades when Christian armies from Europe, inspired by the Pope, attempted to wrest Jerusalem's holy places from Muslim control. The first Crusade of 1096, for example, led to the Rhineland massacres in which entire Jewish communities were destroyed. The Crusades brought about massive destruction in the Land of Israel where Muslims and even Eastern Christians were slaughtered.

Initially, Jews were welcomed in Eastern Europe where much less violence was initially perpetrated. However, with the rise of the massive Jewish communities in those areas, both Roman Catholic and Orthodox clergy continued to preach anti-Semitic teachings and Jews continued to suffer terribly, even when physical violence was lacking. The Protestant Reformation led to extensive warfare between Catholics and Protestants and, as we know, this horrendous destruction only came to an end recently in Northern Ireland. It seems, however, that happily we have seen the last of intra-Christian religious battling. As the modern period dawned at the turn of the twentieth century, peace and security became the norm in Christian Europe. However, only a short time later, under the secularized guise of national socialist and totalitarian communist ideologies, Europeans continued the persecution and sometimes violent destruction of Jews and Muslims. The Nazis and their allies in World War II, even though secularized in their ideology, transformed classical anti-Semitism into the basis for murdering six million Jews, thousands of Catholic clergy and other religious minorities, not to mention another twenty-five million people in the course of the war.

The extent to which this should be seen as religious violence is a matter of debate but it is clear that religion played a part in bringing it about.

The lessons of the Holocaust have brought first the Catholic Church and then numerous Protestant and Orthodox denominations to seek reconciliation with one another and with Jews and Muslims. In general, one can say of Christianity that it is almost impossible to find support for religious violence today, and that toleration of various religions and ideas has become the norm for virtually all Christians. This increased tolerance represents a major accomplishment, a result of consistent enormous efforts on both sides. The Catholic Church is to be given great credit for leading, and, in fact, continuing to lead in this important area.

Islam

The initial period of Muslim history in the seventh century CE was one in which Muhammad and his followers initially sought to take control of Yathrib / Medina and a variety of other parts of the Arabian Peninsula, in the process slaughtering Jews and Christians. The Muslim conquest of the Middle East was, of course, one involving great violence. However, as the conquest proceeded, the idea of the protected minority, namely the peoples of the book, Jews, Christians and sometimes Zoroastrians, became enshrined in the beliefs of Islam. This new category allowed Muslims to spare Jews and Christians where they did not militarily resist the Arab armies and were willing to accept protected second-class status and pay the poll tax. Nonetheless, conquest by Arab armies often led to widespread destruction affecting Jews and Christians, not only remaining pagans. The concept of jihad, the obligation of waging holy war, led to the continued violent expansion of Muslim domination even into parts of Europe.

Punctuating the peace of the Arab world, however, was the ongoing strengthening of the Sunni-Shiite split which continues to be a major factor in world affairs today. Violence of one group against the other was continuous, although it more or less came to a stop during the Ottoman period. Further, already in the Middle Ages, various extremist groups within the Muslim faith turned to violence against others but it remained a marginal phenomenon.

When the period of conquest came to a close, in most places the Jewish and Christian communities settled into the protected minority status in which they were able to flourish in a variety of professions. Further, with time Judaism and Christianity benefited from the intellectual cross-fertilization of the eighth to thirteenth centuries when many classical philosophical and scientific works were translated into Arabic. This period, indeed, was the golden age of interaction of Muslims, Christians and Jews within the wider areas of the *dar el-Islam*. Organized, governmentally sponsored violence against Jews and Christians seems to have been rare, although in many places *dhimmi* status effectively morphed into persecution.

Toward the end of the premodern period, it appeared that the Ottoman Empire would bring peace, security and the end of religious violence and persecution to the Muslim world. However, after the first hundred and fifty years or so of the Ottoman Empire a period of decline set in in which security deteriorated and all kinds of cruel and despotic rulers grew up. The situation of the minorities began to decline. There were exceptions, however, such as the development of the Jewish communities of the Land of Israel during this period where Christian religious shrines as well continued to thrive.

The onset of modernity brought about great changes in the Arab / Muslim world. Among those changes, as we mentioned, was the rise of Zionism and the State of Israel which had a major negative impact on the status of Jews in the Arab world, eventually leading to their wholesale expulsion or emigration, depending on the country. However, Christian communities continued to hold on as minorities in the Muslim world, even being treated well in many places. As we know, these communities are today gradually being destroyed as a result of violence and persecution. The Christian population, whether Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Coptic or other, has been decreasing constantly in the Middle East, except in Israel where it has increased.

As modernization proceeded, a variety of economic, political and religious factors have led as we all know to massive unrest in the Arab world. Beginning in the 1920's Islamism, a movement to establish through violence either a central caliphate or individual political entities to be ruled by narrow interpretations of Islamic law, has brought religious violence to horrible heights. It remains to see how such groups can be brought to reconciliation even in an atmosphere in which more normative Muslim groups could be brought into better relations with Christians and Jews. Needless to say, closely connected to this phenomenon, although politically motivated as well, is Arab terrorism directed at Israel.

What this brief survey shows is that among Jews and Christians, organized religious violence and persecution of others has basically been replaced by tolerance and mutual respect. Further, an unbelievably successful process of reconciliation has taken place. Regarding Islam, a combination of political affairs and a strong and violent minority refusing to follow a path of reconciliation has ensured that hostility will remain. Christian communities essentially are abandoning the Middle East, and Jews and Christians in the United States and Europe still are unable to reconcile with their Muslim neighbors.

In the next section we will turn to those resources that exist to make possible full reconciliation between the monotheistic faiths.

Resources for Peace and Reconciliation

Each one of the three monotheistic faiths includes in its foundation text and later traditions concepts of peace and reconciliation. It has to be admitted up front that these often coexist in the same sacred texts with sanctioned or permitted violence, and certainly with the concept of "just war." We will examine them now one by one, commenting to some extent as well on attitudes toward violence. We will also look at attitudes to the dignity of the human being, relation with God, relations between human beings, and prophetic visions of peace and the perfected world.

Judaism

We begin with Judaism at the origins of the monotheistic religions. We start with a concept of a single, all-powerful and all-knowing creator God who formed all human beings. Rabbinic tradition teaches that God initially created one human being in order to emphasize the sanctity of every human life and to show that all human beings are related since they share a common ancestor. The Bible emphasizes that people were created in the image of God. While it is difficult to

define exactly what this means, since it does not refer to his physical appearance, it certainly teaches the intrinsic value of each human being as a representative of God on earth as well as the obligation of each person to imitate the goodness of God in our world, later termed *imitatio dei*. Cain's murder of Abel, the first act of violence, is clearly condemned, although we know that under certain circumstances violence was permitted by the Hebrew Bible, namely self-defense, just war and punishment of criminals. Numerous biblical passages condemn wanton violence.

That the human being is a social animal intended to live with others, male and female, is clear from the earliest accounts of the book of Genesis where we learn of the difficulties in human relations both within and outside of the family. These stories as well as the laws regulating human interaction clearly intend to bring about a society that respects the persons, families, property and dignity of others. Jewish tradition understands the creation as indicating that men and women are joined together with God in a covenantal community. This concept essentially endows human relations with an extra factor, the role of the divine in the construction of every relationship. Such a notion, in turn, calls on all humanity to relate to one another as if relating to God. Reconciliation, from the Jewish point of view, is effectively the restoration of this covenantal community—the reinvolvement of God in human affairs.

While many of these laws are aimed at Israelites, we are told specifically that not only must one “love your neighbor as yourself,” but that it is obligatory as well to love the stranger. The Bible emphasizes that God is concerned about how the weakest among us—orphans, widows, and foreigners—are treated. While the Bible speaks of the destruction of the non-Jewish inhabitants of the land of Canaan, this vision never actually came to fruition as the land was conquered. Later rabbinic tradition understood that non-Jews who accepted belief in God and a basic moral code known as the Seven Noahide Laws were to be treated like members of the Jewish people for most purposes. That is, the ethical and legal requirements for relating to Jews and non-Jews were effectively rendered equivalent. Further, Judaism believes that the righteous of the nations will inherit the world to come, often identified with reward after death. Neither the world to come nor the messianic era is in any way limited to members of the Jewish people.

The biblical prophets speak of an ideal of peace, admittedly after the forcible destruction of the wicked by human and divine forces for good. In this ideal situation, all nations will share in worship of the true God. Visions of peace and reconciliation of the Hebrew prophets are so well known that the words of Isaiah (“nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more—Isa 2:4) have been inscribed right here at the UN. The prophets looked way beyond the life of ancient Israel and the difficulties of navigating the complex international relations of the ancient Near East. They looked forward to a world of perfect peace and harmony, of not only human but even animal reconciliation. This vision was closely associated with the prophetic expectation of the coming of the messiah who would bring about the final redemption. This strongly held belief was a cornerstone of later Judaism that expressed hope for the future and fueled the Jewish people's aspirations for a world of peace and goodness, and for their return to their ancient homeland in the Land of Israel.

Rabbinic tradition greatly emphasized the need for reconciliation among people. Aaron the Priest was praised for his role in what we would call mediation, bringing together those who were in conflict. The prophets spoke of such reconciliation both within the Jewish people and between

the Jewish people and its various ancient enemies. Numerous narratives emphasize this obligation and it is enshrined in Jewish law as Jews are required to ask for forgiveness and to grant forgiveness to one another and to their non-Jewish neighbors in the context of restitution. From the Jewish point of view, relations between humans must be conducted according to a moral pattern that, when violated, calls for restitution and repentance. Here we see the Jewish emphasis on individual responsibility for one's actions and, hence also, collective communal responsibility. These obligations again confirm a vision of human relations that is intended to create harmony among Jews and between Jews and their neighbors.

While the Hebrew Bible called on the Jews to attack and destroy the Canaanites in an effort to extirpate their pagan, idolatrous practices, later Jewish tradition effectively forbade all such actions. Essentially, then, religious violence is totally proscribed by Judaism, and when it occurs, usually in connection with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is roundly condemned by religious and political leaders.

Christianity

Christianity began in the first century Jewish milieu of the Land of Israel. It accepts the Hebrew Scriptures, the Christian Old Testament, so that many of its beliefs are in fundamental agreement with Judaism. Most of them are expressed directly in the teachings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels. Fundamental to Christian teaching is the notion that love of God and love of humanity are intrinsically bound up. The primacy of the command to "love your neighbor," is understood to be directly parallel to love of God. This tenet is basically an echo of Pharisaic-rabbinic ethics, based on the Hebrew Bible. In rabbinic literature it was often expressed as "that which is hateful to you do not do to others." The shared Golden Rule was taught to much of the world through the spread of Christianity. The Hebrew Bible had forbidden hatred in one's heart, and instructed that one must even help one's enemy to unload and reload his animal or return a lost animal to his enemy. The rabbis emphasize that although merciful treatment of animals is also at stake here, the requirement to help even one's enemy lies behind this law. The New Testament explicitly taught love of one's enemies. Famous to the teachings of Jesus is the idea of turning the other cheek even when one is attacked. In addition, Jesus told his followers to suffer being reviled and persecuted with humility. Forgiveness is constantly stressed, as it is as well in Jewish tradition. Both traditions express greatly the need to help those who are less fortunate. Jesus's emphasis on healing of the sick certainly sets an example for concern with the health of other nations.

Much of Jesus's teaching concerns the notion of the kingdom of God. This idea was widespread also among the Talmudic rabbis and is connected with the notion of the Messiah, who when he appears, will establish a peaceful, just and free society even within the present historical age. This belief becomes more prominent, of course, in the New Testament. Both Judaism and Christianity stressed extensively the notion that there can be a better and more perfect world in consonance with God's will.

The theme of peace is stressed in the New Testament. Jesus is said to praise the peacemakers as well as calling on people to be at peace with one another. The Messiah is expected to bring the ultimate peace. Indeed, peace is intimately connected with the kingdom of God and is expected

to ensue after the Second Coming. Peter refers specifically to Jesus's preaching of peace. Some of these passages echo various sources in the Hebrew Bible. Paul speaks of the God of peace, correctly identifying peace as a major demand of the God of Israel. Believers are expected to live in peace. James connects peace and peacemaking with righteousness. In Hebrews, Jesus is the king of peace, also associated with righteousness. Further, believers are expected to pursue peace, echoing also passages in the Hebrew Bible. In this way they are said to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

Islam

Islam includes in its teachings extensive material that can serve as the basis for peace and reconciliation. What follows assembles a number of these teachings even while noting that numerous other teachings encourage violence and jihad. We will argue below that the challenge facing the peaceful Islamic majority is to develop a hermeneutic whereby the teachings we survey in this section can overcome the force of those Quranic teachings appearing to advocate violent confrontation with non-Muslims.

Muslims are required to believe in one God, his scripture, the Quran, and the prophets he sent to guide them. All of these describe a clearly defined code of moral and ethical conduct, stressing the relations of all people by virtue of their universal brotherhood and the requirement to carry out their obligations to uphold justice. The Quran speaks of the creation of humanity as a single soul, and of all people from a single couple. They are admonished to see the divine aspect of all human relations.

These beliefs are translated into action by the creation of a just society. The Muslim way of life is preoccupied with issues of social justice and social ethics as delineated in the Quran and the life of the Prophet Mohammad. The purpose of Islam is to bring society on earth into harmony with the will of God.

In the Quran God himself commands justice and requires that Muslims act with justice and kindness while forbidding that which is unjust. The Quran states that a person must stand up for the right under all circumstances, for justice may not be distorted by considerations of those who hate him, who is rich and powerful or poor and unable to protect himself, even if the judgment may likely affect oneself, one's parents or one's relatives. "When you speak, speak with justice, even if it is against someone close to you..." (6:152). The pursuit of justice even applies to those with whom one is in conflict or estranged.

Later traditions attributed to Muhammed social teachings that could be instrumental in bringing about a reconciliation of Islam with Judaism and Christianity. According to some versions of a later Hadith tradition, the Prophet Muhammed taught in his final sermon that "All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor has a non-Arab superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor has a black any superiority over a white, except by piety and good action..." Likewise, even slaves should be treated with fairness by not overburdening them with tasks they cannot accomplish, giving them adequate food and clothing, and allowing them to earn money to buy their freedom. Freeing slaves was considered the highest form of charity and caused sins to be erased.

The fundamental equality of humanity and the divine gifts of free will and reason were

understood to lead to a vision of pluralism in the Quran. God set out the various diverse communities that exist in the world, and different prophets at different times came to deliver his message of the one God and his moral commandments. Muhammed, however, was understood to be the seal of the prophets, whose teachings effectively supplemented those of Jewish and Christian teachers. In a sort of Muslim version of the Golden Rule, Muhammed is reported to have said that “no man is a believer until he wishes for his brother that which he wishes for himself” and one must “do to all men as you would wish to have done to you, and ... reject for others what you would reject for yourself.” Muhammed further declared that the actions that endear men most to God are to “feed the hungry and visit the sick, and free the captive if he is unjustly confined. Assist any person oppressed, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.” In the Hadith God extols the poor and vulnerable. Allah does not ask to be fed by sacrifice, but rather asks that the poor be fed which is understood essentially as an offering to God.

The Prophet frequently mentioned the poor, orphans, and widows for special care. The duty of society is to care for the destitute. As it was the community’s responsibility to oversee the giving of alms, it was the right of the underprivileged to receive aid. Included in this category were parents, kin, orphans, the needy, and wayfarers. While a certain amount of charity was required, voluntary charity above that amount was praiseworthy and rewarded by God.

Another trait that Muslims believe God rewards is self-control that manifests itself in the suppression of anger, the withholding of retribution and the practice of forgiveness. Of forgiveness the Quran states: “The reward of the evil is the evil thereof, but whosoever forgives and makes amends, his reward is with God” (42:40). Since God is both gracious and merciful, he is ready to forgive those who sincerely repent of their faults. “Those who do ill deeds and afterward repent and believe—lo! For them afterward, Allah is forgiving, merciful” (7:153). The opposite of this submission to God is pride that causes a Muslim to turn away from God and reject the truth and God’s guidance.

Thus, Islam seeks to provide moral guidance through the Quran and the example of Muhammed and to create a just and peaceful society. The Quran expresses this concept in its suggestion that believers follow the path of Abraham: “And who better in faith than the one who willingly surrenders his being to God, and is a doer of good, and follows the way of Abraham, the rightly oriented? For God took Abraham as a friend.” (4:125). Many of the passages we have surveyed here can serve as the basis for bringing about peace and reconciliation of the Jewish and Christian communities with Islam.

Paths to Reconciliation

In trying to establish possible paths towards reconciliation, we need to consider two separate questions. On the one hand, one can ask how the resources that we have cited, in view of the history that we surveyed in the first part, can be utilized to bring about reconciliation among the three monotheistic faiths. On the other hand, one can ask how these resources can enable those who believe in and practice these faiths to serve as agents of reconciliation among others, even in cases where conflict is not related to religious issues.

It is clear that if religions are to serve as a catalyst for bringing about peace and reconcilia-

tion among others, they will first have to complete that process among themselves. Such a process would entail continued efforts to bring the three monotheistic religions together and to end the conflicts between them. One of the major obstacles to such an accomplishment remains the divisions within some of the religious groups, particularly regarding the types of issues that separate different faiths. I do not propose an attempt to bring the religions into some type of theological harmony in which each is required to modify its beliefs. Rather, each religion needs to harness the very resources we have talked about in the previous section to develop theological argumentation and justification for harmonious relations, even in the face of serious religious or political disagreement. Indeed, the trick in intergroup relations is to be able to say that we do not agree, but we wish to remain friendly. Such an approach would allow each religious tradition to confront the other with respect and tolerance but in full recognition of what separates us. In no way should anybody be asked to abandon his / her beliefs.

I suspect that the long track record of success in fostering Jewish-Christian relations, with Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant groups, would make it easy for these groups to prepare for effective dialogue and cooperation with Muslims. I think we have to admit that Islam here faces difficult challenges. To some extent, we are currently witnessing an internal struggle over the question of “What is Islam?” The vast majority of its adherents define it as a religion of peace and truly believe that their faith should bring them into peaceful relationships with fellow Muslims as well as with others. However, whether for political or religious reasons, significant numbers of Muslims continue to see violent jihad as a practical path for the future of Islam. It is not just that these groups are wreaking havoc in many parts of the world, threatening world peace. What is significant is that they are supported by some other Muslims who have not embraced violence. Furthermore, an atmosphere has been created in which those for whom Islam truly is a religion of peace have trouble in making that publicly clear. Effective interreligious cooperation will require major international and national Muslim groups to make very clear, first and foremost, to their own adherents and then to their non-Muslim neighbors, that they truly do believe in a religion of peace and that they totally condemn religious violence and violent jihad. Christians and Jews will have to make clear that they are willing to accept the honest beliefs of this group of Muslims as representative of the vast majority. That majority, however, at least in the Western countries, will not have the luxury of remaining silent.

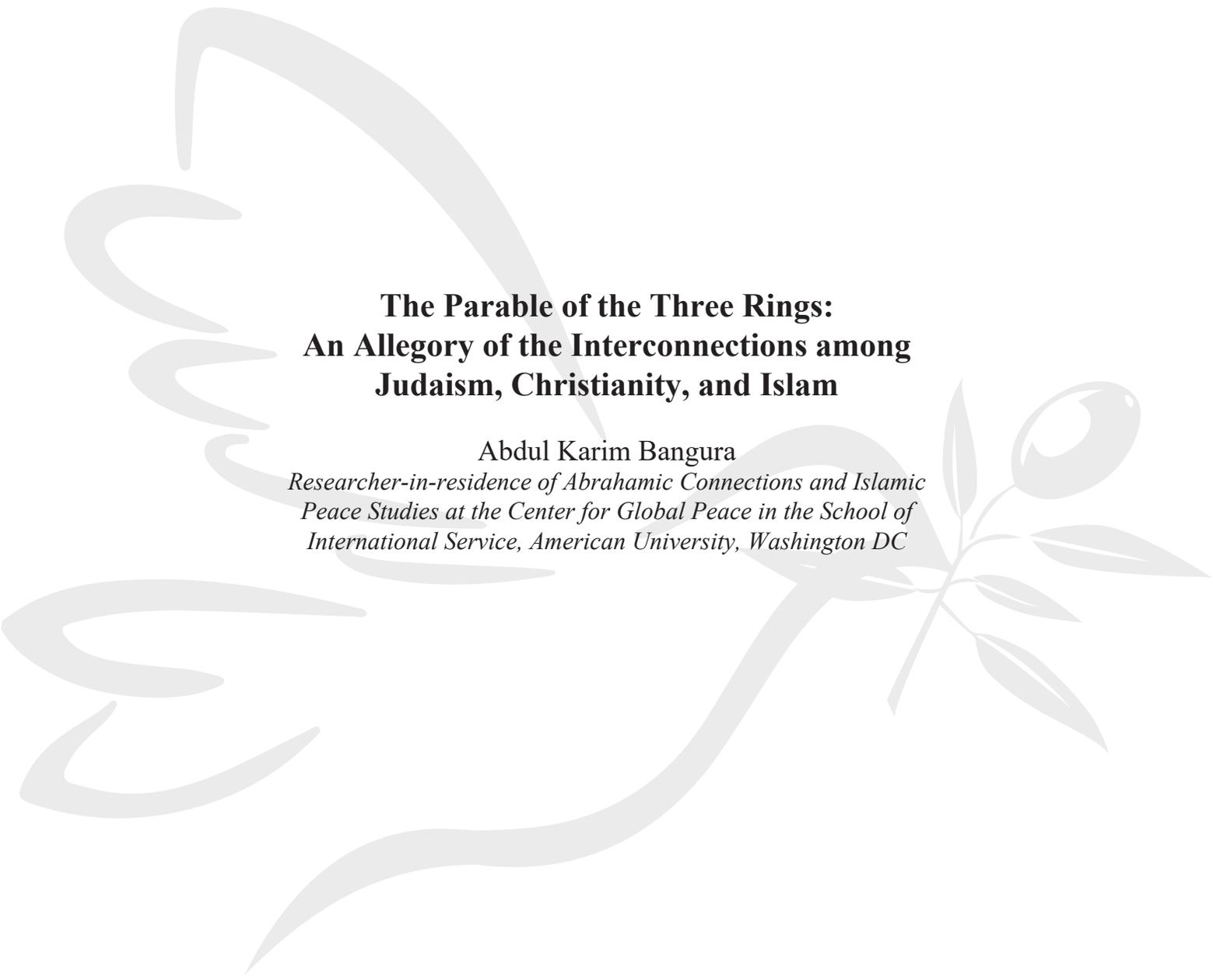
There is no question that we would need a full-scale program with large-scale funding in order to move from hopes of such reconciliation to a new reality. The Saudis, the King of Morocco and a Jordanian prince have taken up this challenge, but not on a large enough scale. These goals are attainable with sufficient effort as we have seen in the case of Jewish-Christian dialogue and of the reconciliation of Israel and Germany, for example.

The second question is whether religious groups and their teachings can serve as a path for reconciliation in conflicts that extend into the political and social realms as well. If success can be attained on a large scale in Jewish, Christian and Muslim reconciliation, religious leaders could serve as mediators regarding long-standing international conflicts as well. It is clear that religious aspects lie behind many of the conflicts that are currently plaguing the world, and the example of full reconciliation of the monotheistic religions would no doubt lead to peaceful resolution of some of these conflicts. In many cases, and this is my view regarding the Israeli-Arab conflict, refusal of

political leaders to recognize the religious aspects of the conflict often bring about the failure even of the most extensive of peace initiatives. Unfortunately, many political leaders do not totally grasp the significance of religion in world affairs and, hence, refuse to take it into consideration in political processes. Anyone who reads the newspaper should know what a mistake this is.

We have explored above a variety of resources within each of the religious traditions that should make it possible for them to achieve peace and reconciliation among them. However, the same factors, and in particular, the ethical beliefs that we have surveyed, should make possible application of religious ideas to conflict resolution. It is not only a question of specific verses in the Scriptures. Rather, the religious traditions stress a kind of cosmic peace and harmony as a supreme value and the ideals of local peace and world peace with a much higher goal and purpose, namely fulfillment of the will of God. These religions teach personal responsibility and collective responsibility for the state of relationships between individuals, groups and nations. Such beliefs endow the quest for intergroup and international peace with a much greater imperative. Further, mediators imbued with the spirit of such traditions present the message of peace with a level of commitment that is indeed infectious.

We recently saw the role of the Vatican in bringing about a reconciliation between the United States and Cuba. There are many such challenges ahead in our world. If we were able to bring about the reconciliation we all would love to see among the three monotheistic faiths, they together could become an immense force for peace and reconciliation. I have tried here to explore the manner in which these religions have moved towards such a relationship as well as the limitations they face. We have cited the immense resources in theological and ethical terms that the three monotheistic faiths can bring to reconciliation among themselves and to the reconciliation of others. We can only end with the hope and prayer that we may see the day when religious authority can be brought to bear to end violence and enmity, and when religious leaders can take their rightful place as global peacemakers.



**The Parable of the Three Rings:
An Allegory of the Interconnections among
Judaism, Christianity, and Islam**

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Abstract

If we understand intercultural philosophy as an endeavor to give expression to the many voices of philosophy in their respective cultural contexts and, therefore, generate a shared, fruitful discussion granting equal rights to all, we can then envision a philosophy that facilitates an attitude of mutual respect, listening, and learning among the major Abrahamic faiths: i.e. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. One of the most challenging theological issues of our time, how to account for the great number and diversity of world religions and at the same time to acknowledge their correspondences, is also one of the most troubling social issues confronting humanity. Disputes and disagreements over religious beliefs have been and continue to be sources of conflict around the world. Yet upon careful observation of the basis or foundation of most religions, one will find correspondences among the basic beliefs behind them. This paper hypothesizes, therefore, that the three Abrahamic faiths have common values; and that while religious persecution is built on ignorance, peace can only be achieved by knowledge and understanding. Some would argue that the struggle for political power, especially between ethnically and religiously identified constituencies in so-called democratic processes within the modern state, is a major factor. But this proposition does not explain why people with certain common religious values would be convinced otherwise. This paper therefore bases its hypothesis on *The Parable of the Three Rings*, a classic allegory for religious tolerance and understanding. For data collection, this paper employed expert interviews and the document analysis technique, and relied on both historical and contemporary sources, namely passages from the Holy Torah, the Holy Bible and the Holy Qur'an, as well as scholarly books, journals, and Internet sources. The findings generated after a qualitative analysis of the data elucidate the fundamental correspondences among the three faiths and suggest that religiously inspired terror is unwarranted and unjustified.

Keywords: *peace, Abrahamic connections, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, the parable of the three rings*

Introduction

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are brother/sister religions which together comprise about four billion adherents, accounting for more than half of the world's population. Yet, just as in the story of Cain and Abel, which they all share, they are at constant odds with one another. Judaism, the oldest practiced Abrahamic monotheistic religion, sprung from the desert and nomadic cultures of the Middle East almost 6,000 years ago. From Judaism, Christianity developed. In the Christian tradition, Jesus Christ (Peace Be Upon Him; henceforth, PBUH) fulfilled the prophesied ideas surrounding the Messiah and, thus, brought completion to the Jewish faith. Islam, which is the youngest of the three practiced Abrahamic monotheistic faiths and the fastest growing faith in the world, embodies the traditions of both previous Abrahamic religions and includes newly revealed scriptures from another and final (in the Islamic faith) Prophet, Muhammad (PBUH). These three faiths trace their roots back to Abraham (PBUH) and, thus, to Adam (PBUH). Their common lineage to Abraham (PBUH) has termed them as Abrahamic. All three faiths are spiritually based, and their historical backgrounds in the Torah, the Bible, and the Qur'an converge and diverge at some points. Having most of the same prophets (Peace Be Upon Them; henceforth, PBUT), didactic stories and morals, the three faiths have much common ground. This commonality, however, is a point upon which little focus is placed. This lack of knowledge about similarities in faiths and understanding about theology has led to increased tension, prejudice, and general discord.

Thus, as noted theologian Hans Küng once said, "There will be no peace among the peoples of the world without peace among the world religions" (Haring, 1998:173). Nearly four-fifths of the world's population identifies itself as religious (Smith, 2003:57), and the allegiances stemming from this basic fact transcend partisan, national and ethnic lines. For hundreds of millions, the most important community tie seems to be born of faith, not nation; the most authoritative pronouncements seem to be those of religious leaders, not statesmen; and the most effective provider of social and cultural resources seem to be churches, mosques, and synagogues, not the state. Faith-based loyalties and providers typically seem to outshine all others in terms of their ability to mobilize energies and tap into human resources. And yet, religions seem to remain one of the major engines of deadly conflicts.

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC were a prime example of religion and its role in deadly conflict. And as a result, of all the religious communities, it seems as if it is only the Muslims who feel being constantly under attack. In the media, they are presented as the new threat since the fall of communism. After any terrorist attack by "jihadists" from the September 11, 2001 attacks to those in Bali in 2002, Madrid in 2004, and London in July of 2005, religiously legitimated terror was attributed to Islam.

Consequently, the recent terrorist attacks cannot be understood without a grasp of Islam and the concept of Jihad. Jihadism is not a tactic, like terrorism, or a temperament, like radicalism or extremism. It is not a political pathology, like Stalinism, a mental pathology, like paranoia, or a social pathology, like poverty. Rather, it is a religious ideology, and the religion with which it is associated is Islam (Khaled Abou, 2002:32). And so "Jihadist Terrorism," a new catchphrase for

many journalists and politicians, is by no means synonymous with Islam, which is a very sophisticated religion and contains many competing elements. Islam can be, and usually is, moderate, whereas terrorism is inherently radical (Khaled Abou, 2002: 34). Therefore, if the Western and secular world's short-term goal is to stymie the terrorists, its long-term aim must be to discredit terrorism in the Muslim world.

Concomitantly, if we understand intercultural philosophy as an endeavor to give expression to the many voices of philosophy in their respective cultural contexts and, therefore, generate a shared, fruitful discussion granting equal rights to all, we can then envision a philosophy that facilitates an attitude of mutual respect, listening, and learning among the Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This is more so because intercultural philosophy entails a new orientation which insists that in order to acknowledge the cultural *situatedness* of philosophy, claims must be proven interculturally, and cultures must be consciously kept in view as the context of philosophizing. Of course, the study of interculturality of religions is nothing new, albeit rare. A recent example is Wim van Binsbergen's essay titled "Derrida on Religion: Glimpses of Interculturality" (2000). In the essay, van Bisbergen examines Derrida's argument, in which sacrifice, wholeness and righteousness become increasingly central as one reads on. According to van Bisbergen, the main purpose of the circulation of Derrida's text is the "articulation of philosophical problems of interculturality, and the suggestions of possible routes towards possible answers, specifically from the context of religion or, perhaps more generally, vaguely, and state-of-the-art-like, 'spirituality'" (2000:1).

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to examine the three major world religions, especially Islam, and the concept of *Jihad* (meaning "to struggle" or "to strive" in the way of God—SWT). This paper aims to elucidate the overwhelming commonalities shared by the major world religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and discredit the many stereotypes and misconceptions. It also seeks to answer the age-old questions of why humans continue to battle over religion, why people cannot simply get along, and how they are to promote religious tolerance.

The paper briefly explores religious strife throughout history, starting with the Roman Pagans and Hebrews and ending with the recent "War on Terror." It examines fundamental elements surrounding religious conflict and utilizes a comparative analysis of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

More specifically, however, the essence of this paper is the revelation that all founders of the faith communities simply shared the same goals and objectives—liberation of self against oppression. By illustrating the major commonalities of the three major world religions, this paper aims to stress the importance of knowledge and understanding as the only path toward peace. Since the basic values and tenets of the three major world religions are inherently the same, religious strife is simply outdated and unwarranted—there is no logical reason as to why people cannot get along.

Literature Review

The studies that have been done in this area of research focus on the history of religious strife as well as tolerance and understanding throughout history. The existing theories and/or approaches

on this topic are interpretations of religious texts, notions of power, and the core similarities of humankind. This study contributes to the sample of literature reviewed because while it incorporates the history of religious conflict and future possibilities of religious tolerance, it also uses a close analysis of specific passages from the Bible, the Qur'an and the Torah to identify the fundamental similarities shared by the three major world religions and, thus, suggests a path towards world peace and tolerance.

Although not translated into English until recently, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's play, "Nathan the Wise," in *The Parable of the Three Rings* (1894), is arguably the single-most magnificent story concerning religious tolerance. It argues in a beautiful paradox how the religion most beloved by the other two will turn out to be in possession of the true ring. The play elucidates the shared knowledge of different religious traditions. Basic patterns of mutual understanding, pluralism, tolerance, and dialogue—still relevant today—are drafted. As Hilary Le Cornu (2004) points out, the parable is told, among others, by Boccaccio in the *Decameron* (1353), a medieval collection of short stories. Actually, it should be noted that in *Decameron*, the play corresponds very loosely to the third story on the first day. Le Cornu adds that the earlier versions of the parable were told for the purpose of indicating that the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—cannot be ranked inferior or superior to one another.

In order to study the clash of religions and the path towards peace, one must look back on the history of clashing religions. Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (1998) consider the issues of tolerance and intolerance faced by Jews and Christians between approximately 200 BCE and 200 CE. Francis E. Peters in *The Monotheists: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Conflict and Competition* (2004) provides a way for readers to at least try to imagine what it must be like to live in a quite altered religious system with its different views of God (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala; henceforth, SWT, meaning "Glorious and Exalted is He/Allah").

Building upon the clash of religions and understanding why people do not simply get along, Richard Wentz in *Why People Do Bad Things in the Name of Religion* (1993) deconstructs religion to its elements and examines how fanaticism and wrong doing in the name of religion have developed. He further explains how all humans are in some way religious and how people allow that religiousness to be imprisoned within walls of their own mind's making.

Adding to the study of religious tolerance and ways to promote peace, Louis Hammann and Harry Buck in *Religious Traditions and the Limits of Tolerance* (1988) provide a collection of essays and insight that gets at the heart of how people are to balance individual belief systems and subsequent faith with holistic world views. Also, Martin Forward in *Inter-religious Dialogue* (2001) draws on a wide array of sources. This guide examines the past, present and future possibilities of inter-religious dialogue.

Other in-depth studies have looked at the impact of misinterpretations on religious conflict. Through a close reading of the Qur'an, Khaled Abou El Fadl shows that injunctions to violence against nonbelievers stem from misinterpretations of the sacred text in *The Place of Tolerance in Islam* (2002). Kathleen M. Moore in *Al-Mughtaribun: American Law and the Transformation of Muslim Life in the United States* (1995) examines pluralism and religious tolerance in America, viewed from the vantage point offered by the experiences of Muslims in the United States, a

significant and growing part of an increasingly pluralistic society.

There is a growing body of texts concerning different religions of the world, but Michael Coogan's *The Illustrated Guide To World Religions* (2003) provides an in-depth analysis of seven major world religions all in one book. Each chapter in this volume examines one of seven major world religions—from Judaism to Christianity and from Islam to Buddhism—and contains detailed information about each one.

Steven Smith in *Getting over Equality: A Critical Diagnosis of Religious Freedom in America* (2001) delineates a way for people to tolerate and respect contrary creeds without sacrificing or diluting their own beliefs. He also argues that people do not have to pretend to believe in a spurious “equality” among the variety of diverse faiths.

As the world's collective eyes focused more closely on the Middle East and made the recognition that the region would be the epicenter of its attention, interest in the three faiths of that region has grown. Because of this increase in awareness, many scholars have begun writing extensively on Muslim, Christian and Jewish relations. A compilation of essays written about the development of Islam, Christianity and Judaism and their shared backgrounds, *Muslims and Christians, Muslims and Jews. A Common Past, A Hopeful Future* (1992), edited by Marilyn Robinson Waldman, places much emphasis on the past growth of the three faiths. Their shared lineage is discussed.

The Abraham Connection: A Jew, Christian and Muslim in Dialogue (1994), compiled by George B. Grose and Benjamin J. Hubbard, is a collection of discussions among Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Through their conversations, an ambiance of mutual understanding may be achieved.

In the book, *Jews, Christians, Muslims: A Comparative Introduction to Monotheistic Religions* (1998), John Corrigan et al. discuss the foundation of the three monotheistic faiths. From this platform, the doctrinal beliefs and traditions of each are explained. The work also examines the places from which rifts occur.

Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding (2002) edited by David Smock discusses the idea of dialogue as a means to peacebuilding and how dialogue may be applied in an interfaith setting. This work also gives advice on how better inter-religious relations may be increased through discussion.

Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue (2003) discusses the way in which Christianity relates to other faiths and the role of God (SWT) in Christianity. The work further describes the way in which dialogue may be used in an increasingly more religiously divided world.

The article, “Religion, Dialogue, and Non-Violent Actions in Palestinian-Israeli Conflict” (2004), by Mohammed Abu-Nimer, examines the way discussion in an interfaith setting may increase understanding and lead to peace. This article specifically references the Israeli-Palestinian model; however, suggestions made to increase dialogue may be applied in any setting.

Heirs of Abraham: The Future of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian Relations (2005) is another compilation of conversations among Muslim, Jewish and Christian theologians from editors Bradford E. Hinze and Irfan A. Omar. This book uses the dialogues of the three theologians to create an understanding about the three faiths' interfaith relations and discusses thoroughly the

heritages of the faiths and dialogue among them.

Terence J. Lovat's article, "Educating about Islam and Learning about Self: An Approach for Our Times" (2005), discusses the importance of increasing education about Islam and its historical and shared backgrounds with Christianity and Judaism as a means for creating peace. This article is closely aligned with the current study, and similar conclusions are hypothesized to be reached.

Methods for successfully studying the scriptures in an interfaith setting with members of the three Abrahamic faiths are discussed in the article titled "An Interfaith Wisdom: Scriptural Reasoning between Jews, Christians and Muslims" (2006) by David F. Ford. The use of Ford's models for scriptural analysis may be applied to the archival research of this study.

W. T. Dickens argues that interfaith dialogue may occur even while each faith maintains its own truths. His article, "Promoting Peace among the Abrahamic Traditions through Interreligious Dialogue" (2006), states that recognition of the disagreement taking place must be made in order for progress to be made in discussion.

Although there exist studies concerning the clash of world religions and religious intolerance, there is a glaring omission in texts that combine all of the information concerning the world religions, religious warfare, promoting tolerance, etc. in the hope of educating others as a path towards peace. To that end, this study will augment the existing works on the subject and determine whether the three major world religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) do share commonalities and, if so, if there are misinterpretations that have perpetuated intolerance and impeded the path towards peace.

Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

This paper incorporates theoretical postulates from Socrates and the German playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. The rendering of Socrates is that every deity whatsoever should be worshiped in just the manner ordained by that god (Peters, 2004:86). This theory is useful because for that very reason, it became a matter of the supreme necessity with the Roman pagans to refuse to worship the God (SWT) of the Hebrews (Peters, 2004:88). For if they were minded to worship Him in a method different from the way in which He had declared that He ought to be worshiped, then assuredly they would have been worshiping not this God (SWT) as He is, but some figment of their own imagination. Yet, if they were willing to worship Him in the manner in which He had indicated, then they could not but perceive that they were not at liberty to worship those other deities whom He had forbidden them to worship (Peters, 2004:91-4).

This theory guides this study because that same logic applies not just to polytheists but within the monotheistic family as well. Again, the problem seems to be not so much (or not just) in the iniquity of believers, but more pervasively in the logical structure of the religions themselves. All three monotheistic religions trace their origins back to a definitive revelation in history (Peters, 2004:114), and this may be where the problem lies.

In addition to this, Lessing is crucial to this study because in his play, "Nathan the Wise," from the book, *The Parable of the Three Rings* (1778), he tries to resolve this problem—not just the problem of tolerance but more crucially the dilemma of revelation's uncertainty and its attendant exclusionary clause. His play is useful to this study because it suggests that perhaps the only

solution seems to be understanding—or more precisely, the kind of civilized, sympathetic, and self-confident appreciation that is willing to look inside the belief system of another without abandoning its own.

The methodological approach used in this study is a qualitative case study. It is qualitative because the study analyzes various religious texts and the different aspects of religious conflict throughout history using non-numerical data. According to Kaplan and Maxwell (1994), the motivation for doing qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research, comes from the observation that, if there is one thing, which distinguishes humans from the natural world, it is their ability to talk. Qualitative research methods are designed to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live (Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994:18)

Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines. Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods. Researcher Robert K. Yin defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (1984:23).

This study employs qualitative analysis to establish the foundation on which to test the efficacy of the religious allegory of *The Parable of the Three Rings*. After discussing the tale, it addresses the fundamental elements surrounding religious conflict and utilizes a comparative analysis of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism to test the hypothesis that the three religions share common values and are related to one another—that neither of them advocates violence and that while religious persecution is built on ignorance, peace can only be achieved by knowledge and understanding.

The unit of analysis in this study comprises the three major world religions in relation to the issue of religious conflict throughout history. The levels of analysis vary. On the individual level, this study focuses on aspects of the individual experience—why one would engage in religious warfare, what deters one from religious tolerance, and how one is to promote peace. On the interactional level, this study explores the interactions of opposing religious groups that have resulted in warfare. And lastly, on the structural level, which focuses on social institutions and patterns of social behavior, this study examines the perpetuation of religious strife throughout history.

The technique used for data collection was document analysis of books, sacred texts, Internet publications, and scholarly journals, because it is a study of references and an analysis of their contents. The factors that shaped the choice of the data collection technique were availability of information and its relevance to the topic.

Analysis

To the casual observer, it may seem that the major world religions have clearly separated people, for religions seem to attach themselves to nationalistic governments that are in political competition with other governments, setting up one religion against another (Forward, 2001:66).

And because religions most often seem to demand allegiance from their followers, they tend to give the impression of superiority over others. In order to achieve peace or some type of resolution to the age-old war of leading religions, what is needed in today's world is something very different: something that can unite people. Religion seems to separate people. That is the generic problem. In spite of religions and religious fervor, social and economic injustice, racism, and violence continue to exist in societies where the belief in a deity is so overwhelmingly present and fervently adhered (Forward, 2001:2-55).

In order to examine these issues in this essay, the following subsections deal with *The Parable of the Three Rings*, the history of religion in brief, ignorance and intolerance, religious conflict, religious tolerance, the history of religious tolerance, religious tolerance today, and a comparative analysis of the three major world religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam).

“The Parable of the Three Rings”

A work that deserves to become a part of the resolution to the age-old conflict of religious supremacy resulting in warfare is “Nathan the Wise,” a verse play by German critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing first performed in 1779, albeit Iris Shagrir (1997) has traced the allegory to its Muslim origins. The play revolves around three main characters: (1) Nathan, a wealthy Jew from Jerusalem; (2) Sultan Saladin, and a (3) Christian Knight.

Saladin, although noble and generous, needs money for his armies and attempts to get it from Nathan by challenging him in an intellectual bet. Nathan is to say which of the three religions of the Book is the true one. Yet Nathan is in a bind: name his own faith and antagonize the Sultan; name Islam and betray his own religion; name Christianity and betray Judaism while also offending the Sultan. Nathan then, known as “the Wise” for good reason, escapes the trap by telling the Sultan a story.

The story is of a wealthy merchant with an opal ring that bestows the power to be loved by both God (SWT) and man. The merchant has three sons and foolishly promises each of them, in secret, that they will inherit the ring. The father, feeling death approaching, commissions a jeweler to make two replicas of the ring. They are so fine that he himself cannot tell them from the original, and he gives the three rings to his sons. After the father's death, each son claims to have the true ring and with it the privilege of heading the family. They appeal to a judge to settle the dispute. He declares:

My counsel is: Accept the matter wholly as it stands.
If each one from his father has his ring,
Then let each one believe his ring to be
The true one. Possibly the father wished
The tyranny of just one ring!—And know:
That you, all three, he loved; and loved alike;
Since two of you he'd not humiliate...Let each strive
To match the rest in bringing to the fore
The magic of the opal in his ring!
Assist that power with all humility...
And with profound submission to God's will!

In the end, even the knight, who started out prejudiced against Muslims and Jews, accepts the benign message of the three rings: the universal brotherhood and sisterhood of all men and women under God (SWT).

Seen across from the Crusades to the Holocaust, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and fanaticism of every sort that enlightened spirit seems almost heartbreakingly dated. But the *Parable of the Three Rings* seems to be the antithesis of the crusading spirit and describes to what most of the West seems to adhere.

This belief can be viewed as the spiritual notion that holds all religions and cultures to be equally valid. Or it can also take a more rigorous form that respects other people's faith while insisting on the distinctness of one's own. Many Christians, Jews, and Muslims insist on the unique truth of their religions, but they seem to seek to enforce that truth with a strong focus on their differences, instead of acknowledging the core similarities.

Islamic extremists are very similar, if not no different from the West's Crusaders. The Islamic extremists may be seen as today's Crusaders, seeking to rid Holy Lands of "infidels." Even former President Bill Clinton, to illustrate some of the West's own misdeeds, recalled that Christian fighters massacred Muslims during the first Crusade (Madden, 2002).

So in order to ever achieve peace, religious fanatics seeking justified warfare in the name of their own religion must heed to the conclusion of the judge's ruling in "Nathan the Wise":

And when the magic powers of the stones
Reveal themselves in children's children's children:
I bid you in a thousand, thousand years,
To stand again before this seat. For then
A wiser man than I shall sit as judge
Upon this bench and speak.

But can the world really wait "a thousand, thousand years" for that decision?

The History of Religion in Brief

As seen from the preceding discussion on the *Parable of the three Rings*, the ideological clash between the leading world religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—is an age-old issue confronting humanity. Therefore, in order to understand the current conflict of religious intolerance, it is necessary to explore the roots of religion among the different peoples of the world. As I frequently tell my students, history is the most important subject matter because everything begins with history, for history is the basis for philosophy. If one gets ill and goes to see a doctor, the first thing the doctor will request is the person's medical history.

Looking back to history, religious conflict seems to lie not only in the iniquity of believers, but more so in the logical structure of the religions themselves (Stanton and Stroumsa, 1998:12). From the beginning of time when man started to lead his life guided by something other than instinct, he has seemed to feel the need to acknowledge, to see, to feel, that something greater than him exists and tried to reach this ideal (Laursen, 1999:64). So, it seems as if this is why religion was born. And looking back to history, man seems to have always fought because of his beliefs. He

sometimes committed crimes, atrocities, and wars in the name of or because of his god, or stood united in front of an enemy, or perhaps it is because of this concept.

Furthermore, in examining the history of religious warfare, the opinion of Socrates that “every deity whatsoever should be worshiped in just the manner ordained by that god” (Peters, 2004:86) is relevant. This is because for that very reason, as stated earlier, it seemed to become a matter of the most supreme necessity with them [the Roman pagans] to refuse to worship the God (SWT) of the Hebrews (Peters, 2004:88). For if they were minded to worship Him in a method different from the way in which He had declared that He ought to be worshiped, then assuredly they would have been worshiping not this God (SWT) as He is, but some figment of their own imagination. On the other hand, if they were willing to worship Him in the manner in which He had indicated, then they could not but perceive that they were not at liberty to worship those other deities whom He had forbidden them to worship.

Perhaps what is more important is not just the immense complexity of each religion but more importantly how layered these religions have become, with their assorted historical accumulations and culture-specific beliefs (Smith, 2001:132). Philosophical speculations on God (SWT) tend to return time and again to certain well-worn themes, like theodicy and divine simplicity. But because each monotheistic religion began with a revelation that constituted—and continues to shape—a historical community, the complexities pile up and give to each religion a unique contour that no philosophy can blur, let alone obliterate (Smith, 2001:135-6). And that is just the point: no one can seem to hope to achieve peace without an understanding of these religions or without taking into account their complex layers.

Ignorance and Intolerance

Albert Einstein once said that “Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding” (<http://rescomp.stanford.edu/~cheshire/EinsteinQuotes.html>). If peace is to be promoted, education is to be encouraged. In order to administrate dialogue in the hope of attaining conflict resolution, there needs to be an emphasis on educating people on the similarities of the clashing leading world religions. The fact of the matter is that violence is perpetuated by ignorance; and as the ignorant notions of religious supremacy are passed down generation after generation, religious warfare has and will continue for the years to come. A prime example of this is President George W. Bush’s “War on Terrorism.” As mentioned earlier, it seems that of all the religious communities today, it is the Muslims who feel that they are constantly under attack (Moore, 1995:1-31). In the media, they are falsely portrayed as advocates of violence in the name of Jihad—their religious justification for it.

Jihad, routinely translated as “holy war,” often makes headlines. For example, Yasir Arafat’s May 1994 call in Johannesburg for a “jihad to liberate Jerusalem” (*Middle East Quarterly*, 1994:50) was a turning point in the peace process. The Israelis thought they heard him speak about using violence to gain political ends and questioned his peaceable intentions. But Arafat then clarified that he was speaking about a “peaceful jihad” for Jerusalem.

This incident points to the problem with the word jihad. What exactly does it mean? Two examples from leading American Muslim organizations, both characterized as fundamentalist,

show the extent of disagreement this issue inspires. The Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Washington-based group, flatly states that jihad “does not mean “holy war.” Rather, it refers to “a central and broad Islamic concept that includes the struggle to improve the quality of life in society, struggle in the battlefield for self-defense...or fighting against tyranny or oppression.” CAIR even asserts that Islam knows no such concept as “holy war” (www.cair-net.org). Yet in abrupt contrast, the Muslim Students Association distributed an item with a Kashmir dateline titled “Diary of a Mujahid.” The editor of this document understands jihad very much to mean armed conflict: “While many dream of jihad and some deny it, while others explain it away, and yet others frown on it to hide their own weakness and reluctance towards it, here is a snapshot from the diary of a mujahid who had fulfilled his dream to be on the battlefield” (www.mynet.net/~msanews/). It is necessary to note here that the words for “holy” and “war” in Arabic are *muqadassa* and *harb*, respectively. Thus, Jihad does not mean “holy war.” The concept is unlike its medieval Christian term, “crusade,” which means “war of the cross.”

Does jihad mean a form of moral self-improvement or war in accord with Islamic precepts? There is no simple answer to this question, for Muslims for at least a millennium have disagreed about the meaning of jihad. But there is an answer. Warfare is only one interpretation of the concept of jihad. The root meaning of effort never disappeared. Jihad may be an inward struggle directed against evil in oneself or an outward one against injustice. A Hadith defines this understanding of the term. It recounts how Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), after a battle, said: “We have returned from the lesser jihad (*al-jihad al-asghar*) to the greater jihad (*al-jihad al-akbar*).” When asked “What is the greater jihad?,” he replied: “It is the struggle against oneself” (Al-Hujwiri, 1911:200-2001). Although this Hadith does not appear in the Qur’an, it has had enormous influence in Islamic mysticism (Sufism).

Sufis understand the greater jihad as an inner war, primarily a struggle against the base instincts of the body and also resistance to the temptation of polytheism. Some Sufi writers assert that Satan organizes the temptation of the body and the world to corrupt the soul. Al-Ghazali (1059-1111), arguably a prominent figure in Islam’s development after Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), describes the body as a city, governed by the soul, and besieged by the lower self. Withdrawal from the world to mystical pursuits constitutes an advance in the greater jihad. Conversely, the greater jihad is a necessary part of the process of gaining spiritual insight (Renard, 1988:225-242; Hoffman, 1998:196-200). By the 11th Century, Sufism had become an extremely influential, and perhaps even the dominant, form of Islamic spirituality (El Fadl, 2002). Judging from a variety of texts, to this day, many Muslims seem to conceive of jihad as a personal rather than a political struggle.

The common misconceptions and stereotypes of “Jihad” are only a few of the many examples of how ignorance perpetuates violence. If people were to take the initiative to educate themselves on Islam, or any other religion, then perhaps it would be far less likely that misunderstanding leading to violence would occur. And this notion takes this study back to its original pursuit: Why can’t we all just get along?

Religious Conflict

In order to understand the reason peoples of different faiths around the world cannot simply get

along, the examination of why people so vehemently adhere to their proscribed faiths is essential. Richard Wentz explains in *Why People Do Bad Things in the Name of Religion* (1993) that people belong to a particular religion either because they are born into it and do not even think of it as a religion (rather as *their* people, *their* way, *their* cosmos), or because people discern the community that they so desperately need as social beings. In the modern world, people tend to “convert” because they find in a certain religion the support they need. It is important to understand that the social expression of their religiousness gives power to the verbal and practical expressions. *People* believe these things, these propositions, *people* tell these stories because this is who the *people* are. *People* do these rituals and abide by these rules and practices because that is what their people do (Wentz, 1993:45-48).

More specifically, however, Wentz explains that people “rage” in the name of religion because they are defending their world, their identity, and their memories. They are “raging” on behalf of the most important thing in existence, the relational symbols and realities that are the very heart of life. There is a sense in which every war is, in large measure, a conflict “in the name of religion.” He adds that even the so-called secularist who rages for “human” (whatever that is), economic, or political “reasons” is doing so on behalf of his “cosmos,” his universe of order and meaning, his identity as one who belongs to an “enlightened” or magnanimous people. Secularism and humanism do not avoid the analysis of the scholar of religion. And that as a matter of fact, they, too, often rage in the name of religion—in the name of their particular way, their kind of people (Wentz, 1993:52-4).

Religious Tolerance

Clearly, the topic of religious tolerance is both crucial to a people who try to understand and address conflicts throughout the world and extremely complex in its boundaries, definitions, and implications. As Jay Newman in his work, *Foundations of Religious Tolerance*, exclaims, “intolerance is the most persistent and the most insidious of all sources of hatred. It is perhaps foremost among the obstacles to civilization, the instruments of barbarism” (1982:3).

As I explain in *Islamic Peace Paradigms*, “The paradigm of conflict resolution contains numerous methods of resolving conflicts, all of which attempt to reach agreement without bullets flying” (Bangura, 2005:71). I also note that “In analyzing conflicts, defining those parties involved becomes crucial to delineating interests” (Bangura, 2005:73). And further state that “the larger question becomes that of pluralism within Islam. In analyzing conflicts between religious groups, it is imperative to understand pluralism with religious beliefs and in the world at large” (Bangura, 2005:76-7).

In terms of Western history, it is perhaps the case that the earliest concrete attempts to understand the meaning of tolerance came in the 16th Century with the rise of the Reformation. The term was used in Germany and the Low Countries, and also in France, to mean permission or concession in relation to religious freedom (Champion, 1999:2). The main issue came to be whether more than one religion could be tolerated in the Christian state, with tolerance actually meaning “permission.” The theologians agreed, of course, that “permission need not mean approval” (Lecler, 1955:vii-x). In the 16th Century, it was clear that tolerance was understood

strictly as a theological concept, “far different from its connotations in the anti-clerical atmosphere of the age of Enlightenment” (Lecler, 1955:x). Even politics was “theology-minded,” as the discussion ranged over the extent to which the state could be involved in matters of religion.

Nonetheless, there also were influences from movements of Christian humanism and spiritualizing mysticism (Lecler, 1955:476). Joseph Lecler in *Toleration and the Reformation* makes this interesting observation:

In spite of the stiffening attitude of the various denominations, which became so pronounced after 1560, the Christian humanists still hoped to bring about religious unity. Unfortunately, they followed a dangerous road. In their wish to overcome the divisions of Christendom and to keep it open for increasingly radical sects, they reduced the dogmatic requirements to less and less. This, as experience showed, led to a gradual frittering away of the substance of Christian belief.... (1955:480)

In essence, the possibility of religious tolerance was of deep concern to many people who feared that tolerance may have to lead inexorably to the abandonment of deeply held beliefs and the ultimate dissolution of faith. For many, it was manifested in their deep concern about the possible encroachment of “syncretism.”

This possibility of “frittering away,” as mentioned earlier, of course, still seems to be of deep concern to many people today. Some Muslims today are calling for an end to the term “interfaith,” on the grounds that it will inevitably blur the lines of distinction between faiths, and propose instead the adoption of “multi-faith” as a category for religious engagement with the other. Yet, true pluralism involves the coexistence of profoundly different, but equal, values.

To put the notion of religious tolerance without abandoning one’s faith, I would essentially concede that it is important to make a distinction between tolerance of those persons who adhere to another faith tradition and the tradition itself: that is, one can be tolerant of Confucian, or a faith practitioner, without needing necessarily to be tolerant of what people call Confucianism or Shamanism. For example, Mormon practitioner Robert Paul argues that in light of his commitment to the necessary relationship of human beings to God (SWT) and the love of God (SWT) for all of God’s (SWT) spiritual offspring, there is no moral or spiritual justification for not expressing genuine tolerance for those of another (or no) faith, even if one may not accept the tenets of that faith (Mozjes, 1990:23). And to reinforce this notion, Jay Newman says that “Tolerating a religious belief, then, does not involve a half-hearted acceptance or endurance of the belief in itself, but rather it involves acceptance or endurance of someone’s holding [a] belief... that one considers to be significantly inferior to one’s own alternative belief” (Newman, 1982:8, 10).

It is necessary to keep in mind, however, that religious tolerance, or more so pluralism, as a solution to religious conflict resolution is far more complex. People cannot assume that any religion, culture, or political system gives equal credence and/or value to any academic discipline. And if pluralism is attainable, perhaps diversification is possible. I then concede that in order to incorporate pluralism into conflict resolution, it is necessary for people to take into account practices associated with their religion, whether or not they reflect the historical or cultural “underpinnings” of their own professed deity.

Education and the Similarities Shared by the Three World Religions

If people are to respect pluralism and, therefore, shed light upon the practices of others associated with their own religion, it is imperative that they educate themselves on other religions and their customs in order to realize that their own religion, among the many different types and branches of others, shares common values with and is related to the others. More importantly, people need to understand one another's traditions, rituals, values, heritages, legacies, and cultures in order to accept one another and stop their conflicts. Religious tolerance, promoted since the 18th Century, should be one of the most important aspects of international and intercultural concerns.

Values in all religions seem to be the same, more or less. The only difference seems to be given by a people's mentality, which actually does not seem to come from religion—it seems to come from its leaders. If people could find a common ground, they could reach a consensus of living, unaltered by prejudiced judgments. The following is a discussion of some of the shared aspects of the Abrahamic faiths.

Y-w-h/Allah/God (SWT):

To begin with, faith in the Supreme Being is the basis of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, expressed mostly by public and private acts of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, petition, and repentance (Coogan, 2003:41). More specifically, theism (the notion that a deity created the universe and continues to actively participate in the world's activities and in human history) is shared by the three religions (Coogan, 2003:74-6). All of them believe in monotheism: that is, the belief in a single God (SWT). It should be mentioned here, however, that between 1570 and 1085 BC, Pharaoh Amenhotep IV of Egypt became the first to introduce monotheism to Kemet and the world (Zulu, 1992:249).

All three religions admit an Ultimate Reality, a Supreme Being, who many call God (SWT), that is eternal and unchanging, and this Ultimate Reality is only one omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent (present everywhere), and omniscient (knows everything past, present, and future) Being. Christians, Jews, and Muslims have the same concept of God (SWT): He is unique, greatest, kindest, etc. The only difference is that Christians believe that God (SWT) is a single authority but composed from three persons: (1) the Father, (2) the Son, and (3) the Holy Spirit/Ghost.

More specifically, as described by Michael D. Coogan in *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions* (2003), there are three fundamental ways in which Ultimate Reality is defined: (1) personal being, or a personal and loving God (SWT); (2) an impersonal being, as origin and target of all personal beings; or (3) an eternal truth or principles that govern the universe, as in pagan religions like Wicca or Masonry (2003:112). Through his analyses of the three major world religions, Coogan (2003) reveals that Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are similar in that they all define God (SWT) in the same fundamental way—as a personal being.

While some people have questioned whether Muslims worship the same God (SWT) as Jews and Christians, it is quite clear that since Prophet Abraham (PBUH) is treated as one of the spiritual ancestors of all three religions, it can be said that all three are closely related *Abrahamic*

faiths. There are, undoubtedly, some differences among them, but there are more similarities among them.

Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe that there is only One True God (Allah in Arabic), who is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He is self-Sufficient or self-Subsistent. God (SWT) is without gender. Nothing is comparable to Him. He is all-mighty, all-holy, all-peace, all-wise, omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), and immanent (all-present). God (SWT) is the Ever-Living, the Eternal, and has no beginning and ending. He is just, righteous, perfect, and infinite. He is the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Most High and Great. God (SWT) is the source of wisdom, truth, justice, and mercy. God (SWT) alone is absolute being, totally independent.

Islam, Christianity and Judaism believe God's (SWT) attributes. According to the African theologian and philosopher, St. Augustine of Hippo, God (SWT) has three attributes: (1) Being, (2) Knowledge, and (3) Love (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2000). In Islam, the "99 most beautiful names" describe the attributes of God (SWT), and these names and attributes are eternal. The concept of God (SWT) in Islam, Judaism and Christianity is strictly monotheistic. None can be equal to the perfect, infinite, self-sufficient, absolute, and only God (SWT). He is beyond comprehension. All three religions also abhor deification of any human being. Muslims agree with Jews and Christians wholeheartedly that it is heretical to contend that a human being can become God (SWT).

Islamic scholars have defined three aspects to *tawhid* (Islamic monotheism):

- (1) *Tawhid-ar-Rububiyyah* declares oneness of the Lordship of Allah (SWT), Who is Creator, Sustainer, Planner, etc.
- (2) *Tawhid-al-Uluhiyyah* declares oneness of the worship of Allah (SWT). Only Allah (SWT) has the right to be worshipped.
- (3) *Tawhid al-Asma' was-Sifat* affirms all the Names and Qualities or Attributes of Allah (SWT). The Attributes of Allah (SWT) are the 99 Names, such as the Real, the Mighty, the Most Gracious, the Powerful, etc.

Tawhid and *shirk* are two important Arabic concepts in knowing Islamic monotheism. *Tawhid* means "declaring God (SWT) one," and *shirk* means "associating partners with God (SWT)." Therefore, *tawhid* is monotheism, and *shirk* is polytheism or idolatry. In Islam, *shirk* is the greatest sin that Allah (SWT) will never forgive (Qur'an, 4:48, 116, 5:72).

Tawhid is a basic tenet of Islam. The Qur'an affirms the following: "...we worship none but Allah" (3:64). The first of Islam's five pillars says that "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah." This profession is found at every juncture of a Muslim's life. It is recited throughout the whole life of a Muslim.

"He is Allah, (the) One. Allah-usSamad [Allah—the Self-Sufficient master, Whom all creatures need (He neither eats nor drinks)]. He begets not, nor was He begotten. And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him" (Qur'an, 112:1-4). Obviously, the Islamic concept of monotheism rejects any plurality of Godhead (Qur'an, 2:116, 19:35, 88-89). The running

commentary of the Holy Qur'an by Dr. 'Allamah Khadim Rahmani Nuri notes 112:4 as "admitting no plurality of any kind in the Godhead, 2:163, 21:22."

Religious Duties:

Muslims, Christians, and Jews all consider their first duty to be to recognize this Supreme Being, to adore Him, to praise and give thanks to Him. The second duty of these three world religions is to take good care and love the creatures of this God (SWT), the universe, nature, and mainly the human beings considered by most religions the greatest achievement of God (SWT) (Coogan, 2003:2006).

Each major world religion has a person that started it all, even if the knowledge came from God (SWT) "directly" as a message or if it came from studying and realizing what is best for humanity. In both cases, people are dealing with something called a spark, as divine intervention. This being represents the symbol of his religion, even if he did really exist or not.

Christians hold the Bible to be true and have Jesus of Nazareth (PBUH), regarded by them as the Christ (PBUH), who reformed Judaism about 2,000 years ago and gave a new vision on human essence (Coogan, 2003:206-7). Muslims have Muhammad (PBUH), the Great Prophet to whom the Qur'an was revealed. And Jews have Moses (PBUH) who led the Hebrew nation out of Egypt, through the desert, to give them the Promised Land, Palestine. Moses (PBUH) also received a great part of the Torah, but he is a prophet, a founder, even though many Jews are still waiting for their Messiah to come (Coogan, 2003:291-3).

Core Beliefs:

The sacred texts of the three world religions reveal many commonalities within their beliefs and doctrines as prescribed in their scriptures. The following are some examples:

(a) *The Golden Rule*: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism preach and try to practice the Golden Rule: love one another, because all people are brothers and sisters in God (SWT). In Judaism, the Torah states: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary. Talmud, Shabbat 31d... Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus, 19:18, NIB). In Christianity, the Bible testifies: "all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye so to them; for this is the law and the prophets...All the Bible! (Matthew, 7:1). It also states: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke, 6:31 NIB). And in Islam, the Qur'an attests: "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself" (Hadith recorded by al-Bukhari, Sunnah).

(b) *Sin*: Confession of sins is a very important ritual in each world religion—this is the emphasis on honesty and responsibility for one's actions as a common value. "Sin" seems to have always been a term most usually employed in a religious context, and it describes any lack of conformity to the will of God (SWT); especially, any willful disregard for the norms revealed

by God (SWT) is a sin; any bad ethical behavior is actually a sin; but the greatest and most deceiving sin for most religions is the lack of faith in God (SWT), in the Ultimate Reality, in the Supreme Being.

Islam, Christianity, and Judaism all acknowledge the sins of every individual and of the society in general, and preach to avoid sins and errors. Yet still, in Judaism, God (SWT) is said to have 13 attributes of mercy (Coogan, 2003:303-5):

- (1) God is merciful before someone sins, even though God knows that a person is capable of sin.
- (2) God is merciful to a sinner even after the person has sinned.
- (3) God represents the power to be merciful even in areas that a human would not expect or deserve.
- (4) God is compassionate and eases the punishment of the guilty.
- (5) God is gracious even to those who are not deserving.
- (6) God is slow to anger.
- (7) God is abundant in kindness.
- (8) God is a God of truth; thus, we can count on God's promises to forgive repentant sinners.
- (9) God guarantees kindness to future generations, as the deeds of the righteous patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) have benefits to all their descendants.
- (10) God forgives intentional sins if the sinner repents.
- (11) God forgives a deliberate angering of Him if the sinner repents.
- (12) God forgives sins that are committed in error.
- (13) God wipes away the sins from those who repent (Talmud, tractate Rosh HaShanah 17b).

Similarly, in Christianity, "Jesus Christ on the Cross at Calvary paid for all the sins of humanity...and to appropriate His redemption, His ransom is easy, free, by grace, without any effort, without any work, Just have faith in Jesus, do what He tells you, and your sins will be forgiven, completely erased, all of them" (Coogan, 2003:220). The Bible states: "Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (1John, 1:29, 35). "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew, 26:28). "Jesus appeared so that he might take away our sins" (John 3:5). "The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin" (1 John, 1:7). "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark, 16:16). "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? They replied, believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household" (Acts, 16:30-31).

Also, Jesus gave to his disciples the power to forgive sins or not to forgive them. The first item in the first apparition to the Apostles Jesus (PBUH) told them: "receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (1John,21:23). "If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1John, 1:9).

And finally, Islam sees sin (*dhanb*) as anything that goes against the will of Allah (SWT). Muslims believe that God (SWT) is angered by sin and punishes sinners (*jahannam*), but that He is also the Merciful (*ar-rahman*) and the Forgiving (*al-ghaffar*), and forgives those who repent and serve Him. To support this statement, one can refer to the Qur'an, when it says: "O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (Qur'an, 39:53). Additionally, although some of the major sins are held to be legally punishable in an Islamic state (for example, murder, theft, adultery, and in some views apostasy; see *Sharia*), most are left to God (SWT) to punish (for example, backbiting, hypocrisy, arrogance, filial disrespect, lying).

(c) *Places of Worship and Supernatural Entities*: All Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—present worship places generally accepted as temples. A Christian temple is called a church and is a place where God (SWT) "touches" people. They come to pray and for their sins to be forgiven. They have to admit their sins in order for them to be forgiven. The same thing happens in a Hebrew temple known as synagogue, which is also a place for offerings, prayer, and serves as a worshiping school. The synagogue also has an educational value, teaching young men. Lastly, in Islam, Muslims gather in Mosques or Muslim temples. They are places where adherents come to pray and to worship Allah (SWT).

To shed light upon yet another similarity among the three world religions examined in this study, in each one, there are forms of spiritual beings, grouped as demons or angels. Proponents of supernaturalism claim that their belief system is more flexible, which allows them more diversity in terms of epistemology (ways of understanding knowledge). For example, scientists accept the findings that the Earth and universe are many billions of years old. Among members of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities, however, there is a wider range of beliefs that are based on claims of divine revelation as opposed to verifiable facts. Some have a literal interpretation of Genesis, and they believe that the earth and universe are only 6,000 years old in contradiction to all verifiable evidence; other Christians accept the results of science which show the Earth and universe as many billions of years old in terms of age.

Shared History, Convergent Backgrounds: The Abrahamic Connection

The title given to the three monotheistic faiths, Abrahamic, is rooted in their rich histories and their ties to Abraham (PBUH) in the book of Genesis. Thus, the history of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims from the world's creation to Abraham (PBUH) is a shared history. Furthermore, understanding Abraham (PBUH) as a critical figure of all three religions is pertinent to developing an understanding of the schism of the faiths, but more importantly the locus of the monotheists' convergent backgrounds.

Following the great flood, the three sons of Noah (PBUH) had sons of their own and perpetuated humanity. Abraham (PBUH), originally Abram (PBUH), was a descendant of Shem, the son of Noah (PBUH). This is important because Noah (PBUH) is a key figure in both Judaism and Christianity, and is considered one of the first prophets of Islam: "... indeed, all of Qur'an 71 is devoted to him...[Furthermore,]...Noah was, like Muhammad, a messenger (*rasul*), sent to a

people who rejected him...” (Peters, 2003 v. I:2). From prophet to prophet, Abraham (PBUH), like his ancestor Noah (PBUH), received many messages from God (SWT). In a critical message from God (SWT) to Abraham (PBUH), God (SWT) promised: “I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you; I will make your name great, And you shall be a blessing: I will bless those who bless you, And curse him that curses you; All the families of the earth Shall bless themselves by you” (The Torah, Genesis, 12: 2-3).

After this annunciation, Abraham (PBUH) did indeed have his first son, Ishmael, who was born to Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid of Abraham’s (PBUH) wife, Sarah, as Sarah was barren and could not conceive (The Torah, Genesis, 16). Thereafter, Sarah did conceive and bore a son, Isaac. At this point, God (SWT) told Abraham (PBUH) that he would make a covenant with Isaac. However, Abraham (PBUH) asked God (SWT) to bless Ishmael. God (SWT) granted this request and promised that Ishmael, like Isaac, would go on to be a patriarch of many tribes and the father of a great nation (The Torah, Genesis, 17:19-21).

Isaac went on to become the father and patriarch of Christianity and Ishmael’s descendants, the Ishmaelites, became the Arab people from whom Islam sprang. It is no wonder then that Muhammad (PBUH) made quite clear that Islam was “nothing other than a ‘religion of Abraham’” (Peters, 2003 v. I:7). Furthermore, for Muslims, the Ka’ba, the central structure of Mecca around which the *Hajj* or pilgrimage is focused, was built by Abraham (PBUH) and Ishmael (Peters, 2003:7). As stated in the Qur’an,

If the People of the Book rely upon Abraham, let them study his history. His posterity included both Israel and [Ishmael]. Abraham was a righteous man of God, a Muslim, and so were his children. Abraham and [Ishmael] built the Ka’ba as the house of God, and purified it, to be a centre of worship for all the world: For God is the God of all Peoples (The Holy Qur’an, S.II. 121. C. 48).

Truly, Abraham (PBUH) is a central focus and convergent point for both Islam and Judaism. Abraham’s (PBUH) connection to Christianity lies in Jesus Christ (PBUH) himself. Christ (PBUH), a Jew, was a descendant of Abraham (PBUH) himself as established in the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke’s gospels (Holy Bible, Matthew, 1:1-17; Luke, 3:23-38). Furthermore, Christians maintain that Christ (PBUH) was the Messiah (Anointed One) and the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Torah. Thus, Christians maintained that Christ (PBUH) and Christianity were the completion of Judaism and “in direct continuity with Judaism” (Arnaldez, 1994:6). Christ (PBUH) discussed this exact issue: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Holy Bible, Matthew, 5:17).

Thus, Christianity, as Christians believe, is a growth from Judaism and not a replacement. It is seen as a completion of the Prophecies, the Laws, and the Faith, and Christ (PBUH) is the *modus operandi* of that conclusion.

In sum, all three faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—were born from a past in Abraham (PBUH). With Abraham (PBUH) as their patriarch and *uniter* of backgrounds, they each have forged their own place and traditions. They cannot, however, forget their common ancestry.

Shared Scriptures, the Identity of God, and the Ten Commandments as Sources of Value Identification

The written tradition of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is a shared attribute which perpetuates the three faiths. The stories, values, and expressions of faith are, in written form, preserved *ad infinitum*. The faiths' reliance on the scriptures binds them together. A unique pattern arises in the scriptures and the way in which they were created and shared.

According to the tradition of the faiths, the Torah was given by God (SWT) to Prophet Moses (PBUH) to write down. This is only partially true, however. The distinct book which Moses (PBUH) wrote contains the laws and history of the Jewish people. Nonetheless, it is only a part of a more complete anthology which is broken into the categories of "the Laws, the Prophets, and the miscellany called Writings" (Peters, 2003: v. II:1). The Torah was the book which was used and taught to Jesus Christ (PBUH) as a Jew. Consequently, the Torah, or Old Testament, as it is known in Christianity, became the basis of the new Christian faith.

Uniquely, Jesus' (PBUH) story, the New Testament or Gospel or Bible, was not written by Jesus (PBUH). "The Gospels are accounts of Jesus' words and deeds set down, in approximately a biographical framework, by his followers" (Peters, 2003 v. II:1). In addition to the descriptions about Christ (PBUH), the "Acts of the Apostles" and various epistles of Christ's (PBUH) disciples were also set down in this "New Testament" which was to complete the Torah in the same way that Christ (PBUH) fulfilled the prophesies of the Torah (Peters, 2003 v II:1).

Finally, the Qur'an was sent directly from God (SWT) through the Archangel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to be written down. The Qur'an is the only text written in this manner, directly from God (SWT) (Arnaldez, 1994:25-26). Furthermore, the Qur'an teaches a unity of the three faiths and uses all three scriptures and their teachings and stories as precedent for itself as illustrated:

God's truth is continuous, and His Apostles from Adam, through Noah and Abraham, down to the last of the Prophets Muhammad, form one brotherhood. Of the progeny of Imran, father of Moses and Aaron, sprang a woman, who devoted her unborn offspring to God. The child was Mary the mother of Jesus. Her cousin was the wife of the priest Zakariya, who took charge of Mary. To Zakariya, in his old age, was born a son, Yahya, amid prodigies: Yahya was the herald of Jesus the son of Mary, and was known as John the Baptist. Jesus was of virgin birth, and performed many miracles. But those to whom he came as Prophet rejected him and plotted for his death. Their plots failed, for God's Plan is above man's plots. So it will be with Islam, the Truth from all eternity (The Holy Qur'an, S. III. 30. C. 56.).

Together with Judaism and Christianity, Islam shares ties and a common base. Each faith builds off the last in a unique phenomenon. Christianity builds on the Torah with the Gospel and New Testament. And Islam adds to the previous two with its own message brought by Muhammad (PBUH).

As the faiths share a continuity of text, a convergent background in Abraham (PBUH), and build upon the precedent of the last, it is not unreasonable to recognize that all three faiths

celebrate only one God (SWT). Furthermore, the God (SWT) of each faith is the same God (SWT), albeit with three messengers and three [slightly] varied interpretations (Arnaldez, 1994:1). Judaism sets the precedent in the Ten Commandments, which Moses (PBUH) set down at the order of God (SWT): “You shall have no other gods before Me” (The Torah, Exodus 20:3). As a Jew, Jesus (PBUH) maintains the Jewish monotheism: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Holy Bible, Mark, 12:29). And Muhammad (PBUH) asserts one God (SWT) in Islam by conveying God’s (SWT) monotheistic message. He takes it a step further in doing what this paper sets to do—that is, joining the three faiths in one understanding: “Say: ‘O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not lords and patrons other than God’” (The Holy Qur’an, S III. 64).

Although the idea of one God (SWT) is shared, the way each faith views that God (SWT) may be varied. This complication can be seen as a root of schism. However, all the faiths describe the nature of God (SWT) and His will and actions in similar terms. This, and not the differing views, should be the focus of dialogue in dealing with the nature, will, and actions of God (SWT). The Abrahamic faiths deal with God (SWT) on two levels: (1) the universal and (2) the particular. The universal relates to God (SWT) and His dealings with all the world and humanity. The particular discusses God (SWT) and his behavior towards specific people and in a set time period (Swidler, 1998:43). The universal is that which is most helpful to dialogue, as it is that which is most unified in description and, thus, will be that which is here discussed.

Universally, all three faiths describe God (SWT) as being the singular maker of the world and universe or Heaven. Thus, the Jewish and Christian scriptures begin by affirming that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis, 1:1) and the Qur’an likewise declares that “Your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six spans” (10:3) (Swidler, 1998:43). As described by John Hick in the anthology, *Theoria—Praxis*, edited by Leonard Swidler, all three faiths have commonalities in how they describe the overarching nature of God (SWT): “God...[is] understood within each tradition to have a moral nature encompassing both the more demanding attributes of justice, righteous wrath, absolute claim, and the more tender and giving qualities of grace, love, mercy, forgiveness” (Swidler, 1998:43). Hick cites several scriptures in showing these commonly described attributes:

... [A]ccording to the Hebrew scripture Yahweh [(God)] ‘judges the world with righteousness’ (Psalm 9:8) and yet is ‘merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love’ (Psalm 103:8). And according to the New Testament ‘the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness’ (Romans 1:8), and yet at the same time ‘God is love’ (I John 4:8) and ‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (I John 1:9). And according to the Qur’an ‘The Lord is quick in retribution, but He is also oft forgiving, most merciful’ (7:167). (Swidler, 1998:43)

Thus, in creation and in nature, the Abrahamic faiths have unity in their God (SWT). In this universal perspective of God (SWT), the religions can find accord. Truly, it is only in the particular study of God (SWT) where there is difference. But in finding unity and in promoting dialogue,

differences must be cast aside and discussion must be focused on the similar: the universal perspective of God (SWT).

Another front of dialogue may be around the centrality of the Ten Commandments or Decalogue. The Ten Commandments, written down by Moses (PBUH), preceded Abraham (PBUH) and, thus, are pertinent to all three Abrahamic faiths (Magonet, 2003:80–89). Each faith has taken to heart the overriding messages and rules of the Ten Commandments, and in each faith their effects can be seen (Magonet, 2003:84). First and foremost, the Decalogue makes known that there is only one God (SWT). As from before, all three faiths have this ideal in central importance. Second, the faiths reject idolatry; each in its own way, and in some manners more critically than others (Magonet, 2003:84). Also, the idea of a Sabbath in establishing a regulated system of work and leisure, a tradition based in Middle Eastern culture, also pervades the three religions (Magonet, 2003:86). It is around this shared, central source of values where even more critical dialogue can occur. The realization of this centrality of law and values is critically important to enhancing dialogue. Thus, the Ten Commandments may be elevated from their revered place within each faith to the table of religious dialogue.

The ultimate question then is whether or not there is hope that the adherents of the three Abrahamic faiths have the potential to live in lasting peace. The following subsection entails some evidence from Anthony Teke Quickel’s survey, although a bit dated, that seems to suggest that with education and dialogue, this is possible.

Quantitative Findings from Anthony Teke Quickel’s Survey

In 2007, a student of mine by the name of Anthony Tele Quickel, working under my supervision, conducted a survey designed to discover the level of understanding between the three Abrahamic faiths. The survey posed general questions about these faiths to discover what a sample of adherents of each faith understands about the others and their faith’s similarities to the others. A simple random sample of 200 respondents was done in the Washington, DC community. Based on the United States Census Bureau demographic estimates in 2007 of 591,833 residents, with 65% being Christians, 10.6% being Muslims, 4.5% being Jews, and 19.9 being adherents of other faiths, the population sample comprised 130 Christians, 22 Muslims, eight Jews, and 40 adherents of other faiths. The following is the survey instrument:

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---------------|--------|
| (1) Of the three monotheistic faiths, which are you? | Christian | Jewish | Muslim |
| (2) Which scriptures do Jews use? | Torah (Old Testament) | New Testament | Qur’an |
| (3) Which scriptures do Christians use? | Torah (Old Testament) | New Testament | Qur’an |
| (4) What scriptures do Muslims use? | Torah (Old Testament) | New Testament | Qur’an |
| (5) Which faiths have the following figures or elements? | | | |
| Jerusalem: | Judaism | Christianity | Islam |
| Abraham: | Judaism | Christianity | Islam |
| The Ten Commandments: | Judaism | Christianity | Islam |
| Noah: | Judaism | Christianity | Islam |
| Adam and Eve: | Judaism | Christianity | Islam |

After eliminating those respondents who were not followers of the three Abrahamic faiths analyzed, the following results were extrapolated from the given survey by Quickel.

As can be seen in Table 1, there is extremely little variation in the recognition of the faithful to the scriptural usage of their own faiths and that of the other religions. This suggests that there is high interfaith understanding of the scriptural backgrounds of the three Abrahamic faiths.

Table 1: Scriptural Usage

Faith of Respondent	Judaism uses Torah*	Christianity uses Torah and New Testament*	Islam uses Torah, New Testament, and Qur'an*
Judaism	100%	78%	83%
Christianity	98%	99%	84%
Islam	97%	89%	97%

** Scriptural usage headers based on the real usage of scripture*

Table 2 demonstrates again little variation in the results. This indicates that a high percentage of those surveyed recognized that the figures and elements about which they were surveyed exist in all three faiths.

Table 2: Figures and Elements of Faiths

Faith of Respondent	Jerusalem*	Abraham*	Ten Commandments*	Noah*	Adam and Eve*
Judaism	99%	85%	75%	96%	94%
Christianity	99%	93%	94%	95%	98%
Islam	99%	99%	100%	100%	100%

** All faiths have this figure or element*

The results from both tables demonstrate a high amount of understanding about the general backgrounds of the three Abrahamic faiths amongst those surveyed. This conveys that there is little disjointed perception amongst the followers of the faiths. The reality, however, is that Washington, DC, the survey area, has one of the highest education rates in the United States. Based on the United States Census of 2000, 42 percent of adults have a Bachelor's degree and additional 19 percent have a Master's, Professional, or PhD degree (McNally, 2003). Thus, the idea that there is increased understanding and perception with education may be accepted. This concurs with a major idea of the paper at large: that is, learning and dialogue lead to understanding and altruistic perceptions.

Conclusion

Albert Einstein once claimed that "The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing" (<http://rescomp.stanford.edu/Quotes.html>). The findings presented in this study do indeed support the hypothesis that the three major world

religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) have common values and are related to one another—none of them advocates violence and that while religious persecution is built on ignorance, peace can only be achieved by knowledge and understanding.

Before going further, it should be stated that there must be a place for the acknowledgement of all traditions. Yet peace cannot be realized through deities and religious traditions which are in competition and whose claims to superiority are won by violence. The only hope for success is that the individual traditions of people will be secondary to the broader, more comprehensive, unity that can become the basis for peaceful co-existence. Whatever the process for the future will be, all people must be integrally involved in it. If the goal for the future is peaceful co-existence, then people will need to adjust to the beliefs and values of others. Power, might, and control are no longer an acceptable model in a world of peaceful co-existence. Mutual respect is essential.

Therefore, in a socially, racially, and religiously plural society, people must recognize that there is a need for a change of attitudes. All founders of the faith communities fought for the liberation of self and against oppression. Religious communities today have the task to fulfill the mission of their founders. The human quest of the religious mission must be directed toward equality and justice and the challenge of religious discrimination. The key to success is openness to universality, rather than the parochialism to which what people seem to be so fascinated and accustomed. The pride in one's own tradition must come not from what separates him/her from others, but rather in what unites him/her with others. That should be the major change in human thought. Indeed, the findings from Quickel's survey and the work being done by organizations such as the Abrahamic Faiths Peacemaking Initiative (<http://www.abarhamicpeacemaking.com>) and academic institutions such as the Center for Global Peace in the School of International Service at American University (<http://www.american.edu/cgp>) and the Lubar Institute for the Study of Abrahamic Religions at the University of Wisconsin (<http://lisar.lss.wisc.edu>) are quite promising signs for such a change in human thought.

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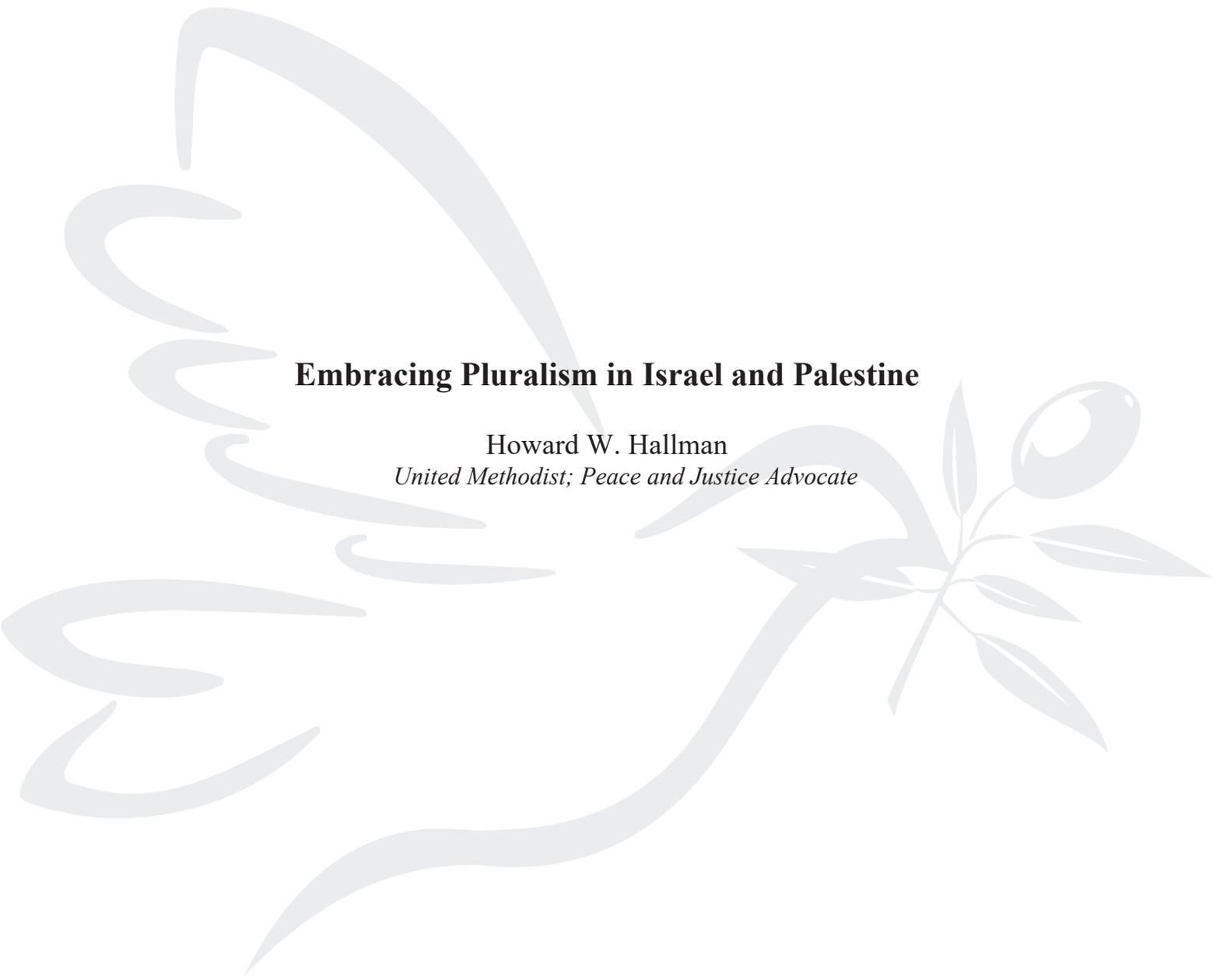
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Acknowledgment

This essay benefited from the work of two of my effulgent former American University students, Azita Saleh and Anthony Teke Quickel.



Embracing Pluralism in Israel and Palestine

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Abstract

Prospects for peace between Israel and Palestine can be greatly enhanced by embracing pluralism and seeking win-win solutions. As revealed by the Holy Scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all three faiths express belief in love of God and love of neighbor. In all three faiths love of neighbor extends to hospitality toward strangers following the example of Abraham, their common spiritual ancestor. In the Holy Land hospitality can gain practical expression in political systems that are pluralistic in nature. Israel can fulfill the commitment to “complete equality of social and political rights to all of its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race, or sex” found in the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (1948). Instead of being a divided city let Jerusalem be transformed into a unified international city with sovereignty by both Israel and Palestine and the capital for both nations. The future State of Palestine could allow some settlements to remain and offer the residents full citizenship in Palestine and full participation in civic life. To facilitate a peaceful transition there could be a truth and reconciliation commission that draws on the experience of 30 nations around the globe.

Keywords: *pluralism, hospitality, acceptance, reconciliation, and win-win*

Introduction

For many years the effort to achieve peace between Israel and Palestinians has been played out as a zero-sum game. If the Palestinians gain, Israel loses. If Israel gains, Palestinians lose. It's either-or.

A wiser approach, more likely to achieve lasting peace, would be to seek win-win solutions. It would be both-and. Both Israel and Palestine would benefit.

Religious Commonality

Significantly in a region where too often religion divides, peace can come about by recognizing and applying a commonality of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This congruence was pointed out in a 2007 statement entitled "A Common Word Between Us and You" that 138 Muslim scholars addressed to Pope Benedict XVI and other Christian leaders. It could have equally been addressed to Jewish leaders. The common word is "love of one God, love of neighbor."

Thus, the Torah instructs, "Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). And also, "And you must love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). Jesus called these the Two Great Commandments (Mark 12:28-31).

Summarizing Islamic belief, the Muslim scholars in "A Common Word" (2007) explained: 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, 121:2). Of the necessity of love for God, God says in the Holy Qur'an: *So invoke the Name of thy Lord and devote himself to Him with a complete devotional* (Muzzammil, 73:8). Of the necessity of love for the neighbor, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: *None of you has faith until you love for your neighbor what you love for yourself.*

Hospitality

In all three faiths love for neighbor extends to hospitality toward strangers. All three faiths honor Abraham (Ibrahim) who offered food and drink to three strangers who appeared at his tent. They turned out to be angels in disguise who told him that his wife Sarah, childless in old age, would bare a son, leading to a great nation (Genesis 18:1-15; Qur'an 51:24-27). The strangers went next to Sodom to the home of Lot (Lut), Abraham's nephew, who took them in, fed them, and protected them from men of Sodom, who wanted to gang rape them. (Genesis 19:1-23; Qur'an 15:51-70). The Letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament summarizes this experience in a single verse: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unaware" (Hebrews 13:2).

As the Israelites were wandering in the Sinai wilderness, God had Moses instruct them: "You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt." Also translated, "stranger", "foreigner," "resident alien" (Exodus 22:21). Repeatedly the Israelites are told to care for widows, orphans, the poor, and sojourners. For instance, allow them to glean

for grain, to pick up fallen grapes and olives (Deuteronomy 24:20-21).

In Jesus' allegory of the Last Judgment persons who welcomed strangers gained a place of honor in the future kingdom, along with those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, visited the sick and prisoners (Matthew 25:31-46). In answering a question of "who is my neighbor," Jesus made a Samaritan the hero in a story about a man who showed mercy to a robbery victim along the road to Jericho (Luke 10:29-37).

The Qur'an includes travelers on lists of persons to support. For example: "In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Prophet told the people: Show kindness to parents and kindred, to orphans and to the destitute, to near and distant neighbors, to those that keep company with you, to the traveler in need, and to the slaves you own" (Al-Nisa 4:36).

Brought into the 21st century these teachings about hospitality can apply in the Holy Land where one-fourth the population of Israel consists of Arab citizens and other non-Jewish residents and 17 percent of the population of the West Bank is Jewish. Greater Jerusalem also has a mixed population. In these locales minorities are indeed "strangers" in the midst of a majority population who should be offered acceptance and hospitality as their religion requires.

Pluralism

Within governing systems pluralism gains application by accepting and honoring population diversity. It is a both-and solution.

In principle the idea of pluralism has been present in Israel since its founding in 1948. The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (1948) stated that it was to be a homeland, "open for Jewish migration and for the ingathering of Exiles" (para. 14). But at the same time The Declaration made a commitment to "ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all of its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex" and to "guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education, and culture" (paragraph 14).

This ideal wasn't fully applied as large numbers of Palestinians were displaced. Nevertheless, in Israel today non-Jewish citizens have full citizenship, including the right to vote, form political parties, gain representation in the Knesset, serve as judges, hold other political offices, and be employed for government jobs. Although military service is not compulsory for Arab citizens, some from the Bedouin community volunteer and a few are high ranking officers.

Pluralism extends to the religious community where there are two chief rabbis, one from the Sephardic community, the other Ashkenazi.

Jerusalem

The principle of pluralism has particular relevance for the future of Jerusalem. Israel, after capturing Jerusalem in the 1967 war, considers Jerusalem as its undivided capital. Palestinians, however, want to regain control of East Jerusalem as their future capital. This is an either-or situation, a kind of zero-sum game.

A creative new approach would be to elevate a unified Jerusalem to the status of an international city with sovereignty by both Israel and Palestine. It would indeed be the capital for

both nations. The Israeli Knesset is already there. Palestine would construct a new capitol building. It would be both-and, a win-win situation.

In a unified Jerusalem, residents would have equal right to vote and elect a city council. Recognizing a dual constituency, there could be two mayors, one Jewish, one Palestinian (drawing on the experience of Israel with its two chief rabbis). Each mayor would have a veto on local legislation. They could share a common reception area with the hope that propinquity would enhance cooperation.

The municipal police department with both Jewish and Palestinian officers would perform ordinary police functions together, and they would be in a position to deal with any militants aiming to disrupt the public order.

As a further step to promote harmony and cooperation, there could be a citywide council of neighborhoods to bring residents together and allow them to work cooperatively on mutual concerns. This would create opportunities for communication between Israelis and Palestinians, between persons of different economic classes and stations in life. They would offer hospitality to one another. They would seek unity out of diversity. Together they would promote achievement of a glorious city, a New Jerusalem that provides for the well-being of all.

State of Palestine

Pluralism also can have application in a future State of Palestine. Presently 83 percent of the population of the West Bank is Palestinian, 17 Jewish, mostly living in Israeli settlements. The population of Gaza is 98 percent Palestinian.

The most common proposal for creation of a Palestinian State is to recognize that 70 to 80 percent of the settlers are concentrated relatively near the pre-1967 border between Israel and the West Bank. Therefore, a land swap should occur with Israel annexing this territory in exchange for a similar amount of territory elsewhere that it would cede to the new Palestinian state.

The question arises of what would happen to the 60,000 to 70,000 residents of Israeli settlements remaining in the West Bank. Although in 2005 Israel dismantled 21 settlements in Gaza and relocated the 7,000 residents, this approach seems impracticable in the West Bank for a number of reasons: resistance from the residents, challenge of finding alternative house in Israel proper, waste of resources in tearing down the settlements as was done in Gaza.

A win-win approach would be to let these Israeli settlers remain if they choose. They could be offered full citizenship in Palestine with voting rights, other civil rights, and representation in the Palestinian governing body just as Israel has Arab citizens. Short of that they could be given the status of permanent residents (an offer Israel made to Palestinians living in East Jerusalem after annexing that territory, an offer most of them declined). An alternative would allow the Israeli settlers to become dual citizens of Palestine, where they are living, and Israel, from which they have come.

This approach would require both sides to apply the principle of hospitality. Palestinians would need to accept the remaining settlements as established facts and welcome the residents into life in the Palestinian State. The Jewish residents who remain would need to graciously accept minority status in a Palestinian state with guarantee of full civil rights.

The result would be two multi-ethnic nations, one predominantly Jewish, the other predominantly Palestinian, living together side-by-side. This would reflect the facts on the ground that both states are pluralistic in population.

State of Israel

For Israel the greatest act of hospitality would be to facilitate the establishment of fully functioning, democratic Palestinian state. In reciprocity Palestine should recognize and accept the State of Israel and should prevent attacks on Israel from Palestinian territory. This could lead to recognition of Israel's sovereignty by surrounding Arab states in accordance with the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. Ultimately this would provide far more security for Israel than the separation wall and continued occupation of the West Bank. As peace occurs, the wall should be removed.

Internally Israel would need to carefully examine whether it is fulfilling the promise in The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel of "complete equality of social and political rights to all of its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex" and to take steps to remove any barriers to full equality.

Truth and Reconciliation

Embracing pluralism in the manner that I am suggesting would constitute enormous change from past decades of mistrust and conflict. Peaceful transition won't come easy. But fortunately, there is an abundance of experience with conflict transformation and peacebuilding to draw upon.

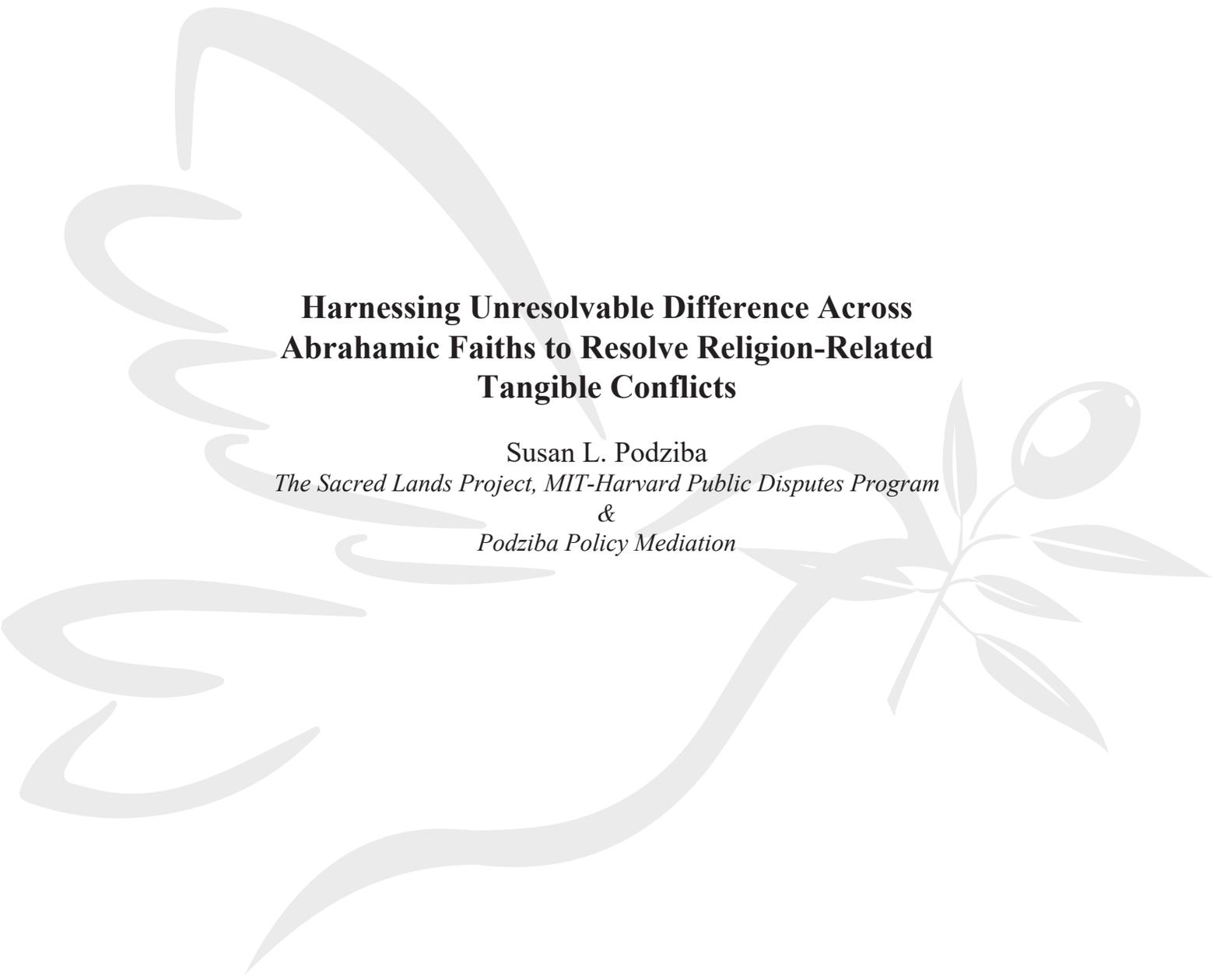
Approximately 30 nations around the globe have found it useful to establish truth and reconciliation commissions (by various names) to bring out the truth of past practices and grievances in a non-judicial setting and commence the process of reconciliation. The best known functioned in South Africa and dealt with grievances against both the apartheid state and liberation forces. Such a joint commission established by Israel and Palestine could foster healing and promote harmonious relations.

The challenge in Palestine will be to integrate residents of the retained Israeli settlements into the new pluralistic state. The new government could establish a community relations commission with this function. There is available a growing body of knowledge on mediation, conflict resolution, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding, and also a variety of international organizations with expertise to draw upon.

On a smaller scale the new unified Jerusalem could have its own community relations commission to help Israelis and Palestinians resolve disputes and work together to achieve harmonious relationships in this new kind of international city.

This kind of pluralism can make a significant contribution to achieving lasting peace in Israel and Palestine.

ISSN: 2373-6615 (Print); 2373-6631 (Online)



**Harnessing Unresolvable Difference Across
Abrahamic Faiths to Resolve Religion-Related
Tangible Conflicts**

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Abstract

Inherent across the three Abrahamic faiths are unresolvable theological differences. To resolve religion-related tangible conflicts may require great and respected leaders to build capacity for holding to their beliefs while simultaneously holding in mind sometimes contradictory and even seemingly unassailable beliefs of adherents of other religions. The power that would emerge as religious leaders achieve civic fusion, defined as bonding to solve a common public problem, even as they sustain deep value differences, could be harnessed to resolve tangible conflicts.

***Keywords:** mediation, sacred lands, conflict resolution, civic fusion, Jerusalem, religion, religion-based conflict*

Introduction

The narratives of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have both common and conflicting ideas, ideals, and theologies. Historically, religious adherents of Abrahamic faiths living as a minority within countries of a religious majority have sometimes fared well as a defined minority or within secular governance systems based on the separation of religion and state. On the other hand, religious difference has also resulted in sporadic violence, forced conversions, dispersions, killings, and genocide.

Critical religious differences may be relegated to the background during the times of prosperity and tolerance and when there is a powerful benefit from diversity during peaceful times. However, the differences remain and may be exacerbated during the times of uncertainty and exploited for political gain. In contrast, perhaps the forces unleashed when unresolvable differences become attuned may be harnessed to forge creative responses to religion-related conflict over tangible issues. Mediated negotiations in the context of parties holding deep understanding and acknowledgement of critical differences, even in the absence of toleration of the others' beliefs, may possibly result in what I've termed, "civic fusion."

Civic fusion is when people bond, even as they sustain deep value differences, to solve a common public problem. Public policy mediators assist disparate, passionate parties in negotiating actionable agreements. To do so, the parties must draw close enough together to overcome their polarization, or in other words, achieve civic fusion. To achieve and sustain civic fusion, interested parties engage in assumption-shifting discussions that contribute to unexpected bonding. They connect across common goals the parties share, and find mutual understanding and respect for their interests and those of others. In addition, they come to understand and accept the constraints of their complex situations. A steady stream of new understandings moves people beyond their long-held perspectives to create opportunities for productive negotiations and innovative ideas. Ultimately, the parties generate pragmatic consensus agreements even as they retain their deeply held and often opposing values and beliefs (Podziba, 2012).

Achieving civic fusion among leaders and actors creates the bonds needed to address shared public problems. The author has seen this occur among leaders engaged in value-based disputes and suggests that it may be even more powerful among those well versed in politics and theology.

The role of the mediator requires that he or she enters into the fine detail of disputes to assist the parties in preparing actionable and sustainable agreements. Religion-related conflicts over tangible interests require entry into unresolvable difference. These differences must be identified and clarified by the multiple parties in conflict. The mediator must then help the parties to hold in mind the multiple conflicting narratives simultaneously, while keeping each separate and allowing the contradictions to exist. Disputants gain understandings of the beliefs of others relative to the issues they must negotiate to solve their conflict and achieve their shared public goal; they do not embrace those beliefs as their own. As civic fusion is achieved, respect for difference and the understanding of how those differences may constrain choices contribute to the emergence of innovative solutions to tangible problems.

This paper describes how to build capacity, in the context of a mediated process, for

engaging and harnessing unresolvable difference across the Abrahamic faiths to resolve tangible conflicts.

Complex policy mediations often begin with negotiations over organizational protocols that frame expectations about decision making, the reaching of agreements, and roles and responsibilities of the negotiators and mediators. After reaching agreement on the protocols, the negotiators confirm the scope of issues that must be resolved to sufficiently address the public problem they seek to address. The scope of issues to be negotiated typically includes issues that range from easy and moderate to difficult and sensitive.

As substantive negotiations proceed, initial consensus is typically achieved first on “low hanging fruit,” as the group slowly moves through easy and moderately difficult issues. These issues tend to be conflicts of confusion and resolve as the meaning and intent of stated interests and constraints are clarified. More difficult issues involve a clash of interests in the context of severe political and resource limitations. The most complex issues are those in which the clash of interests occurs in the context of deep value differences.

Values are not negotiable, but potential solutions regarding tangible issues must rest comfortably within the values of the parties even when those values conflict. Mediators carefully explore sensitive core issues with the parties. Although this may risk a collapse in the negotiations, not doing so would likely result in the parties’ failure to reach an actionable and sustainable agreement. Accurate understandings of the multiple perspectives that generate conflict may lead the parties to mutually acceptable arrangements, even as incompatible perspectives and values are maintained.

To achieve resolutions of religion-based conflicts may require mediators to assist negotiators in respectfully acknowledging their deep value differences and negotiating from a stance of simultaneously holding in mind their own reality as well as the multiple divergent realities of all the parties. The civic fusion that ensues results in connections and commitments to solve shared public problems.

An example of the power of civic fusion is illustrated by the abortion talks I facilitated among leaders of the Massachusetts pro-life and pro-choice movements after fatal shootings at two women’s health clinics. A primary goal of the talks was to reduce the violent nature of the rhetoric used in the abortion debates. Their vastly different worldviews and values required the participants to build a capacity for civic fusion. Some of the women believe that life begins at conception and others do not. Some believe that women have a right to terminate a pregnancy, which others vehemently oppose. Yet they became able to simultaneously hold in mind their views and those of the other, even as some absolutely abhorred the values held by their counterparts. In moments when they felt strong bonds across their differences, which is civic fusion, they sensed a powerful force. The women of the group inclined toward religious interpretation of life experiences described these moments of connection as sacred. All experienced these moments as having moved outside the realm of the ordinary. Each leader came to respect the individuals – though not their values -- as they came to understand that each acted from a moral system, even when that moral system contradicted their own. The sense of the other as immoral, or even evil, fell away.

After years of secret talks, which were made public via a joint article in the Boston Globe, the pro-life and pro-choice leaders all remained steadfast in their beliefs and positions related to

abortion policy. However, as a result of their deep connections, they took individual actions to protect against and reduce risks and threats of violence.

Mediators work to orient negotiators to be able to take in new information to gain a greater understanding of the reality of the conflict they are part of. In the allegory of Plato's cave (Republic 514a–520a), humans see only shadows and believe that those shadows represent the whole of reality. The role of the philosopher is to bring humans out of the cave to experience more of reality. Similarly, a mediator works to help disputants enhance their understandings of the totality of their conflict situation. In so doing, the parties may engage in productive negotiations to innovate their ways out of conflict.

Building Capacity for Simultaneously Holding Conflicting Views

To hold differing realities in mind at the same time may be a matter of building capacity amid practice. Usual political discussion is often an effort to make a position known and in that assertion to influence others toward it. In such conversations, as the speaker asserts, the listener thinks about his or her response rather than carefully listening to better understand the speaker's perspective. In disputes that include extremely sensitive components, such as conflicts rooted in religious beliefs and practices, discussions of core conflicts likely occur only rarely. Through a mediated process, leaders may build capacity to simultaneously hold in mind their own perspectives as well as those of others, which may seem inaccessible or even intolerable. Doing so may create possibilities for addressing the seemingly intractable religion-components of tangible conflicts.

The steps along a pathway toward building such capacity begin with recognition that different people see different realities and that multiple interpretations of the same stimulus are possible. In considering differences across religions, we may practice holding alternative views in the realms of time and space.

Seeing Different Realities

An internet sensation occurred when *the same dress* appeared to some as blue and black and others as white and gold. These are extremely different colors, not merely differences in shades.



Illustration 1: The original photo as posted on Tumblr.

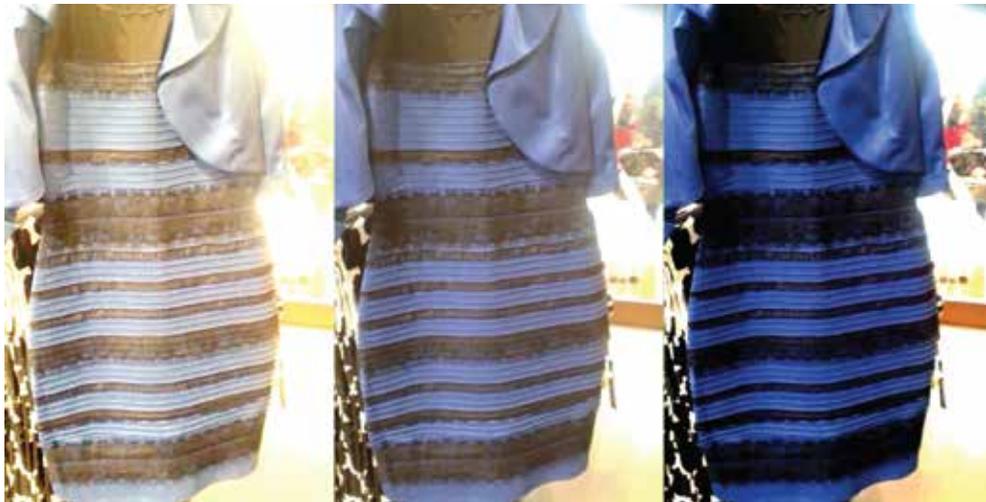


Illustration 2: The three ways people see the original photo.

After it went viral, people came to understand that both versions were possible human perceptions. In building capacity for holding two conflicting views in mind, consider this dress. It is easy to perceive the colors before you, but knowing that your neighbor sees completely different colors is difficult to fathom. Over time, some people came to accept that while the dress appeared to them to be blue and black, others saw it as white and gold. There was not a right and wrong answer. Can we hold in mind that different eyes perceived different colors and that some saw it differently from us, even as we continued to see only the colors we perceived? To do so requires people to understand that their brain translated the light in one way and their neighbor's mind translated in another. This is a situation in which two conflicting views are possible, and no one is required to change his or her own view, only to accept that another view is plausible.

Two Views at Different Moments

If the simplest case is when we see one thing and our neighbor sees another, the next level of investigation is the situation in which we can see two views at different times, but we cannot see them both at the same time. Here is the illusion of *the young woman and the old woman*.



Illustration 3: The Young Woman and the Old Woman

Focus on the small triangle at the left side of the photo beneath the upper black section. If you see the triangle as a nose, you see the young woman. If you see it as a mole, you see the old woman. In this case, the eye perceives one image, but can also see the other. It takes some effort to see the other, and our eyes can only discern one image at a time even as we know that both are there.

The optical illusion of *the young woman and the old woman* helps us build capacity for perceiving that multiple possibilities can exist simultaneously. In this example, the viewer is able to see both images, but not at the same time. As the viewer sees one image, he or she knows the other exists, but cannot perceive the second one. As in *the dress* example, neither perspective is wrong or right, rather both exist.

Recording and Counting Time

As we move into the realm of religion-based difference, time, perhaps, offers an accessible path for acknowledging multiple possible realities. The date of the Third Annual Conference of the International Center for Ethno-Religious Mediation (ICERM) was listed on the conference flyer as 2 November 2016. This date is in accordance with the Gregorian calendar, which begins its counting of time with the nativity. Dates that have occurred before the year 1 are marked as *Before Christ* (BC), although some prefer to use *Before the Common Era* (BCE). Dates from the nativity forward, when necessary to distinguish from time before the nativity, are marked as *Anno Domini* (AD) or for some, the preferred designation is *Common Era* (CE). The Gregorian calendar is a solar-based, and days start at midnight.

The Gregorian Calendar is used as an international norm for identifying dates, but there are many other calendars in use as well. According to the *Hebrew Calendar*, the date of the ICERM conference is 1 Cheshvan 5777. This calendar begins at the time of the creation of Adam and Eve, which according to the Book of Genesis is the sixth day of creation. It is a lunar calendar and days start at sundown.

Still another calendar is the *Hijiri (Islamic) Calendar* according to which the ICERM conference is on 2 Safar 1438. This calendar begins with the year of the Hijra, the migration of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina. It is a lunar calendar and days begin at sundown.

Each of these calendars (and numerous others) is rooted in a religious narrative. For the purposes of learning to hold multiple realities rooted in religious difference in mind concurrently, we can think of the date of the ICERM's Third Annual Conference as simultaneously being:

2 November 2016,
1 Cheshvan 5777, and
2 Safar 1438.

And as the sun sets, it will be 2 November 2016, 2 Cheshvan 5777 and 3 Safar 1438 in New York for about six hours until it becomes 3 November 2016 at midnight.

Is it difficult to consider the ICERM conference date as 2 November 2016, and allow that for Jews it is also 1 Cheshvan 5777 and for Muslims it is also 2 Safar 1438? Note, it is not necessary to adopt the others' dates as your own, but merely to acknowledge that each date time according to another calendar.

Surely, not all will have the capacity or tolerance to do so. For some, accepting that others mark time according to an alternative religion-based calendar may seem to undermine the validity of one's own religion and / or require acceptance of the reality of other religions. Again, the capacity sought is the ability to acknowledge that others have a differing time-recording reality with no need to adopt it. The openness this requires is similar to that which is required of negotiators participating in a mediated process. They must delve into discussions that go beyond their perspectives that sustain their conflicts. If we can respect differing descriptors that people use to count and record time, we can hold these different dates in mind at the same time as we sit in this moment together. Is it plausible to expect that people can respect that others record time differently -- even when their starting points differentiate a sacred event so critical that it is their beginning point for marking time?

If people can master the capacity for holding differing dates in mind, perhaps they may also simultaneously consider passionate contradictory beliefs held by some and rejected by others.

During the abortion talks, pro-life leaders asserted the conviction rooted in their religion, that life begins at conception and that terminating a pregnancy is the taking of life. Pro-choice leaders prioritized a woman's right to control of her body, including the choice to terminate a pregnancy. These political positions, which include life and death, were in direct contradiction. Participants in the abortion talks, with deep respect for each other despite their life and death differences, peeked into each other's views. They continued to vehemently disagree on policy. And yet, their ability to create and sustain civic fusion, that is, to bond by vehemently maintaining one's values and at the same time perceiving the other's sometimes offensive worldview, resulted in actions to reduce the threat of violence against clients and workers at women's health clinics and

even to protect each other from potential attacks.

Is it possible to build this capacity in relation to sacred lands? It may be easiest to do so concerning uncontested sacred lands. For example, Mecca, the birthplace of Mohammed, is sacred land that is held and protected by and for Muslims throughout the world. Jews, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and most others recognize and respect these lands as sacred to Muslims. The Muslim claim is the sole claim to this land; there is no competing claim by other religions.

When non-Muslims respect the sacredness of Mecca, they acknowledge an historic Muslim event of great magnitude. Again, in a civic fusion approach to conflict resolution, people need not accept the reality of the other, but *perceive* and hold to their own reality even as they understand the perceptions of others.

Building capacity for civic fusion is much more difficult if we consider sacred lands for which there are competing claims. The three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all have sacred claims in Jerusalem, and all the more so for the Sacred Esplanade of Jerusalem, usually referred to as the Noble Sanctuary by Muslims, and the Temple Mount by Jews.

In deference to the extreme sensitivity of the conflicting claims over this sacred land and the capacities and preparations necessary for responsibly entering into the heart of this conflict, I will only wonder about such a possibility. (The abortion talks were held secretly over five years.)

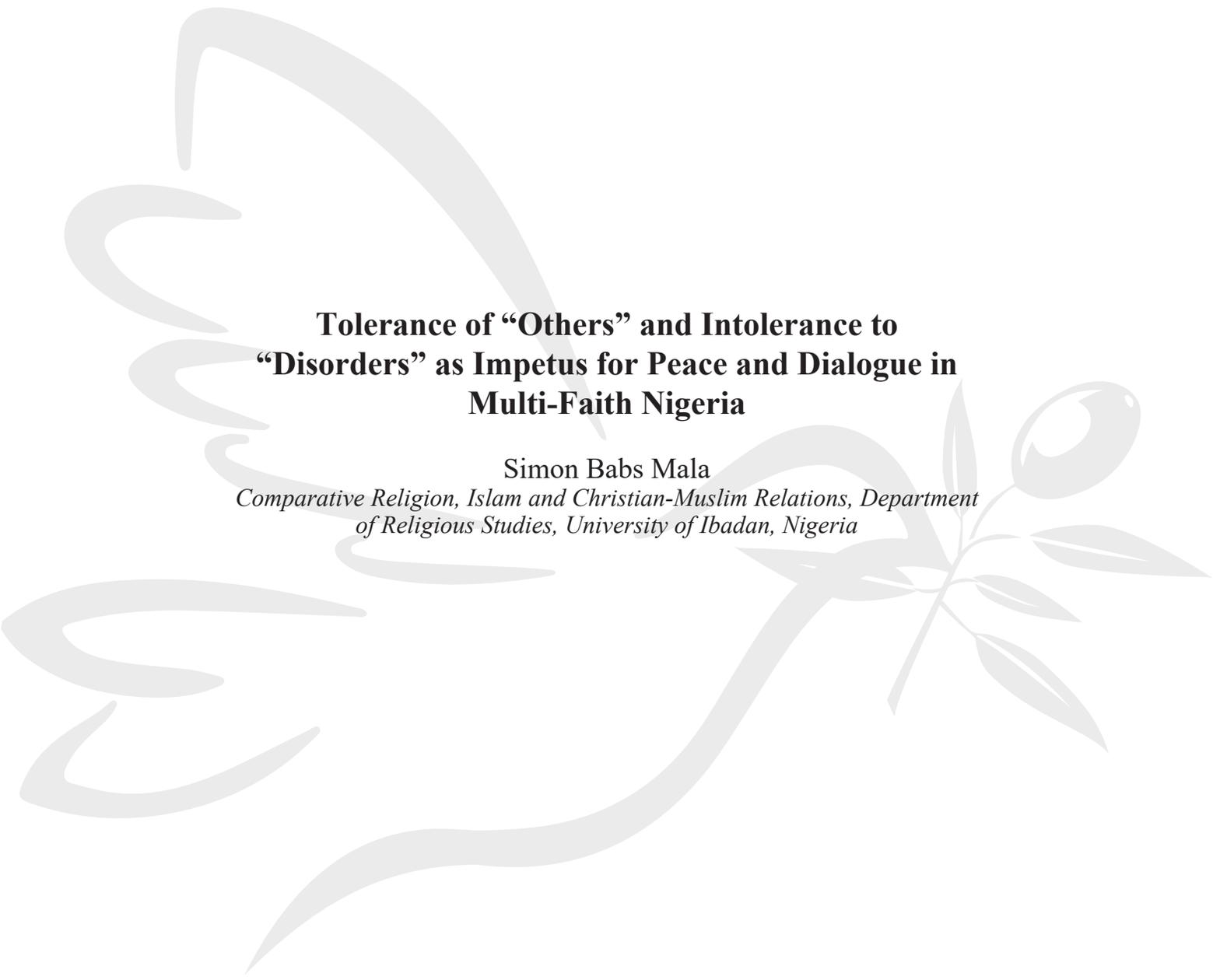
Convening religious leaders for discussions on the Sacred Esplanade of Jerusalem, as with the abortion talks, would require an in-depth assessment to determine participants, necessary protocols for participation, and identify worthwhile, achievable goals that at a minimum do no harm. Such talks would also need to be carefully designed and implemented to create capacity for, initiate, and sustain civic fusion to enable religious leaders to harness the power of their differences to innovate solutions to resolve conflicts over tangible issues.

Religious adherents seek closeness with God. Practices and rituals and prayers provide mechanisms to cleave to God, to celebrate God, to satisfy yearnings and longings to be close to God. Perhaps humility before God might provide the space within which leaders can respectfully learn of others' relationships with God and hold those in mind even as they hold and prioritize their own above all others even when their beliefs demand adherence to an exclusive truth – as did some of the leaders who participated in the abortion talks. Might it be possible to sustain one's specific relationship with God in all of its detail, and to sit and even marvel with others as they detail their own pathways to God?

If, among its sacredness, Jerusalem is the foundation stone of the creation, the place of God's dwelling, the location of the passion and resurrection of Jesus, and / or Mohammed's landing place after time spent in Heaven, then there is sacred potential resident in her land. An attempt to access it may ask great and respected leaders to build capacity for holding their detailed beliefs about this land in simultaneity with deeply held, sometimes contradictory and even seemingly unassailable beliefs of other adherents. It is impossible to know what innovative resolutions of tangible issues, if any, might emerge from such an effort. It would require, in word, a leap of faith.

Reference

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**Tolerance of “Others” and Intolerance to
“Disorders” as Impetus for Peace and Dialogue in
Multi-Faith Nigeria**

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Abstract

The focus of this article is on specific and salient religious concerns which have caused division among adherents of the three major faiths in Nigeria. The views of scholars on tolerance and intolerance to these concerns differ greatly and sometimes generate heated argument due to the religious, cultural and spiritual dimensions associated with them. This article categorises these concerns as “others” and “disorders” and evaluates the need for tolerance and intolerance to them correspondingly, as this can serve as an impetus for peace and dialogue in the pluralistic Nigerian society. The concepts of tolerance, religious tolerance and tolerance of others are discussed from the perspective of African Traditional Religion (ATR), Christianity and Islam. Also, areas of relationship, interaction, and activities, where tolerance should be displayed by adherents of the three major religions in Nigeria are examined. Furthermore, the disorders that should not be tolerated with examples and how they have caused hatred, discrimination and religious crisis in multi-faith Nigeria are analysed. The article concludes that tolerance of “others” and intolerance to “disorders” will help to mitigate religious differences and its attendant crises and promote peaceful relations and dialogue.

Keywords: *tolerance, intolerance, others, disorders, peace, dialogue, religion, ethnicity, diversity, pluralism, Nigeria*

Introduction

The quest for continuous peaceful relations and dialogue is inevitable in societies and countries where religion is easily and frequently used as a basis and tool for division, discrimination, and all forms of atrocities and fanaticism. It is highly indispensable in the light of this, for political leaders, scholars of religion and more importantly religious leaders and their followers to re-evaluate the necessity of tolerance to certain religious and cultural practices which have the impetus to sustain good relations in multi-faith Nigeria. If this re-evaluation is not done, peaceful coexistence, good relations and dialogue will become unachievable among Christians, Muslims, and African traditional religionists in Nigeria.

Although, both Christianity and Islam manifest tendencies for tolerance and intolerance, and this is mostly associated with the interpretation of certain scriptural texts on religious exclusivism, the objective of this article is to challenge the unwholesome attitude of tolerance of disorders and intolerance of others which is fast becoming a standard in religious circle and to present the “others” that should be tolerated and the “disorders” that should not be tolerated by practitioners of the three major faiths at different levels of relationship.

Clarification of Terms

For emphasis, there is a need to clarify the terms that underlie this discourse. These are: religious tolerance, intolerance, “others” and “disorders”.

Religious Tolerance and Intolerance

Tolerance is the “ability to endure, disposition or willingness to tolerate or allow permissible range of variation” (Chambers 20th Century, 1971, p. 1418). According to Sinclair’s Collins Concise Dictionary (1999:410), the word ‘tolerance’ is derived from the Latin ‘tolerāre’ (in English, ‘to sustain’ or ‘to endure’). Potgieter (2014) and Koffeman (2016) note that tolerance is an aspect of the balance between power and freedom.

Religious tolerance is simply the disposition or willingness of religious adherents to tolerate or allow religious views, opinions, ideas, or practices other than their own. It is also the ability of religious adherents to harmonise between the theories and the practical aspects of religion. It can also be the ability of religious adherents to suppress their feelings of repudiation and hostility towards religions different from their own. Toynbe (1969), a great exponent of religious tolerance, expresses the idea when he states that “all religions while retaining their historic identity will become more and more open-minded and open-hearted toward one another as the world’s different cultural and spiritual heritages become, in increasing measure, the common possession of all mankind.” Van der Walt (2016) notes that “religious tolerance or intolerance arguably must have begun with an individual who subsequently influenced others to be similarly tolerant or intolerant, thereby forming a religiously tolerant or intolerant group.” This affirms that tolerance is an attitude that can be cultivated and transmissible to other people and this is the main thrust of this article.

Intolerance is the direct opposite of tolerance. It is the unwillingness to give room, space,

accommodate and accept people, their weaknesses, strengths, beliefs, practices, life style and institutions. Religious intolerance is the unwillingness or refusal to accord respect to a religious faith, its adherents, leaders, teachings, books, and practices. Intolerance is also described as “a psychologically interesting phenomenon because it is symptomatic of insecurity and fear” (Potgieter, Van der Walt, & Wolhuter, 2014, p. 2). However, this article views it as a rejection of the wrong and inappropriate in a multi-religious society. Lack of religious tolerance emanates basically from bias, hatred, prejudice, and competitiveness displayed by adherents of different religions in a bid to defend, protect and sometimes preserve the legacies inherent in their faiths. It is also born out of perceived superiority, discrimination, manipulation and negative worldviews and ideologies. Dopamu (1989) posits that “it is glaringly clear that there is a great deal of religious intolerance within the fabric of the Nigerian society.” This has polarized the country along religious lines and obviously affected all round development.

Others and Disorders: A Clarification

It is noteworthy to give a clarification of the terms/words: “others” and “disorders”. In this article, the word “others” refer to people, young, old, friends, family members, colleagues, acquaintances, visitors, and strangers. It also includes citizens of one’s country, non-citizens, members of one’s faith/tribe/ethnic group, non-members of one’s faith/tribe/ethnic group, different people one meets in diverse social, political, religious, educational centres where interaction takes place, and everyone living within a community. More significantly, “others” also refer to acceptable beliefs, practices, institutions, tenets, right actions, and efforts that stimulate good relationships, harmony, friendship, and peaceful co-existence chiefly as it concerns a pluralist society like Nigeria.

Disorders are actions, dogmas, and ideologies contrary to the proper way of life, essentially a misnomer. A disorder is also a state of chaos, a situation that is negative, inappropriate, wrong, and generally unacceptable. The word “disorders” in this paper is used to refer to certain religious actions that are negative, extreme, radical, irreligious and do not seek the common good of all. Disorders in religion give an incorrect picture of that religion and the misuse by its adherents.

Historical Overview of Religious Encounter in Nigeria

Dopamu (1989), an exponent of African Religion opines that in “Nigeria, religion has proved to be the most sensitive and the one that has often led to hatred and division.” Nevertheless, adherents of African Traditional Religion (ATR) relate peaceably with one another despite their diversities and have steadily tolerated both Christians and Muslims from the time of their entrance into Nigeria. He further attests to it that the adherents of *Afrel* (African Religion) who are still many in Nigeria seldom engage in unpleasant practices or indulge in mutual bickering (Dopamu, 1989) that leads to religious crises. African traditionalists are tolerant because in the view of Dopamu (1989), the religion provides internal cohesion among its adherents when not misused by Kings and chiefs and it expresses this internal cohesion externally when relating with adherents of other religions.

When Islam was introduced to Nigeria around the 14th century, it challenged the ritualistic and cultural practices inherent within ATR (African Traditional Religion) that do not conform to Islamic traditions and teachings. These practices were basically the worship of idols (gods), divinities, ancestors, spirits, and the use of certain mysterious powers. Followers of the Islamic faith that migrated into different parts of Nigeria through trade and other means discovered that the traditional religious practices of the people (Hausa and the Yoruba) aligned with their culture and customs and they were not willing to give them up. The Hausa people who were the first to accept Islam practised a syncretised form of Islam which the Fulani clerics, teachers and *Ulama's* considered as unorthodox, and this is one of the reasons that necessitated the *Jihad* of Uthman Dan Fodio in the 18th century. The religious impact of the Jihad was to purge the Hausa states of certain un-Islamic practices. Kenny (2001) claims that the Jihad launched in 1804 to conquer large tracts of northern Nigeria had the religious motivation of purifying the ruling society from its casual attitude towards Islamic practice and its continued patronage of traditional religious practices. The Yoruba people, however, accepted Islam but still held on tightly to their culture as the Muslims accommodated certain similar cultural values and practices like polygamy and the spirit of brotherhood.

When Christianity came into Nigeria, the first part it penetrated was the southern part of Nigeria (Warri and Benin) in the 15th century through the priests/chaplains that accompanied the Portuguese explorers who came to the Western part of Africa. Christianity however did not tolerate many practices of the people that conform to ATR (African Traditional Religion) and this was one of the reasons that led to the failure of the first attempt at planting Christianity in Nigeria. Later in the 19th century when Christianity was finally planted through the efforts of European missionaries and freed slaves among the Yoruba people, it was still at dissonance with certain African traditional practices and customs. These practices were depicted as idolatrous and uncivilized, while the Pentecostal movement later denoted them as demonic, cultic and satanic. The missionaries spread Christianity by using education as a major attraction for the people and through the help of the colonial masters. Nevertheless, the traditional and cultural practices of the people were not completely abolished as many still identified strongly with theirs. Contemporary Christianity has only succeeded to minimise the influence of African Traditional Religion and culture because of the rate of conversion, spread, and growth in Nigeria.

Tolerance of “Others”

The three principal religions in Nigeria teach and believe in the concept of tolerance (accepting and accommodating people) as enshrined in their corpus and scriptures. In ATR (African Traditional Religion), this is exemplified in their commonly used wise sayings, proverbs, and attitude. Their tolerance paved the way for both Islam and Christianity to become significant reference points in the world at large and to develop their theologies and expand their influence. Christianity and Islam have relegated to the background some of the ethics, teachings, heritage, and cultural practices which symbolize the religion and are still highly relevant and needed today.

Christianity believes in tolerance and living peaceably with all and this can be substantiated with different biblical passages and principally, the teachings of Jesus on love,

peace, and relations with people of other faiths. In Islam, there are Quranic passages that teach tolerance and accentuate the need to tolerate people of other faiths. Prophet Muhammad also demonstrated a level of tolerance at the beginning of his mission to non-Muslims and at some instances encouraged his followers to show them love. Abdullah (2011) attests to it that “the broad thrust of the Qur'an and hadith supports religious liberty, but many parts of these texts can be, and traditionally have been, interpreted as denying it.” Also, he notes that the bedrock of the Islamic case for religious liberty is the Qur'an's vision of the human person (Abdallah, 2011). This vision is predicated on Quranic passages that encourage good relations with non-Muslims.

The fact remains that religious tolerance in a pluralistic society like Nigeria is not without its challenges and one of such is syncretism which is apparent in Christianity and Islam in southern Nigeria. Galadima (2001) lends credence to it: “Christianity needs to interrelate with African culture and African Traditional Religion if Christianity is to survive in Africa” and Africans cannot exist apart from their cultural heritage. Another challenge is the method and manner of tolerance which is sometimes not done willingly and in a friendly manner but with coercion and intimidation. This is seen in many local communities where religious minorities have been subjugated to accommodate the growth and expansion of other religions. Hans Kung (2007) notes that religious tolerance should not be exercised on the basis of strict subordination; it should be done with due consideration for others. Another challenge is the doctrine of exclusivism strictly emphasized by some denominations and groups in Christianity and Islam. Nonetheless, tolerance is the most acceptable attitude desirable in Nigeria today.

Tolerance of Cultural Values / Ideas / Heritage

The tolerance of cultural values, ideas and heritage is highly inevitable in a multi-faith society like Nigeria which has witnessed so much chaos all in the name of religion. Scholars of religion in Nigeria like Bolaji idowu, Awolalu and Babs Mala have at different times advocated and emphasized on the need to *de-westernize* Christianity and *de-Arabize* Islam in Nigeria in order to tolerate and sustain African cultural heritage and values such as, language, traditional education, dressing, wise sayings, music, festival and certain practices as this will aid in sustaining mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence. These cultural values and heritage are core representation of African identity and worldview and are inseparable from the lives of Africans. Christianity and Islam should tolerate the use of local names, cultural dressing, and the use of certain traditional symbolic elements during ceremonies like naming and weddings. It should be noted that tolerating such values is not a call to compromise but the charge to see the good in some African traditional values which are sometimes tagged “devilish and irreligious”. There are Christians who change their traditional or local names to biblical names and there are Muslims who also refuse to be called such names. These names do not necessarily have any direct relationship or covenant with any divinity, ancestor, spirit, or god but are loaded with good and significant meanings, signifying certain events and occasions. Ayantayo (2010) noted that change of name has the tendency to create class within religious community and this leads to identity class that can polarize people along religious lines. Here are few examples of such names particularly among the Yoruba’s of south-west Nigeria:

Fagbenro (Ifa / Oracle divinity upholds me)	Oluwagbenro (The Lord upholds me).
Fakoya (Ifa / Oracle divinity rejects suffering)	Olukoya (The Lord rejects suffering).
Adeyefa (Crown belongs to Ifa / Oracle divinity)	Adeyoluwa (Crown belongs to the Lord).
Ogunbiyi (The god of Iron gave birth to this)	Oluwabiyi (The Lord gave birth to this).
Ogunseemi (The god of Iron has done it for me)	Oluwaseemi (The Lord has done it for me).

There should also be tolerance of certain dress patterns which are not necessarily demonic but purely African. There are instances when people are looked down on by adherents of other faiths because of their traditional mode of dressing. Christians and Muslims should not only embrace western and Arabian form of dressing but should also embrace traditional African attires which reveal our identity, background, and showcase African creativity, originality, worldview, and beauty. There are also certain elements and materials which are symbolic of good life, prosperity, happiness, joy, morality and with profound spiritual meaning that Christians and Muslims do not tolerate during occasions like naming ceremony for a new born child. Symbolic elements like honey, sugar, sugarcane, salt, palm oil, and alligator pepper, kolanut, bitter kola, water, etc.

Fig I. Elements / Emblem for Naming Ceremony in Yoruba Land



These elements are figuratively used for prayers to bless the new-born and wish the child a great future. It should be tolerated, reawakened, and allowed to stay. Traditional African music and songs that teach morals should be encouraged and taught to the upcoming generation in order to preserve them. African heritage should be tolerable to African Christians and Muslims.

Tolerance of Social and Political Institutions

There is a need to tolerate some social institutions and political structures in multi-faith societies because they have become a part of the society. There are many socio-cultural groups and activities that are seemingly not religious in their outlook that Christianity and Islam have to tolerate. Some of these institutions help in social, educational, moral, and economic development of the society. There are a number of socio-cultural and political structures and groups all over Nigeria and they help in sanitizing and maintaining peaceful relations in the society, promoting unity and brotherhood, helping local communities, and giving voice to minorities. Some of these groups have structures that help in stabilizing the polity when there are civil disturbances and unrest. They help to reach out to people beyond the religious border lines, create awareness, and ensure peaceful co-existence through traditional mediation methods. Religious leaders should not discriminate against these groups and organisations but should make effort to find out what they really stand for and relate with them in a way that will not diminish their spiritual integrity and the sacredness of their offices. This will help such groups to continually seek the common good of all without religious bias in line with their vision and mission. Groups like Afenifere socio-cultural organisation, Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE), Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Ohaneze Ndigbo, and many others should be tolerated by Christians, Muslims, and African Traditional religionists. They should not be labelled as an unspiritual / secular group but should be seen as partners in progress for the common good like similar religious groups involved in social-economic responsibilities.

Tolerance of Peculiar Religious Practices

Christians and Muslims in Nigeria mostly campaign against the use of certain religious attires, eating of selected food because such practices are peculiar and are not inherent in their faiths and they lack understanding of what they stand for. Some of these doctrines are held in high esteem by the adherents of different religions and have spiritual implications with scriptural backings and interpretations. Muslims and adherents of ATR (African Traditional Religion) should not misconstrue, speak ill of, and not condemn practices like the Eucharist (the Lord's Supper) or Holy Communion which is peculiar to Christianity as this is a sacred religious act with deep spiritual meanings. Also, speaking in tongues either "*Glossolalia* (speaking in languages not interpretable except through divine utterance) or *xenolalia* (speaking in foreign languages that is comprehensible and interpretable)" which is a peculiar feature among Pentecostal Christians should be tolerated. The recitation of the Quran in Arabic language should not also be seen by Christians as a form of Illiteracy among Muslims but as a unique way that reflects the originality of the Islamic scriptures. The wearing of "*Hijab*" by Muslim female students to schools; this is seen by many Christian religious leaders, groups, and owners of schools as a violation of the provisions of the Nigerian constitution which designates Nigeria as a secular state where no religious identity should be promoted above the other. It is regarded by some as a religious identity for distinction during religious crises and violence which can be used for targeted attacks and an indirect ploy to Islamize Nigeria. This should be tolerated as long as it is a peculiarity inherent

within the religion. There are two states in south-west Nigeria where the Christian Association of Nigeria, and Government and Muslims organizations have gone to court to challenge the legality and illegality of the use of *Hijab*. The cases are yet to be finally decided in Nigeria’s Supreme Court at the time of writing this article. It should however be noted and taken into consideration that Catholic nuns who teach in some schools and work in certain organizations - both government and sometimes private - also wear their *Habit* without any form of restriction. If the use of certain religious dress is prescribed and required by a religious faith, it should be tolerated by all and sundry and if there are security reasons behind non-usage, it should not be enforced through coercion but with dialogue. In addition, the consumption of certain foods and meat products which are forbidden and acceptable and the introduction of prayers and religious worship in government schools should be tolerated for peace to reign and for cordial relations.

Tolerance of Efforts of Inter-Religious Relations and Dialogue

Due to the several cases of religious disturbance in multi-faith Nigeria which at some time led to the loss of many innocent lives and destruction of several properties, there is a need to embrace and tolerate efforts and groups that promote inter-religious dialogue. There are a number of faith based organizations, non-governmental organizations, government agencies, programs, denominational / group campaign for religious dialogue / harmony and individual efforts by religious clerics which should be tolerated by adherents of the three major faiths in Nigeria. They are groups like the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), Dawah Institute of Nigeria (DIN), Programme for Christian Muslims Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), and Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC). Inter-religious / inter-faith efforts by these organizations should be tolerated and overwhelmingly supported as they contribute in a great way to foster and enhance the quest for religious harmony, inter-religious dialogue, and peaceful co-existence in religiously pluralistic society. Inter-faith cooperation and partnership should be embraced by groups and sects who hold on dearly to certain extreme beliefs and do not see the need to relate or interact with adherents of other religions either at the inter / intra religious level platform. The groups and people who do not tolerate them do not believe in ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue and their intolerance to it is mainly based on their personal / special interpretations of the scriptures. It should be noted that there are scriptures that support cooperation, interaction, partnership, and friendship with people of other faiths, and these efforts and groups should be tolerated by all.

Tolerance of Inter-Religious and Religious Education

Inter-religious education should be tolerated in schools and other learning centers particularly from the early stage as this will help children in their formative stage to develop spiritually, morally and academically. Religious education that de-emphasises radicalism, fanaticism, and particularism but promotes virtues, good morals, and behavior in the society should be tolerated. Religious education creates awareness that helps people to appreciate, accept and accommodate people of other faiths in the spirit of love and friendliness. Awolalu (1980) affirms that “all-round religious education that affects the body, mind and spirit must be given to

young people... from childhood as it helps them to develop holistically and creates the fear of God in them, which in turn makes them to develop good morals which is needed for the development of every society.” Muslims and Christians in Nigeria are always of the opinion that inter-religious and religious education can be used as a tool for conversion. Nevertheless, it can be regulated by the religious and educational authorities by ensuring that teachers of religious education in schools and colleges follow the curriculum and are monitored. Religious education should be tolerated by the three religions without fear, suspicion, and bias. The curriculum for religious education should be balanced and well-crafted by knowledgeable experts from all religions who believe in religious dialogue and embrace the attitude of tolerance towards people of other faiths. This will stem the tide of fanaticism and aid respect for adherents of the other faiths.

Intolerance to “Disorders”

In Nigeria today, there are so many disorders which have bedevilled the nation and fanned the flames and ambers of religious violence, hostility, and rivalry. These disorders stem from religious teachings, beliefs, scriptures, historical antecedents, and adherents in different form. Dopamu (1989) lends credence to it: “Religions which are meant to be the platform for peace and unity, as well as forces of reconciliation have mutually been used by many to disrupt the total well-being of people and society” (p 61). There are adherents of the three major religions in Nigeria that use religion as disorders to foment trouble and disturb the general well-being and peace of the nation.

Intolerance to Manifestations of Religious Fanaticism and Radicalism

It has become a norm for certain adherents of religious faiths to manifest fanatical and radical tendencies which are disorders that are not acceptable in a pluralistic, law abiding, sane and democratic society. These tendencies and manifestations bring about a misrepresentation of the religion to the world at large thereby giving non-adherents a different / negative worldview about what the religion preaches and stands for. Dzurgba (2010) describes such traditions as traditions that are diametrically opposed to religious tolerance and effective development which can be categorized as religious parochialism, particularism, chauvinism, bigotry, and fanaticism. This manifestation creates fear in the heart of people (citizens, residents, and visitors), increases prejudice and hatred in volatile communities that are prone to ethno-religious violence, and encourages others to tow such path of radicalism. Religious clerics, leaders, adherents, organisations, monarchs and community leaders, political leaders and institutions, government agencies, non-governmental organizations and the world at large should not tolerate such acts of bigotry as it is inhuman in all forms. Such acts are unlawfully occupying places and communities for religious purposes, obstruction of the flow of traffic and movement (which affects many travellers and road users), taking the law into one’s hand in the name of justice, disturbance of the general peace and serenity of the populace, and community with noise and sound and the hate preaching and programs that incite young people to cause civil disturbance and riots.

In many communities and locality in Nigeria, religious activities are carried out at odd hours of the day and night with so much noise and sound, using *Public Address System* and horn

speakers (loud speakers). These activities are also carried out in spaces that are unlawfully occupied at odd hours of the day. This should not be tolerated but be regulated by relevant religious and government agencies because it is a disorder to so many people. The Lagos - Ibadan expressway in south-west Nigeria which is one of, if not, the busiest highway(s) in Nigeria is occupied by many Pentecostal Christian groups and churches as well as a few Muslim organizations. The rate of religious activities on this highway and the non-provision of proper, adequate traffic control mechanism at different times have caused several troubles to innocent travellers and road users which engender traffic grid lock and prevent many from getting to their destinations on time along with missing several appointments. This is also a disorder that should not be tolerated in a pluralistic society.

An example of a case of religious fanatical disorder which should not be tolerated in Nigeria happened in Kubwa, a satellite town in Abuja, Nigeria’s federal Capital on July 19, 2016. Some Muslim youths displayed acts of religious fanaticism towards a Christian female preacher that attends the most popular Pentecostal church in Nigeria and probably in Africa (Redeemed Christian Church of God). She usually goes out early in the morning to preach with Megaphone. This woman was brutally stabbed and murdered by these suspected Muslim youths. It is a disorder that should not be tolerated in any civilised society. There have been instances when worshippers of African Traditional Religion were beaten by adherents of other faiths during their annual masquerade festival which almost led to a chaos. This happens particularly in south-west and south-east Nigeria because of the insensitivity of some religious bigots who detest such cultural practices.

Another occurrence of the manifestation of religious fanaticism was when the Chief of Army staff of Nigerian Army was denied passage by members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (Shiite sect) on a major federal highway. Although, there are conflicting narratives of what truly transpired on the said day but the media (social and news) reported that the Army chief in company of some of his aides appealed severally to members of the movement to allow them passage but were denied because they were embarking on a rally. The army chief was eventually allowed passage to and fro but the soldiers who were members of the Army Chief’s entourage who were seemingly displeased with what happened attacked the Shiite members (probably to discipline and caution them) and this led to the death of several of their members and destruction of their religious community. My aim is not a justification of the acts of the members of the Nigerian Army but considering the complaints by residents of the city of Zaria in north-west Nigeria who attest that such religious fanatical acts and unruliness are prevalent among members of the group. Some of the residents similarly noted that they have been living in fear for a long time in the community and are always intimidated by members of the group who chose to maltreat fellow Muslims who are non-members of the group and non-Muslims alike. It is also important to clarify here that it is not the Shiite Islamic sect that should not be tolerated but fanaticism by members of this group who believe they are above the law and do not respect the Nigerian Constitution, most importantly the aspects on freedom of religion.

Intolerance to Particularism and Discrimination

Religious leaders, clerics, organizations, and adherents of different religions must display

intolerance to religious particularism which is a major disorder in the Nigerian religious space. Particularism is when a religious faith sees its own religion as right, correct, genuine, orthodox, and complete and others as inferior, fake, and man-made. Religious particularism is usually seen and used as a tool to promote religious discrimination and this makes other religions of no worth and value. Particularism is acceptable only when it has to do with certain religious practices pertaining to a specific religious tradition without being used to threaten the existence of other religions; and some scholars refer to it as “acceptable particularism.” The challenge with the Nigerian situation is that adherents of different religions over-stress the particularism taught by their religion in public and non-religious spaces in a way that it mid-wives disorders of religious segregation, manipulation, discrimination, and dissonance in religiously pluralistic societies. Religious segregation and manipulations which are offshoots of particularism have polarized the Nigerian religious space which has led to disorders that caused inter-religious and intra-religious divisions, crisis, hatred, and prejudice.

Intolerance to Domination in Religious and Non-Religious Platforms

Religious domination is another common disorder prevalent in multi-faith Nigeria. This occurs when practitioners of a religion believe they are superior to non-members of their faith either because of their numerical growth, financial strength, political influence, social status, government support, educational achievements, and religious / spiritual exploits displayed in the media. This disorder refers to other religions as non-existent and irrelevant, hence their activities and adherents are subjugated forcefully and denied their own due rights and privileges which is against the provision of religious freedom in the Nigerian constitution. There is intra-religious domination as well as inter-religious domination and this should not be tolerated as every religion has its own uniqueness and is beneficial at a level. Intra-religious domination cuts across the three major faiths in Nigeria but is seen mostly in Christianity and Islam. The Christian Pentecostal denominations sometimes dominate the mainline churches and mainly the African Indigenous Churches when there is an ecumenical service or project. The mainline churches also dominate other denominations when there is a need to relate with the government and in certain socio-political and educational fora. This is because they are well established and have been in existence over a long period with greater experience and more structures to accommodate certain religious and social programs.

In Islam, the Sunnis dominate the Shiites in Nigeria because of their numerical strength and their leadership roles in almost all Islamic organizations which serve as umbrella bodies for the two sects. The only exception to the Sunni domination of Shiites is in the city of Zaria in Kaduna state which is regarded as the headquarters of the Shiites where they forcefully dominate the Sunnis and adherents of other religions and do not always respect the democratic, secular government. Similarly, there are times when intra-religious dominations also happen across organizational lines in Islam, e.g. members of the Ahamadiya Movement being dominated by members of Muslim Students Society of Nigeria during a general program for the *Ummah*. This sort of intra-religious domination also happens in tertiary institutions where there are two or more Muslim student groups. This is also apparent and even more prevalent among Christian student groups in tertiary institutions because of the numerous Christian student groups on campuses and

their many socio-religious activities (Mala, 2012).

African Traditional Religion is the most dominated religious faith in Nigeria; this is not unconnected with the fact that it is not a missionary faith that goes about looking for members and converting people into the faith. The federal government and even the state governments in Nigeria do not recognize their existence, and their leaders and adherents are dominated during inter-religious worship and government functions. This form of disorder that relegates to the background a religion with universal strength should not be tolerated. Muslims also dominate Christians and Christians also do likewise when the principal head at the three strata of government or in any agency, organization, or institution is either a Muslim or Christian. Sometimes it is so obvious, other times it is not, and this domination occasionally leads to in-fighting, persecution, demotion, inefficiency, under productivity, and breeds hate and prejudice. Nevertheless, it is a disorder which should not be tolerated in a democratic and religiously pluralistic society like Nigeria – a country that is easily engulfed with religious crises.

Intolerance to Organizations and Individuals that Promote Fundamentalism

In the last twenty years, there has been a notable surge in the emergence of religious movements and organizations that promote religious radicalism, fanaticism, fundamentalism and even terrorism generally in Africa and particularly in Nigeria. These organizations and individuals are institutions of disorders and as such should not be tolerated. If tolerated by religious or government institutions, they would cause the ambers of war and terrorism to burn all over the world. One of such organizations is the gradual emergence of the Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and *Jihad - Boko Haram* (western education / civilization is forbidden) which has caused and is still causing several havocs and wanton destruction of lives, properties (government, religious groups and private) and displacement of people and destabilization of governance in some northern states of Nigeria and other West African countries. Also, groups like the Al-Shabbab in East Africa, Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb and certain religious clerics with hate messages that encourage violence and enlisting into such organizations by unsuspecting and sincere and tolerant members of their religious faith and group. Johannes van der Walt (2016) opines that individual perspective towards tolerance and intolerance is responsible for the forming of religiously tolerant or intolerant group. These groups and individuals are disorders that should not be tolerated by all the three major religions in Nigeria and they should either be proscribed by the government or cautioned by the umbrella religious organizations they belong to.

Recommendations

In a religiously pluralistic country like Nigeria with intra- and inter- religious differences, tolerance of others and intolerance to disorders are highly inevitable to ensure continuous peaceful co-existence among the adherents of the three religions. From the foregoing, the recommendations below are made to reinforce the idea and practice of tolerance of others and intolerance to disorders.

There is need for a re-examination of the level of tolerance and intolerance particularly the

harsh stipulations in the scriptures and corpus, with a view to repudiate and revise them in line with the present realities. This will definitely call for a *re-reading* of the various written and unwritten scriptures of the three religious faiths as the case may be.

Also, it is pertinent to ensure that a conscious effort is taken to re-formulate a more dynamic, purposeful, humanity-conscious religious and moral education geared towards building religious understanding, mutual sharing, tolerance and even dialogue. Holding a regular dialogue meeting among the religious leaders and scholars who are the models of the three religious communities at the three strata of government will help to spread the virtue of tolerance.

More so, intolerance to disorders should be done peaceably with dialogues and in a friendly manner so that it will not cause intolerant disorders in the society.

Finally, the government and religious institutions should put up mechanisms that will help facilitate cordial relations and guide against intolerance to adherents of other religions.

Conclusion

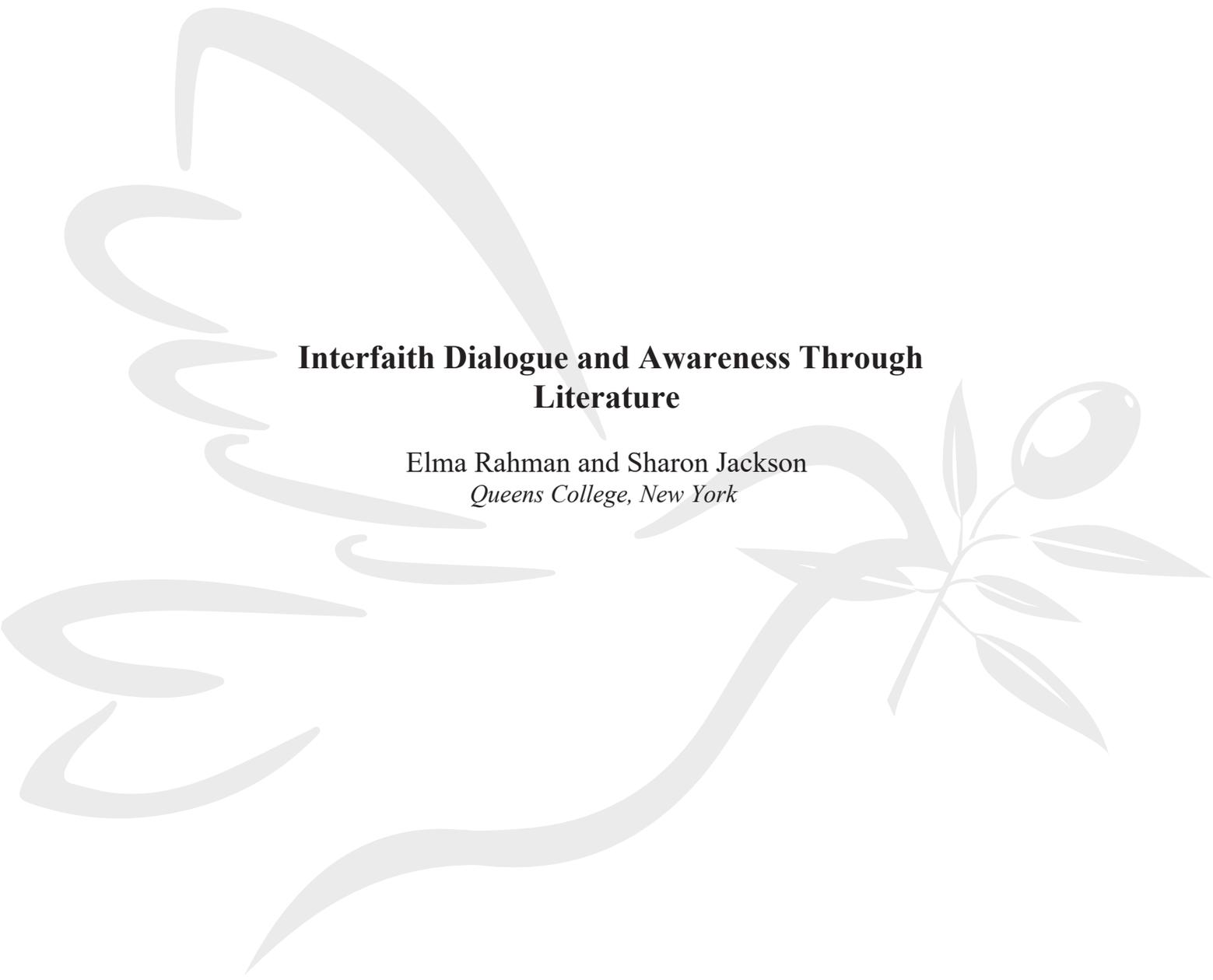
If the recommendations made are adhered to, it will help to stem the tide of religious fanaticism, bigotry, and discrimination in multi-faith Nigeria. It should be noted that tolerance for others and intolerance to disorders are not a call for discrimination or destruction of certain religious values that are not in line with one's faith but an appeal for appreciation and accommodation of practices that promote love and the good of the society, and the rejection in simplicity of disorders which are associated with religion and not healthy for the common good. This is because of the copious evidence of intensive rivalry, differences, and conflict in almost all strata of life among the Muslims, Christians, and African Traditionalists.

This paper has therefore succeeded in emphasizing the need for tolerance of specific religious values and cultural practices, and intolerance to certain disorders associated with religion.

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Interfaith Dialogue and Awareness Through Literature

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the ways in which literature may be used to inspire interfaith dialogue, as well as intra-faith dialogue. Two sets of Queens high school students, one from an Islamic school and one from a public school, were asked to read *Fajr*, a short story revolving around an interfaith friendship between two teenagers, one Jewish, the other Muslim. Through pre- and post-story surveys, as well as a discussion group, the students shared their questions, curiosities, and preconceptions about practicing Jews, and examined how friendship offers possibilities for reconciliation. Separately, during a workshop at Queens College, a group of college students, many of whom were prospective teachers, as well as educators, were asked to read excerpts from Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story, "The Minister's Black Veil," to analyze the symbol of the black veil at the time of the Puritans in comparison to how people perceive it today. This activity facilitated a discussion in which these individuals were able to reflect on their perception of the "other" as well as media's portrayal of the Islamic faith. Observing and comparing the reactions of the students from the Islamic school and the public school, as well as the participants at the workshop, we are able to analyze the ways in which different populations engage a text and extract a new awareness of one's own ties to other faiths, in order to effectively utilize the text to promote interfaith dialogue.

Keywords: *fiction, interfaith friendship, Muslims, Jews, prejudice*

Introduction

“Men hate each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don’t know each other. They don’t know each other because they can’t communicate. They can’t communicate because they are separated” (Cornell College, 2017).

This famous quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. presents his explanation for the roots of prejudice: separation. It also presents a solution to prejudice: bringing people together. One may bring people together physically, by encouraging face-to-face interactions. But if this is not enough or impossible, interaction can instead occur between real people, and members of the “other,” as characters within the pages of a book.

Kaufman and Libby (2012) set out to examine whether or not a story was powerful enough to break down prejudices in the minds of its readers. In doing so, they uncovered what is known as “experience-taking” - a process by which readers “lose themselves” in a story, so much so that they seem to become one with the main character. This happens especially when the story is told in first person - the “I,” “my,” and “me” of the narrator subconsciously begins to blend in with the “I,” “my,” “me” of the reader. Additionally, the racial background and sexual orientation of the narrator had to either match that of the reader, or be revealed to the reader later on in the story, for experience-taking to occur.

What is meant by “lose themselves”? When a person reads a story, the wall between reader and narrator must be as thin as possible. If readers perceive too many differences between themselves and the main character, they see themselves as separate from the main character. But if identity is the same, or an identity different from the reader is revealed late, the reader begins to merge with the character, and by the time the reader becomes aware of the character’s different background, it is too late for prejudice to kick in – by then, reader and character are one. The reader thinks thoughts and performs behaviors similar to those of the character, even for days after reading the story. Kaufman and Libby (2012) observed that after many of the participants read a story in which the main character voted in an election, they too turned up at the polls a week after having read it. Those white participants who read a story about an African American male, whose racial identity was revealed later on in the story, were more likely to connect with the narrator.

The classroom is an ideal place for connections to be made between people of different backgrounds, if teachers have their students read stories that are conducive to experience-taking. However, in her article, “Made in the (Multicultural) U.S.A.: Unpacking Tensions of Race, Culture, Gender, and Sexuality in Education,” Asher (2007) states that “the cultural gap between teachers and students is growing” (p. 65) because discussing controversial topics such as race, religion and homosexuality are avoided in school. In addition, media attention to stereotypical portrayals of certain ethnicities and religions associated with Islam, along with a constant, public discourse of terror and xenophobia, increases school administrators’ fear of being held accountable by parents and their community for hiring teachers who may represent those groups. In truth though, schools have a need for teachers with multicultural backgrounds so that they can share their thoughts on such controversies in order to promote a healthy and safe learning environment that embraces diversity.

Taylor and Fox (1996) make five suggestions for “infusing multiculturalism” in the

education system, thus promoting it within the youth of our society in their article “New Teachers: Valuing Cultural Diversity” which recommends that when it comes to teaching, educators should “begin with the personal in order to honor all voices and to value everyone's perspectives” (p. 90). Taylor and Fox (1996) suggest creating a learning environment in which students branch out from sharing their own personal experience toward “more involved activities such as autobiographical inquiry” (p. 90). In other words, when a teacher, regardless of ethnicity, religion or race, models for students how to create an environment of sharing both different and common experiences, students will then be more open-minded towards those whom they preconceived as “others.”

One way to open the door for interfaith dialogue and create awareness and acceptance amongst different faiths is by incorporating social justice within the classroom. In *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, Bell (2016) defines social justice education as “an interdisciplinary conceptual framework for analyzing multiple forms of oppression and their intersections, as well as a set of interactive, experiential pedagogical principles and methods / practices” (p. 4). In a classroom, teaching for social justice might then include: a) talking about difficult issues instead of ignoring them; b) introducing students to the impact of some groups’ privileges in society; c) building curriculum that promotes diversity and form bonds with parents and the community to eradicate the prejudice encouraged by society and the media; d) exploring teacher identity as one way to access knowledge and perspectives that would otherwise remain untapped.

It was with these studies in mind that we, the researchers, utilized two stories, *Fajr* and “The Minister’s Black Veil, among three sets of participants with the aim of exploring the ways in which literature may be used to inspire interfaith dialogue, as well as intra-faith dialogue.

The Stories

Fajr, written by one of the researchers, Sharon Jackson, is a novella (29-pages in length) titled after one of its main characters, a young Palestinian Muslim girl living in Queens, New York, who has been pushed to her death at a subway station by two Jewish men. Her Jewish counterpart, an Orthodox boy named Adam, is the only one who can see her ghost - and the only one Fajr can turn to for help in stopping her cousin Haithm from attempting to avenge her death. Adam and Fajr’s first-person narratives alternate to tell their story as they slowly but surely overcome their initial mistrust of one another and become friends. And though Adam is initially fearful of Haithm, he is able to see through Haithm’s hateful exterior to the grief and pain within over Fajr’s loss. Adam’s empathy towards Haithm saves Haithm from becoming someone he does not recognize, as ultimately, when Haithm’s plan to set a yeshiva on fire puts Adam in danger, Haithm and Fajr together save Adam’s life.

“The Minister’s Black Veil” is a 19th century short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne in which the author uses the symbol of the black veil to represent the innate, sinful nature of man. The story begins with a Reverend Mr. Hooper who arrives to the congregation with a black veil covering the lower half of his face. This, naturally causes the crowd of Puritans to stir uneasily as they listen to the sermon. Gossip and fear spread among the inhabitants of the town and the only person who approaches the reverend is his fiancée Elizabeth. When he tells Elizabeth that he cannot take the veil off even for her, she bids him farewell and breaks off their engagement. Life goes on for the

people of the town and for Mr. Hooper and although he is committed to a life of loneliness for his decision, many find themselves asking for him at the time of their death. At the time of the reverend's own death, Elizabeth comes to him to plead one last time to take off the veil. When he is dying, the people tremble in fear, but he tells them not to and informs them that they all wear their own black veils. Reverend Mr. Hooper is then buried with the black veil on his face.

The Three Studies

In 2015, twelve ninth-grade students (two males and ten females) attending an Islamic school in Queens, New York, took part in a study in which they were asked to read *Fajr*, a novella revolving around an interfaith friendship between two teenagers, one Jewish, the other Muslim (Figure 1). Through pre- and post-story surveys, as well as a discussion group, the students made connections to their own identities and experiences as Muslims; they also shared their questions, curiosities, and preconceptions, about practicing Jews.

In the summer of 2016, four female tenth grade Catholic students from a public high school read *Fajr*, filled out surveys, and discussed the story in relation to their own understanding of Muslims and Jews, the conflicts between Muslims and Jews on a societal and global level, how these conflicts affect the youth of these communities, and how friendship offers possibilities for reconciliation.

The first surveys given to both the Islamic school students and public school students (before participants had read *Fajr*) contained demographic questions about gender, family's country of origin, and number of years participant has been speaking English. They also had two quantitative measures taken directly from those used by Kaufman and Libby (2012), to examine how likely students would be to become one with the main characters. For these, students were asked to rate themselves on a Likert scale with five choices, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The two measures were "I reflect about myself a lot" and "I'm always trying to figure myself out."

The first survey given only to the Islamic school contained several more questions: some which touched upon what they believed about God/their faith/their purpose in this world, others asking their beliefs about previous interactions with Jews (using a measure from Kaufman and Libby but changing the wording to fit the population, asking students to rate their agreement with the statement, "A Jew is just as likely to be a good person as anyone else"), and one measure from Vezzali, Stathi, Giovannini, Capozza, and Trifiletti's (2014) study, again changing the wording to fit the population, with the statement, "It would be great if there were more people of other religions in my neighborhood" (p. 111).

Survey two, given after participants had read *Fajr*, was nearly the same for both the Islamic and public school students, except for two questions only the Islamic school students received: "Do you believe becoming friends with Jews will make this world a better place? Why or why not?" and "In the first survey, you answered a question about whether or not you are friends with any Jews. If you currently are not, would you be willing to be friends with any? Why or why not?" Students from both groups were asked their opinion of the story, favorite scenes, and Likert-scale questions from Kaufman and Libby (2012) that measure experience-taking ("I understood the

events of the story as though I were the characters in the story,” “While I was reading the story, activity around the room around me was on my mind,” etc.). Both sets of students were asked, “A Jew is just as likely to be a good person as anyone else,” and the public school students were also asked, “A Muslim is just as likely to be a good person as anyone else.”

Both groups of students discussed the story out loud, answering questions such as, “What does Fajr symbolize?” “Why can only Adam see her at first?” “Why was the story told by two characters instead of one?” and “Should our faiths/religions matter when choosing our friends?”

The Islamic school students were also given a third survey nine days after being given the second survey, to assess if their feelings towards Jews had changed. The public school students did not get a third survey. Another key difference between the methods used for the Islamic school students and those used for the public school students was that the Muslim students read *Fajr* on their own, at home, whereas the public school students elected to read it out loud with us.

Having explained the methods in which *Fajr* was presented to the two groups of students, we can now turn to the reactions, similar and different, to determine what each took away from the experience.

The main similarity that can be identified in the reading of the two groups may be that since they are of the same generation, there is a level of acceptance of others that is part of their ideologies that may perhaps be limited in generations previous to theirs. Based on the questions from the first survey and pre-reading discussion questions, both groups believe that the religion of the individual should not determine whether or not one should befriend them, rather, friendship should be based on good character and common interests. Another similarity in their perception of the text is in determining their favorite characters, Adam and Fajr, since the students found themselves either identifying with characters, instead of simply sympathizing with them. While there may be more similarities in the views of the Islamic school and public school students, they are not as clear to point out, mainly because the actual reading experiences differ. The ninth-grade Muslim students were assigned the story for independent reading and shared their thoughts in a Socratic seminar in class while the tenth-graders read it aloud with us one-on-one and paused throughout the reading to either ask or answer questions.

Two major differences that can be noted in the experiences of the ninth and tenth grade students are their focuses during the reading and their takeaway at the end. Based on their responses, it seems as though these differences stem from their ages as well as their exposure to the themes in *Fajr* both in real life as well as through media. For example, the Muslim students focused on the developing friendship between Adam and Fajr and even played with the idea of a possible bond between Adam and Haithm. While the tenth-graders found Adam and Fajr’s friendship “cute,” they were more focused on the individual conflicts of the characters and the unfairness of these issues. With regards to the takeaway of each group, the ninth-grade students’ was an idea of the hope and overcoming the misconceptions one group of people may have about another. The tenth-graders’ takeaway was more of a newfound awareness of injustice because of past history and present media. If we think about the reason for these differences between the two groups, the simplest answer would be personal experience. For the Muslim students who we should keep in mind are attending an all Muslim school, the idea of a friendship with a Jew might be one of timid hope. Not only do they think along the ideas of friendship between individuals but

also a possible reconciliation in the future amongst the countries of the two faiths. The tenth-grade students are outsiders of the two faiths in the story, hence they are easily able to accept interfaith friendship, one student sharing that her best friend is Muslim. Their focus then shifts to the injustice that is caused to individuals and societies. While they are part of the same generation, the fifteen and sixteen-year-old tenth-graders also seem to have a certain amount of maturity and perception that the ninth-grade students have yet to reach. Regardless of their differences however, being introduced to a text that discusses these issues enabled both groups to think critically about them and share their ideas respectfully within the classroom.

In terms of experience-taking, it should be noted that three out of the four public school students did not return their post-story surveys, so we are relying only on their comments from the discussion to determine their connection to the characters. Looking at some of Kaufman and Libby's measures of experience-taking, we find that 8 out of the 12 Islamic school students, and the public school student that did complete her post-story survey, chose "strongly agree" for the statement, "I found myself thinking what the characters in the story were thinking/feeling," and 7 of the 12, as well as the public school student, strongly agreed with the statement, "At key moments in the story, I felt I knew what the characters were going through."

Several comments from the students during the discussions stood out to us and revealed a deep connection with the characters and with the story: one girl from the Islamic school told us she became emotional for the very first time while reading a book during the scene where Adam encounters Haithm for the first time and goes to comfort him. One girl from the public school group had a similar reaction (though she did not say it was her first time a piece of literature had caused this) during the scene where Fajr is describing to Adam how she died. (Ten of the 12 Muslim students wrote in their surveys that the story had an emotional impact on them.) That same public school student, while talking about the more prejudiced characters in the story, described the way they shut off their empathy as "emotional corruption." Meanwhile, another public school student, discussing one of the prejudiced characters, felt that, while she didn't agree with him, "He's looking out for his people." This can indicate the ability to listen with resilience - to hear and understand the points of view of those with whom you disagree.

One other comment resonated with us from the Islamic school students: when the students were discussing why I might have chosen to switch back and forth between the voices of Adam and Fajr, rather than just telling the story from one voice, one girl, to give an example of something she wouldn't have known had the story been told only from Fajr's perspective, said, "We wouldn't know that some Jews are afraid of Muslims." It should be noted here that none of the students from either group showed signs of prejudice at any point. But her answer points to the fact that what is taken for granted by one group is news to another group. One group may know very little about the other, and literature can be used as a bridge to teach readers of each group about the other group's world.

After regarding how this discourse played out amongst the teenage students from both the Islamic school as well as public school, we can turn to how it also helps college students, prospective teachers and even educators to discuss topics that they may not otherwise be comfortable with. However, once these college students were eased into it, they were able to engage in a meaningful discussion with regards to one another's faith. During this workshop that

falls under a series conducted in Queens College called *Complicated Conversations*, our presentation “Breaking the “Mold”: The Teacher as an Individual” included two main literary focuses: “The Minister’s Black Veil” to analyze the symbol of the black veil at the time of the Puritans in comparison to how people perceive it today, as well as interfaith friendship *Fajr*.

Perhaps the most difficult part for the students attending the workshop was to share their thoughts on the *niqab*, or veil worn by many Muslim women, especially when their presenter was wearing one at that moment. Many responded with total ease saying that they are not bothered by it in any way since we live in Queens which is a very diverse area. Others, treading carefully to not cause any hurt feelings admitted that sometimes they feel unsure about it because it makes them nervous not to be able to see someone’s face. Respecting their honesty, we then gave the group two handouts. One handout was a printout of a selfie of the presenter wearing a *niqab* (Figure 2). The other was an excerpt from “The Minister’s Black Veil” with an animated image of Mr. Hooper wearing a black cloth over his face while the Puritan attendees of the congregation stare at him in fear (Figure 3). The group was then asked, “How are the two images similar and how are they different?” At this point, the students broke up into groups first to discuss their responses and then shared in a whole group discussion. The outcome was that they felt much more at ease now to discuss the *niqab* since they were comparing it to the black veil in the short story. In terms of similarities, they stated how the veils are black and they cover the faces of those wearing them.

With regards to differences, the topic turned to identification. The minister’s wearing of the veil instilled fear amongst the people of the town in the story, however, that is not the purpose of wearing the *niqab*. Students themselves were able to explain that since the eras are different, the purposes are also not the same. The person in the selfie is simply showing people in her own way that she is Muslim, and this is how she practices her faith. This activity exemplified how with the right questions and strategies, we can open up discussions about topics that are otherwise difficult to address and help clear up misunderstandings. Interestingly, the students reflected on how they were able to ask certain questions about the *niqab* only after being forced to think about it. The discussion then turned to other markers of identity and how we can make students in the public school aware of these while letting go of previous misconceptions.

One final part of the *Complicated Conversations* workshop was to demonstrate teaching for social justice to the college students who are prospective teachers by sharing with them the research from teaching *Fajr* to the ninth-grade students from the Islamic school. By redesigning curriculum to include literature that promotes not only multiculturalism but discussing topics of social justice, students gain an awareness and even respect for faiths, races and cultures other than their own.

Conclusion

We live in a world that is rapidly growing in economy, technology as well as education for the individual, but in this fast-paced progression, we are in danger of losing sight of the things that keep us connected to one another. When we become conscious, not only of our own surroundings and problems, but also of those of others, we grow as people, into higher dimensions. Through our

research, we've come to see that by introducing topics in the classroom from which we may otherwise shy away through literature that we can enjoy, students can become aware of issues they had not considered before, understand people they had not previously understood, and hope for changes that they may not have dreamed of to improve the quality of life for everyone, not just the individual.

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Appendices

Appendix A

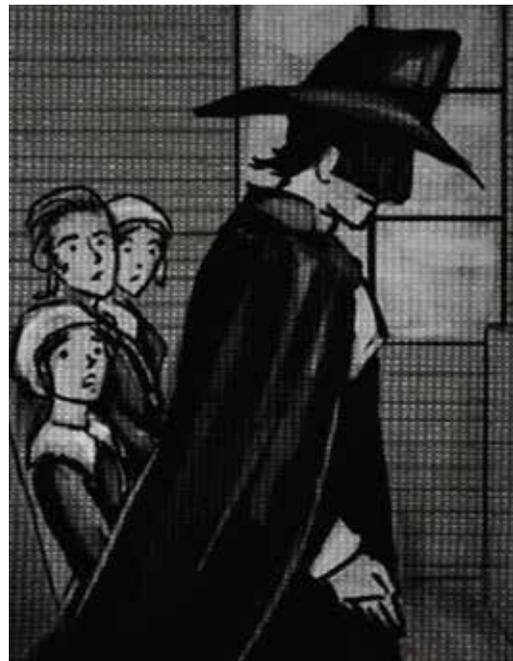
Islamic School 9 th Grade Class	Public School 10 th Grade students
<p>Group of 12 (2 boys and 10 girls)</p> <p>Muslim</p> <p>Southeast Asian, age 14, focused on friendship and symbolism, read story individually, participated in group discussion, and takeaway was hopeful.</p>	<p>Group of 4 (all girls)</p> <p>Catholic Hispanic, ages 15 and 16, focused on the conflicts, read aloud, participated in one-on-one discussion, and takeaway was a newfound awareness of the injustice.</p>

(Figure 1)

Appendix B



(Figure 2)



(Figure 3)

Appendix C

(Surveys used by Islamic school students)

Survey Questions

Survey 1 **Student number:** _____

- 1) What is your gender?
Male Female Prefer not to say
- 2) What is your family's country of origin?
- 3) For how many years have you been speaking English?
- 4) How would you describe your relationship with God? Do you feel close with God?
- 5) Do you believe God has a purpose for you in life? Why or why not? And if so, what is that purpose?
- 6) What do you think is the best way to be a good Muslim?
- 7) How can we make this world a better place?
- 8) Do you believe becoming friends with Jews will make this world a better place? Why or why not?

Please rate how much you agree with the following:

9) I reflect about myself a lot.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
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10) I'm always trying to figure myself out.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
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11) A Jew is just as likely to be a good person as anyone else.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
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Why or why not?

12) It would be great if there were more people of other religions in my neighborhood.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
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13) How often have you had contact with Jews (for example, passing by them on the street, seeing them at the public library, etc.)?

never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	very often
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14) Would you describe these encounters as good, neutral, or bad? How do you feel during these encounters? Explain. (If you answered “never” to the above question, you can skip this one.)

15) Do you have any Jewish friends? Describe your friendship with them. Or, if not, would you be willing to be friends with any? Why or why not?

Survey 2 Student number: _____

1) Did you like the story? Why or why not?

2) Do you admire any of the characters? Why or why not?

Please rate how much you agree with the following:

3) I felt like I could put myself in the shoes of the characters in the story.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
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4) I found myself thinking what the characters in the story were thinking/feeling.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

5) I understood the events of the story as though I were the characters in the story.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
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6) At key moments in the story, I felt I knew what the characters were going through.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

Explain your answers to questions 3-6. Which characters did you connect with? Why do you think that is?

7) Did the story affect you emotionally? What parts of the story?

8) I was mentally involved in the story while reading it.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

9) While I was reading the story, activity around the room around me was on my mind.

strongly agree somewhat agree neither agree nor disagree somewhat disagree strongly disagree

10) A Jew is just as likely to be a good person as anyone else.

strongly agree somewhat agree neither agree nor disagree somewhat disagree strongly disagree

Why or why not?

11) It would be great if there were more people of other religions in my neighborhood.

strongly agree somewhat agree neither agree nor disagree somewhat disagree strongly disagree

12) Do you believe becoming friends with Jews will make this world a better place? Why or why not?

13) In the first survey, you answered a question about whether or not you are friends with any Jews. If you currently are not, would you be willing to be friends with any? Why or why not?

Survey 3 Student number: _____

For this survey, if your answer has not changed, you may write, "My answer has not changed."

1) A Jew is just as likely to be a good person as anyone else.

strongly agree somewhat agree neither agree nor disagree somewhat disagree strongly disagree

Why or why not?

2) It would be great if there were more people of other religions in my neighborhood.

strongly agree somewhat agree neither agree nor disagree somewhat disagree strongly disagree

3) Do you believe becoming friends with Jews will make this world a better place? Why or why not?

4) In the first survey, you answered a question about whether or not you are friends with any Jews. If you currently are not, would you be willing to be friends with any? Why or why not?

Appendix D

(Surveys and questions used by public school students)

Pre-story discussion question:

Should our faiths/religions matter when choosing our friends?

After-story discussion questions:

What are some questions you have about the story?

What was your favorite scene?

What does Fajr symbolize?

Why can only Adam see her at first?

Why did Fajr have to be a ghost in the story?

Why was the story told by two characters instead of one?

What did you think of Fajr's three options?

Does the story affect your perception of Muslims and Jews?

After having read the story, do you still feel the same way about the earlier question, should our faiths/religions matter when choosing our friends?

Survey 1 Student number: _____

1) What is your gender?

Male Female Prefer not to say

2) What is your family's country of origin?

3) For how many years have you been speaking English?

Please rate how much you agree with the following:

4) I reflect about myself a lot.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

5) I'm always trying to figure myself out.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

Survey 2 Student number: _____

1) Did you like the story? Why or why not?

2) Do you admire any of the characters? Why or why not?

Please rate how much you agree with the following:

3) I felt like I could put myself in the shoes of the characters in the story.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

4) I found myself thinking what the characters in the story were thinking/feeling.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

5) I understood the events of the story as though I were the characters in the story.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

6) At key moments in the story, I felt I knew what the characters were going through.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

Explain your answers to questions 3-6. Which characters did you connect with? Why do you think that is?

7) Did the story affect you emotionally? What parts of the story?

8) I was mentally involved in the story while reading it.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

9) While I was reading the story, activity around the room around me was on my mind.

strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
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10) A Jew is just as likely to be a good person as anyone else.

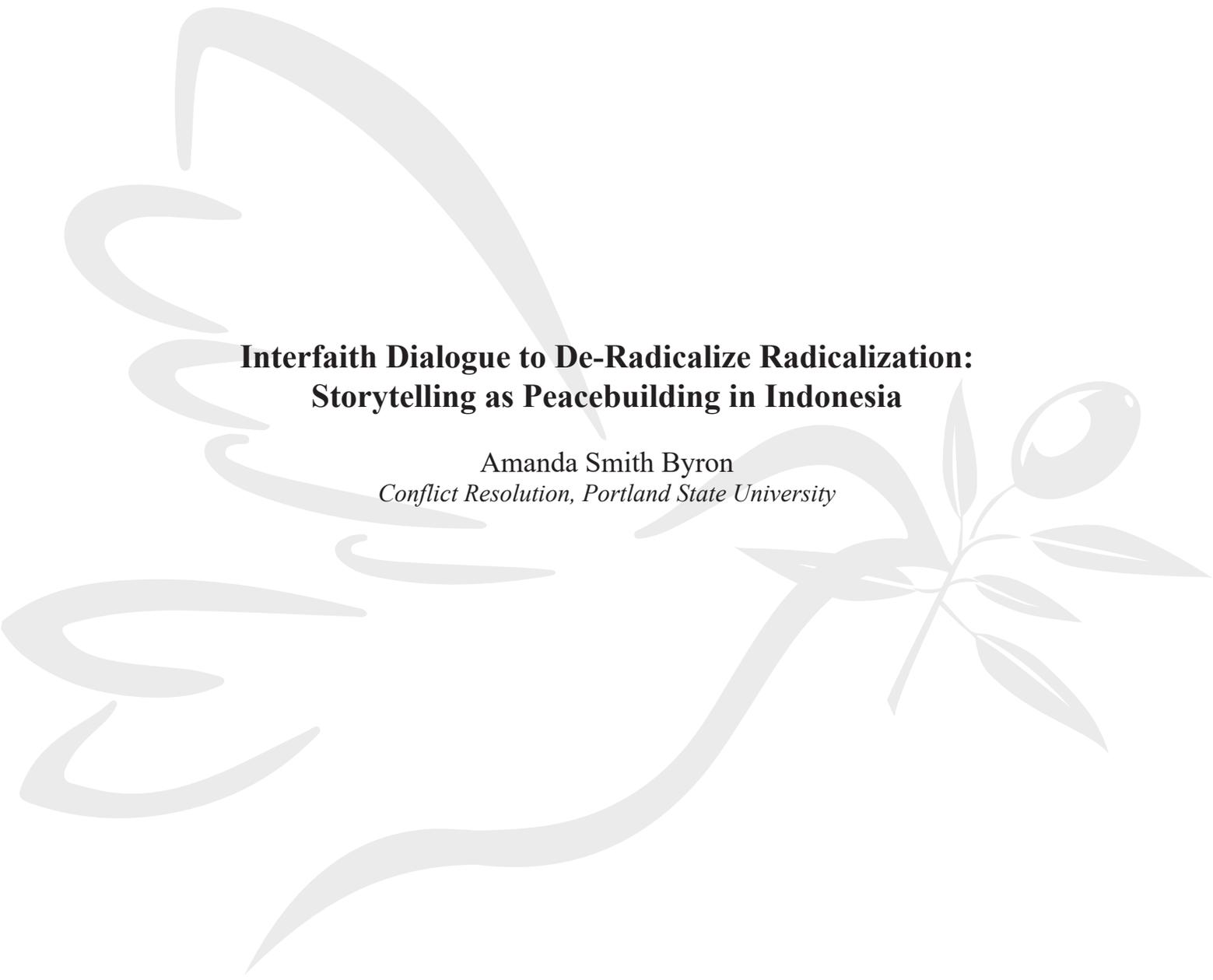
strongly agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree
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Why or why not?

11) A Muslim is just as likely to be a good person as anyone else.

strongly	somewhat	neither agree	somewhat	strongly
agree	agree	nor disagree	disagree	disagree

Why or why not?



**Interfaith Dialogue to De-Radicalize Radicalization:
Storytelling as Peacebuilding in Indonesia**

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Abstract

In response to the history of ethno-religious conflict in Indonesia, there is a strong commitment from governmental and non-governmental organizations alike to constructively and creatively address such conflict as a way to preserve support for religious pluralism, and to take a strong stance against radicalization. One of the most effective tools used to work toward this end is interfaith dialogue. This paper explores the use of interfaith dialogue as a peacebuilding tool in Indonesia, which has been effectively used to build counternarratives of ethno-religious identity. Storytelling, in the context of dialogue, operates as a peacebuilding process that forges common ground, and ultimately co-creates emergent narratives of collaboration and reconstruction. As such, storytelling creates an invitation for the restoration of dignity, something that is easily lost during conflict, and something that must be regained for resolution to take root. The conclusions situate interfaith dialogue as both a transformative tool in the aftermath of ethno-religious conflict, and as a possible means to prevent future atrocities.

Keywords: *interfaith dialogue, storytelling as peacebuilding, religious pluralism, de-radicalization, Indonesia*

Introduction

Indonesia is home to the largest population of Muslims in the world, but rather than mimicking the trend toward extremist beliefs, Indonesian Islam remains overwhelmingly steeped in a longstanding tradition of religious pluralism and religious tolerance. The Indonesian constitution was written in 1945 to guarantee all Indonesians the right to worship according to the beliefs of Islam, Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. While this legacy has not been successful in deterring ethno-religious conflict, it nonetheless provides an excellent building block for interfaith peacebuilding.

As a result of a long history of ethno-religious conflict in Indonesia, there are strong commitments from governmental and non-governmental organizations alike to constructively and creatively address such conflict as a way to preserve support for religious pluralism, and to take an effective stand against radicalization. One of the tools widely recognized as being effective in working toward these goals is interfaith dialogue.

This paper explores the use of interfaith dialogue as a peacebuilding tool, and draws largely from the experiences in Indonesia, where it has been effectively used in religious schools and institutions, and as part of post conflict reconciliation processes. One of the goals of interfaith dialogue is to build appealing counternarratives that encourage acceptance of diverse stakeholder groups. Storytelling — specifically the part of dialogue where stories are shared, heard, and re-crafted — is examined as a peacebuilding process that forges common ground, and ultimately co-creates new/emergent narratives of collaboration and reconstruction. As such, storytelling is considered an invitation for the restoration of dignity, something that is easily lost during conflict, and something that must be regained for resolution to take root.

Interfaith Dialogue

The United Nations General Assembly President recognized that, “promoting a true dialogue among civilizations and religions is perhaps the most important political instrument that we can use to reach out across borders and build bridges of peace and hope” (as quoted in Neufeldt, 2011, p. 344). With a mixture of support and suspicion, interfaith dialogue has gained currency as a viable strategy to address religious tensions, and as a means to rebuild communities that have become rifted along religious lines. In order to maximize the potential of interfaith dialogue, it is important to understand what is intended and entailed in an effective process.

Neufeldt (2011) offers three broad approaches to Interfaith Dialogue, each of which serves a distinct purpose and works toward a deliberate end, with unique contributions to “personal, relational, and structural change” (p. 344). She distinguishes between Theological, Political and Peacebuilding approaches, with particular attention to their varying theories of change. In brief, theological interfaith dialogue intends to build understanding and mutual respect between individual actors of different faiths, whereas political interfaith dialogue is designed to educate each other, and through that education, legitimize and/or de-legitimize political actors and actions. The peacebuilding approach to interfaith dialogue, in contrast, is focused on transforming attitudes and perception of one another in service to the fulfillment of common goals, joint actions, and conflict resolution.

Neufeldt (2011) recognizes that there is an absence of conclusive research on the influence and consequence of interfaith dialogue, and finds that this lack of depth in our understanding encourages unfounded judgments towards its religious actors, and can also minimize perceptions of overall success.

When interfaith dialogue fails, it reinforces arguments that religious-based actors have no bearing on peace processes and religion is more effective at mobilizing people for violence than for peace. When it succeeds, it is seen as a minor footnote to a major political peace process. (Neufeldt, 2011, p. 345)

The theory of change attributed to the peacebuilding method of interfaith dialogue, which is focused on the potential of transforming participants' perspectives of the "other," is reminiscent of intergroup contact theory, also known as the contact hypothesis, which stems from the discipline of psychology (Allport, 1962). The contact hypothesis has been widely regarded as "one of psychology's most effective strategies for improving intergroup relations" (Dovidio, Gaertner & Kawakami, 2003, p. 5). Contact theory suggests that intergroup prejudice can be reduced when different group members have the opportunity to interact with one other. In the absence of definitive findings about interfaith dialogue, the extensive study of contact theory provides a fair amount of both encouragement and caution.

Intergroup contact theory is predicated on the idea that our dislike of the other, or hatred of the enemy, is based on inaccurate attribution of their character. The chance to meet someone who identifies with the "other," or as an outgroup member, provides an opportunity to remedy or rectify those inaccuracies, and to find the humanity of that person/group despite their differences. While this makes great intuitive sense, deeper study has revealed that if the circumstances and support network shaping the contact are inadequate, the contact experience has the capacity to confirm a sense of dislike or hatred.

Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux (2005) analyzed the research on contact theory to ascertain what the optimal circumstances and contexts for contact are. They were looking for concrete examples of what can increase the likelihood of transformed attitudes and perceptions, and as a result, increase social harmony. The majority of research on contact theory has been conducted in the United States, and with the specific focus on racial integration and acceptance. This scenario is only one of many scenarios that might benefit from contact, and may not have the intentions of social harmony that are typical in transformative interfaith dialogue.

Like most social psychological work on prejudice...contact research has focused primarily on the problem of transforming White racism and, as a result, has often neglected the possibility that the lived experience of contact and desegregation may differ according to one's race group membership and historical location within a social system. (Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux, 2005, p. 708)

Using contact theory, which is understood through the lens of white prejudice, to understand other experiences of segregated or divided societies is problematic, although some of the learning from contact theory is helpful in orienting toward a constructive experience of

engagement. Through their research on the limitations of contact theory, Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux (2005) are able to pinpoint what is needed for contact to be constructive. Among many important directives, their list includes the need to meet with regularity and frequency, to maintain a balanced ratio of group members who have comparable status with one another, to offer a variety of social settings and situations, to monitor and manage any competition or destructive emotions between groups, and to emphasize the importance of the work participants are doing by engaging in contact.

These factors are easily applied to the peacebuilding process of interfaith dialogue, where there are similar standards of constructive contact, and pitfalls of destructive contact. Powers (2010) describes religious peacebuilding as including the beliefs, norms, and rituals that pertain to peacemaking, as well as a “range of actors, from religious institutions, faith-based voluntary organizations that are not formally part of a religious institution, and individuals and groups for whom religion is a significant motivation for their peacebuilding” (p. 361). Building on that understanding, Al Qurtuby (2013) describes interfaith dialogue as “a way of rebuilding social capital and restoring trust through dialogue, friendship networking, and community focus” (p. 350).

De-Radicalization

The study of radicalization and de-radicalization has been undertaken by multiple disciplines, which means a diverse range of tools have been used for analysis and an equally varied range of insights have been garnered. Despite these variations, and the resulting difficulty of synthesizing a coherent understanding, the primary focus of radicalization research over the past 15 years has been on terrorism, and specifically Islamic political violence. There has been little emphasis on other geographic and ideological areas, and even less consideration of the corresponding counterpoint of de-radicalization (Della Porta & LaFree, 2012). How the topic is defined, however, remains consistent.

Radicalization may be understood as a process leading towards the increased use of political violence, while deradicalization, by contrast, implies reduction in the use of political violence. Taken together, the study of radicalization and de-radicalization is central to answering the question of how political violence emerges, how it can be prevented, and how it can be contained. (p. 5)

Della Porta and LaFree (2012) recognize that de-radicalization, like radicalization, depends largely on the “legitimacy the audience may bestow on, or withhold from transforming radical groups” (p. 8). This acknowledgement places the de-radicalization process firmly in the hands of community, and affirms the vital role of dialogue and other citizen-based efforts in the peacebuilding process. If a community is committed to harmonious co-existence, despite their differences, efforts toward radicalization will be more easily recognized as divisive, and a natural movement toward de-radicalization can evolve. Because of the historic pluralism in Indonesia, and the tolerant version of Islam that the majority of Muslims practice within Indonesia, a hopeful scenario for de-radicalization exists.

Indonesian Example

Despite the fact that Indonesia has the largest Muslim population of any single country in the world, Indonesia has never had voter support to shift from a secular state to a religious one under Islamic law (Heiduk, 2012). Furthermore, while political scientists typically find a correlation between the regime type and Islamist political strategy, that relationship doesn't hold up in the Indonesian example. When the country embraced Democracy in 1998, it opened up new opportunities for all kinds of freedoms.

The Indonesian example is unique in many ways. First and foremost, the religious pluralism that is an intrinsic part of Indonesian identity validates the possibility of harmonized co-existence, even if it requires a reach into the past for solid footing, and a stretch into the future for a shared vision of moving forward. Much of the literature on interfaith dialogue in Indonesia focuses on exemplary efforts that have transpired in the Maluku of Eastern Indonesia, more commonly known as the Spice Islands, where since 1999 there have been several eruptions of religious-based violence and several remarkable community responses that work toward reconciliation.

The move toward interfaith dialogue in Maluku was described as “an attempt to raise awareness about the commonalities between the religions and to teach the positive values inherent in each faith that guarantee peaceful co-existence” (Brauchler, 2014, p. 164). There was work to be done to remedy the harm done by the religious narratives of violence that were commonly woven into sermons within Mosques and Churches during the times of active conflict (De Juan, Pierskalla, & Vüllers, 2015). In the aftermath of the conflict, it became clear that both groups, Christians and Muslims, lacked sufficient understanding about the other's religion, which impeded the development of mutual respect. A council was formed as a way to provide “a forum for religious leaders to meet and discuss pressing socio-economic and political issues and to respond to any arising communal tensions” (Brauchler, 2014, p. 164), and as a proactive way to build interfaith relationships and promote interfaith education.

There are two main organizations recognized for their work toward interfaith peace building in the Maluku example. *Tim 20 Wayame*, or The Peace Team of Wayame, was comprised of people from the Village of Wayame, near Ambon City, and was extremely successful in engaging interreligious peacemaking during the violence that transpired in both 1999 and 2004 (Al Qurtuby, 2013). Manaputty, one of the founders of *Tim 20 Wayame*, described his relationship building work as employing a strategy of weaving a mat. His faith in the power of relationship building proved to be an effective way of generating a wide and resilient “web of peacemakers” (Al Qurtuby, 2013, p. 358).

Provokator Perdamaian, or Peace Provocateurs, includes a coordinated group of Christians and Muslims representing a diverse range of ethnic, professional and socio-economic backgrounds. *Provokator Perdamaian* galvanized post conflict efforts toward reconciliation through “rebuilding social capital and restoring trust through dialogue, friendship networking, and community focus” (Al Qurtuby, 2013, p. 350). The peace agreements didn't stop the fighting, which is why a more intrinsic and grassroots change was pursued. The interfaith dialogue process was one, in particular, where all voices could be honored in the process of forging a common

ground, from which a new and coordinated narrative could be crafted about the past, and new possibilities of a harmonized future could be forged (Lowry & Littlejohn, 2006).

Storytelling as Peacebuilding

While storytelling is used to draw out a diversity of voices and perspectives on a given topic (Bell, 2010; Caromina & Luschen, 2014; Hooks, 1994; Kuyvenhoven, 2009; McEwan & Egan, 1995; Palmer, 1998; Solinger, Fox, & Irani, 2008), it is also used to find connections that underlie superficial diversities and to link “between past and future, between people and place, among people whose opinions diverge” (Cruikshank, 1998, p. 2). There are numerous ways to define storytelling, and many more treatises on how to operationalize it. Senehi (2009) offers a general definition of storytelling as “a universal way human beings deal with knowledge” (p. 203). She describes the process of telling and receiving stories as continually forming, reproducing, negotiating, resisting, and changing our view of the world (Senehi, 2009, p. 202). Similarly, Michel de Certeau (1984) portrays storytelling as authorizing, founding, and settling in place the way people experience and understand the world. These definitions indicate the important role stories play in shaping our understanding of the world, and contributing to our sense of what is possible within that world.

In *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age: Community, Hope, and Interpersonal Relationships*, Arnett and Arneson (1999) describe the goal of dialogue as providing a means to establish new relationships where a common story can be co-created by the whole community, which is of particular importance in communities that have been steeped in conflicting and competing narratives. Della Porta and LaFree (2012) acknowledge that trends of polarization and radicalization continue when violence-legitimizing narratives remain unchallenged. The storytelling that unfolds within the context of dialogue invites new *story making*, which has the potential to bridge the gap between groups and challenge the stories that underlie radicalized and polarized identities. The dialogue, in this case, serves as the vehicle for keeping transformative conversation in play. Based on their experience with interfaith dialogue in Indonesia, Lowry and Littlejohn (2006) reassure that, “as long as we keep dialogue active, we continue to learn, understand, and create a relationship of sustainable security” (p. 410).

Synthesis

The public health prevention model offers an effective tool to make sense of the relationship between interfaith dialogue, de-radicalization, and the objective of preventing violence. This model was created as a disease and injury prevention framework, but its epidemiological framework has been found to be extremely applicable to violence prevention (Centers for Disease Control, 1992). Within this system, *primary prevention* focuses on education for change, and aligns with the Peacebuilding Approach to Interfaith Dialogue (Neufeldt, 2011). Pressman (2009) has discovered concrete protective factors that assist the de-radicalization process at this stage. *Secondary prevention* is focused on decreasing risk, and relates to the Political Approach of Interfaith Dialogue (Neufeldt, 2011). Pressman (2009) lists proven dis-engagement factors that can support the reduction of risk for radicalization. *Tertiary prevention* includes attempts to fix what is broken, and aligns with the Theological Approach to Interfaith

Dialogue (Neufeldt, 2011). The following figure provides a prevention matrix that contextualizes how De-Radicalization and Interfaith Dialogue line up to meet common objectives.

Public Health Prevention	Objective	De-Radicalization, Disengagement and Protection Adapted from D. Elaine Pressman (2009)	Interfaith Dialogue
Primary Prevention	<i>Education for Change</i>	Protective Factors 3.1 Family/Girlfriend/Spouse influence to reject violence 3.2 Community/public opinion moves away from supporting violence 3.3 Change of vision of enemy and desired outcome 3.4 Reversal of social alienation 3.5 Non-violent views of significant others	Peacebuilding Approach <i>Cultural Change</i> Transform attitudes and perceptions of others in service to common goals, joint actions, and conflict resolution.
Secondary Prevention	<i>Decreasing Risk</i>	Disengagement Factors 2.1 Belief that violence is a failing strategy 2.2 Disillusionment with spiritual leadership 2.3 Shift in ideology 2.4 Disillusionment with organizational experiences 2.5 Growth away from movement	Political Approach <i>Structural Change</i> Educate one another, and through education, legitimize/de-legitimize political actors and actions
Tertiary Prevention	<i>Fixing What is Broken</i>	De-Radicalization Factors 1.1 Rejection of rigid ideology 1.2 Rejection of violence 1.3 Evidence of non-violent goals 1.4 Motivation to de-radicalize present	Theological Approach <i>Individual Change</i> Build relationships of understanding and respect between actors of different faiths

Figure 1.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this exploration situates interfaith dialogue as both a transformative tool in the aftermath of ethno-religious conflict, and through the de-radicalization that occurs in dialogue’s deepened humanization of the “other,” dialogue can be an effective means to prevent

future atrocities. The success of interfaith dialogue in Indonesia has spurred an international conversation about the promise this remedy offers as a peacemaking tool, as a means to exercise the constructive potential of contact theory, and as an active and humanitarian strategy to counter trends in radicalization.

Buber (1958) shared a vision of learning to be with one another with empathy and compassion, despite whatever struggle we may be facing. This was exemplified in his distinction between an I-It model of engagement, compared with an I-Thou relationship, which serve as excellent predictors of success of interfaith dialogue. The I-It relationship describes what happens when we fail to acknowledge the complexity of others, when we treat others as objects of our discontent rather than the subjects of their own rich lives and experiences. Dialogue invites participants into the I-Thou relationship, where the other becomes a valued human, worthy of our curiosity about why they are who they are, and what beliefs and attitudes have shaped their experiences in our shared world (Lowry & Littlejohn, 2006).

The research that has been done on radicalization and de-radicalization draws heavily from the literature of social movements (Della Porta & LaFree, 2012). Perhaps more deliberate attention to the social movement of peacebuilding can provide us with new focus on interfaith dialogue, and the opportunity it presents for revised hindsight, enlivened insight, and accurate foresight in re-crafting the narratives of past, present and future.

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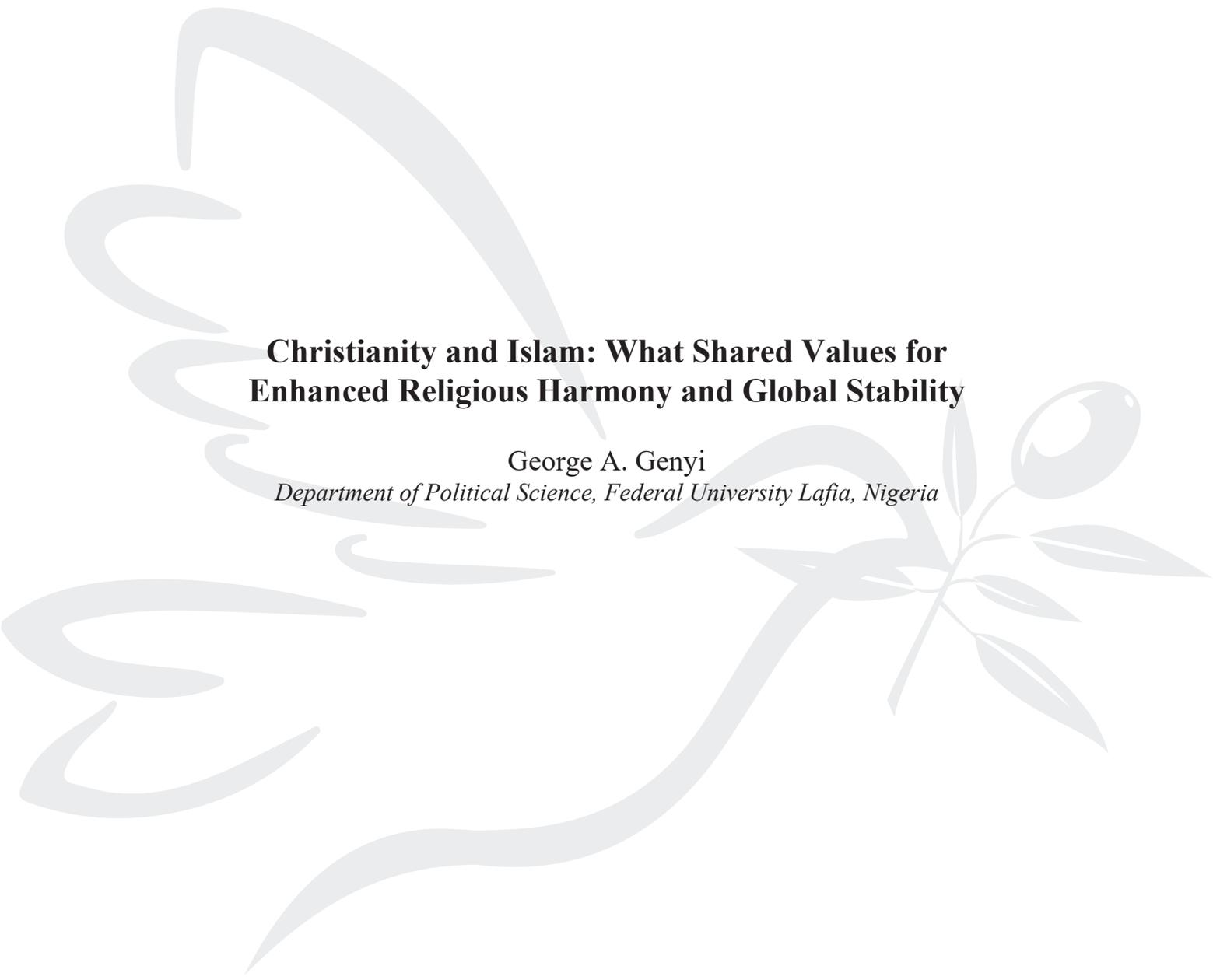
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**Christianity and Islam: What Shared Values for
Enhanced Religious Harmony and Global Stability**

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Abstract

Violent activities of extremist groups like ISIS, Al Shabab and Boko Haram are at the center of contemporary threat to global peace and religious harmony. They put Christian populations under tension. These activities help to sustain the impression that Islam is a violent religion especially against Christianity. Erroneous as this image is, it is difficult to erase it from the minds of many Christians and even moderate Muslims especially those that have been victims of religiously instigated violence. This paper seeks to identify enduring and shared values of both religions such as charity and love of neighbor at the heart of a shared humanity accepted and propagated by both religions. It is argued therefore that projected as core values of both religions, inter-religious dialogue and harmony are achievable in the interest of global peace and stability.

Keywords: *Christianity, Islam, religious harmony, shared values*

Introduction

At the heart of Islam and Christianity is the reality of one *Great God*, all powerful ‘father’, Omniscience, Omnipresent; one God that is absolute, infinite and merciful; greater than all mankind can imagine. To acknowledge and give credence to this greatness is expected of God's creation of which humankind is the highest expression of that creativity involving God himself as proclaimed by the Holy Bible: ‘man is made in the image and likeness of the creator’ (Genesis 1:14). This is the source of human divinity with all the powers, knowledge and wisdom above other creatures to be used to oversee the rest of creation.

This shared unity in the acknowledgement of the One True God permeates all religions, the plurality of which does not diminish the supremacy of God the ‘Father’. In this lies the essence of religion as a transcendent relationship between man and God; the unseen power with control over man's destiny deserving obedience, reverence and worship (Ikenga-Metuh, 1992). Man, thus owes total submission and absolute obedience to God. In an attempt to observe these elements of responsibility to God, man had inadvertently often reached beyond limit to again erroneously assume control of others by deciding on the basis of ‘monopoly of truth’ in relation to any issue. It is here that religious bigotry and spiritual arrogance erupt and find expression as key causes of conflicts and disharmony (Ikenga - Metuh, 1992). The grand illusion is that some religionists claim to have the prerogative to uphold the divine truth while others have limited knowledge of God's revelation. Put differently, enforcement of the supreme will of God is their responsibility even when they have scant understanding of that will.

The pernicious presumption of knowing the position of the One God on all issues by extremists is at the root of inter-faith disruptions and the concomitant upheavals being witnessed around the world. The central premise of Islam and Christianity is embedded in the Golden Rule. It is privileged as a salient religious value from which all other morally sound values that uphold the divinity of mankind derives. While it is accepted universally that religious values are relative and never absolute, the end of those values are absolute; the preservation and protection of the human divinity. Islam and Christianity teach appreciation of values in a progressive manner and are seen as basic principles of daily existence and are in complete harmony. This harmonious unity is derived from the Golden Rule that radiates values of justice, mercy, compassion, love, and includes virtues of beneficence, charity, truthfulness, trustworthiness, courtesy, self- sacrifice, the defense of others and piety (Effendi, 1980).

Overlooking these shared values or an extreme interpretation of these has led to extremism or fanaticism creating inter- and intra- religious upheavals seen around the world. The Middle East demonstrates an exemplar of this extremism with several intolerant or very hostile groups even within Islam. Other parts of the world have witnessed similar violent uprisings such as the case of Boko Haram in Nigeria that evolved from the Maitatsine riots of the 1980s to the Kafanchan religious violence in Kaduna in 1987 (Bako, 1992; Genyi, 2016). Again, in the 2000s had arisen series of clashes between adherents of the two religions on the implementation of Sharia law in northern states in Nigeria. The Arab World has and remains the hot bed of religious extremism that seems to endanger other religions in Syria, Iraq and Iran. The presence of Al Qaeda, ISIL in Afghanistan and Syria, and Al Qaeda in Yemen tell the extremist story more loudly. Somalia and

Kenya have had a fair share of this extremism through the activities of Al Shabab (Genyi, 2016). September 11, 2001 appears to have heralded their reach of religious hatred to all parts of the world when the USA played host to Al Qaeda led attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center.

These exemplars of religious intolerance have overshadowed the possibility of religious harmony in an overarching religiously plural world. The extent of this global religious diversity suggests that it cannot be eliminated. What is reasonable is to live with it in the best possible way. One way to do so is to identify shared values that have endured centuries of religious practices by Islam and Christianity, two of the world's dominant religions. It is argued here that the shared values of charity and love, the cornerstone of the Golden Rule offers the pragmatic platform for interfaith dialogue for religious harmony for enhanced peace and stability on a global scale.

Value as a Concept in Religion

It is pertinent to explore the meaning of value in order to come to a clear perspective on the relevance and impact of the concept in a religious context. Value is indisputably a complex concept in terms of its relativity and a shy away from absoluteness (Mazrui, 2005). Values are simply rules by which we make decisions about right or wrong, should and shouldn't, good or bad. These decisions on the basis of values inform us about which is "more or less important, which is useful, when we have to" (Mazrui, 2005) trade off meeting one value over another. Put broadly, values can be taken as beliefs of a person or social group in which they have an emotional investment in favor of or against something. To the extent of perceiving values as the basis of decisions and belief, Inlow (1956) conceives values as 'the determiners in man that influence his choices in life and that thus decide his behavior'. Human behavior is therefore entirely shaped by a value system well often informed by life experiences, which in turn constitutes general guides to behavior (Raths, Harmin and Simon (1966). Informed human experiences therefore influence preferences in life which suggest that value in itself is a tendency to prefer (Rogers, 1969). These conceptions are utilitarian in nature (Manus, 1992). In making choices, human beings tend to be rational in considering the utility of a given activity or thing. In a functional sense, Kluckhohn (1961) has noted that "a value is a selective orientation toward experience, implying deep commitment or repudiation, which influence the ordering of choices between possible alternatives in action." From a religious perspective, values are hierarchically stratified and dichotomized between material and spiritual existence. The latter is considered superior and the former to be absolutely subordinated to the latter at all given times. Spiritual values are designed to assist human beings in attaining the ultimate aim in creation. Religious authorities therefore believe that given the primacy of this ultimate goal of unity with the spiritual order of reality, religious values must be considered superior to natural values (Manus, 1992, p.41).

Values are central in religion and constitute the cornerstone of any. They shape and guide behavior of adherents. They constitute things that are considered important and order preferences shared among members of a given social group at any given time or the other in favor of other things. In all religions, values deal with what is good and bad, normal and abnormal or appropriate and unacceptable. Muslims and Christians hold tenaciously to values considered absolute and superior and hence must be adhered to and protected at all times in all circumstances. Their

observance reflects the true attitude of a believer in any of the faith. The absoluteness of these values constitutes inviolable beliefs in both religions. Justice, love and the divinity of humanity are some of these absolute values. These values are viewed as the means for the attainment of higher goals such as eternal bliss (Riukas, n.d). Strict observance of religious values is a necessary condition for the realization of eternal happiness promised by Christianity and Islam.

Shared Values in Islam and Christianity

A shared value is a notion that attempts to establish commonality of beliefs and preferences among the adherents of the world's most dominant religions. The idea of a commonality in values goes to the logical connectivity in the power of similarities which support likely behavior. This may be contagious and tend to reduce tension and anxiety that would likely result in adverse and harmful conduct against members of another group.

The belief in one supreme God the 'Father' creates a source of flow of shared values. For Christians, the Decalogue (ten commandments) points to two forms of behavior primed to appeal to God through love of Him and love of one another; all made in his image and likeness. The first three commandments of God address the servant - God relationship that upholds the supremacy of God the 'Father'. This supremacy detests any form of behavior or activity that undermines God in any way possible. Christians are told in no ambiguous terms about the place of God in their entire life. Exodus 20:1-6 states that "I am the Lord your God ... you shall have no other gods before me.... You shall not bow down to them nor serve them... you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." These commandments have established the supremacy of God and will not accept attempts to have rivals likely; even inappropriate use of His name is strongly forbidden. To worship him alone is the only prescribed activity to the extent of setting aside a full day for that purpose in honor of Him.

Similarly, Islam upholds Allah in Surah: 1a, as "Beneficent", "Merciful", "Lord of the Worlds", "Owner of the Day of Judgment" and one who points to "the straight path", and shows favor or anger. To further demonstrates the supremacy of Allah, Surah 5:18 states that "Allah is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them." Saleeb and Geslen (2011) have recollected the supremacy of Allah as an absolute, independent, unique and sovereign, and hold that:

He is the first and the last. He is unique, and nothing resembles Him in any respect. He is One and the One. He *is* self-sustained *and* does not need anything, but everything needs Him... He is the Willer of existing things and the things that will exist, and nothing happens apart from his will. He is the knower of all that can be known. His knowledge encompasses the whole universe that he has created, and he alone sustains. God is completely sovereign over all creation. (p. 41)

This powerful, all-encompassing picture of Allah without any equivocation depicts humans as finite inconsequential beings totally incapable of doing anything worthy for God especially to the extent of adding anything for or seeking to protect God's interest in any form. This means that the use of violence by extremists to protect Allah's name or so-called interest is unnecessary. If the entire humanity depends on God for survival, then it is rather absurd that a helpless humanity would turn against itself in defense of God! For both Christians and Muslims,

the supremacy of God's belief as a value should humble adherents of the two religions to learn to be submissive to the will of the creator and appreciate their common divinity in a harmonious and peaceful co-existence.

Another basis of an interfaith accord between Muslims and Christians is the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule is sharply at point as a shared value. It further radiates other values as justice, mercy, compassion and love (Buck, 2013). By upholding virtues such as truthfulness or, trustworthiness as elements of integrity, it underscores the essential quality of interpersonal relations in a mutually reinforcing manner. The Golden Rule is ultimately taken as a fundamental shared value. In Christendom, the Golden Rule is a summation of the latter six pieces of the Decalogue. "You shall not murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness against your neighbor, covet your neighbor's house, wife, male servant, female servant, ox, donkey... anything that is your neighbor (Exodus 20:13-17) invoke the feeling of doing unto others what you would love them to do unto you. This is the Golden Rule widely accepted and preached to all adherents as the basis of the entire summation of one's religious life. This underscores the peaceful, cordial and harmless relations with one another in deference to God. The common tenet in faith traditions, least Islam and Christianity, is that "we should treat others as we would have them treat us" (Buck, 2013, p.3). As a shared value, religious adherents would take from it a capacity of service for the common good. Religious leaders would therefore find in its invocation fulfilling a standard of mutual and reciprocal care. The Rule is neutral without distinction among humanity. The reciprocal care is devoid of relativity of faith. Muslims would not fail to treat Christians with respect and love because they are not Muslims and vice versa. The common denominator in the Golden Rule philosophy is humanity accepted by both religions as divine.

The holy books of the Bible and Quran are abounding with exhortations in respect of the Golden Rule. For instance, in Matthew 7:12, Jesus Christ affirms: "therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the prophets." Also, Matthew 22:39 clearly underscores the importance of love: "thou shall love your neighbor as yourself; on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

In a similar way, renowned Islamic leaders have invoked this rule copiously. Sahih Muslim Mohammad states that "whoever wishes to be delivered from the fire and enter the garden should die with faith in Allah... and should treat the people as he wishes to be treated by them." Also, An-Nawawi states that "None of you (truly) believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself." The law of reciprocity is the bedrock of interpersonal relation lubricated by faith through respect for God. It is in humans that we find opportunities for attesting to our belief in God through acts of love for one another.

Discussions about shared values point to the ultimate goal of achieving harmony between the Christian and Muslim communities around the world. Put differently, the absence of peace between adherents of these faiths hurts the world as it affects every progress towards a prosperous society. But peace is founded instrumentally on love and justice; surprisingly both Islam and Christianity invoke peace as an essential ingredient in their dogma (Manus, 1992).

The epitomic place of love in Christianity reveals the contradiction among early Christians between authentic worship of God and mistreatment of others. In this practice was a violation of the principle of justice and fairness. Justice is seen as "a moral virtue that consists in the constant

and firm will to give one's due to God and neighbor" (Catechism of the Catholic Church). To God, the Catechism of the Catholic Church calls justice "virtue of Religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the right of everyone and "to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regards to persons and to the common good." To be just means one has to be habitually right in thinking and acts that are upright towards one's neighbor. Love and justice thus flow together and especially acts that clearly favor others in an impartial manner seal the synergy. Christian love is true reflection of sacrifice of oneself in love of God for humanity that Jesus exemplified. Adherents of Christianity are enjoined to express their faith in volitional, respectful and unconditional love for God with one another as Paul records in 1Corinthians 10:24 (Kunkle, n.d). Paul notes: "Be imitators of God as beloved children and live in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us." In practicalizing this, it is expected to permeate all social platforms of interaction including friendship, marriage and family. Love of God is expressed in human response to God's love through the love of neighbor.

Christian teaching portrays love of neighbor irrespective of religion or tribe or race or any other form of identity. Indeed, one is taught to care for one's enemies through charitable acts of prayer and to refrain from revenge. This principle is elaborated thus:

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners', expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful and just as your father is merciful. (Luke 6: 32 – 36)

These tendencies are to enhance peace and had been clearly reinforced by the strong admonition to refrain from revenge. Christ condemned the principle of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Matthew 5:38-41). Paul exhorts the Romans to bless those who persecute them and never pay evil for evil. To live peaceably he advises:

Beloved, never revenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. No, If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:18-21)

These teachings sought to eliminate violence as an alternative form of behavior in the interest of peace through love and justice. To furnish the acts of love, charity, through generous sharing with the needy, is taught by Christianity as a very high virtue. Christians are enjoined to share their wealth with the poor to check the vices of greed, covetousness, pride and gluttony. Luke 6:38 urges Christians: "give and it will be given to you." Rich people like Zachaeus heeded the teaching on wealth sharing and redistributed his riches with the poor (Luke 19:8-10). Jesus urged the Christian community to be generous and charitable with their resources, time, talent and treasure to the benefit of the poor, sick, prisoners and indeed the needy (Matthew 25:7). Christ

invited the generous and charitable and said unto them:

Come, you that are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you... I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked, and you gave me clothing, I was sick, and you took care of me.... (Matthew 25:34)

These acts of generosity and charity are at the very heart of Christianity and by extension Islamic practice. These acts demonstrate in no uncertain terms worship and love of God expressed through love of the needy and poor fellow human beings. In these acts, love and justice are activated for the sake of peace. These acts know no religion or tribe or race.

In Islam, a true Muslim is required to believe in the one God, Angels, the Prophets, the Scripture and the Day of Judgment (Nazeer, 2000). These beliefs have to be translated into actions of faith, indicative of religious practice. The most important Islamic social values are articulated in the Quran and reinforced by the life-style of the Prophet. In Medina where the first Muslim community was founded, it was characterized by an affirmation of human dignity and social justice (Kunkle, n.d). All Islamic values have therefore been derived from the Quran, the personal examples of the Prophet and the writings that followed his teaching. The *Hadiths* are a compendium of the Prophets personal examples and the *Sunnah*, the Muslim way of life. In these documents including the Quran are found fundamental issues of social justice. The whole essence is to bring the individual closer to God by creating a just society.

Justice is the cornerstone of Islamic faith. It informs Islamic theology and social values. The Quran affirms that justice is a command from God (16:90, 5:8). It enjoins believers to adhere to what is just and kind and forbidding that which is unjust (72:15, 60:8). Justice is expected to permeate all actions, speech and thoughts of Muslims. For example, "when you speak, speak with justice, even if it is against someone close, to you... (6:152). The practice of justice is not restricted to familiar persons and must be extended to strangers as well. This form of justice is laced with the principle of equality as a basis for peace. The Quran asserts that the only basis for differentiation is piety (*Taqwa*) or righteousness (*Birr*). It states:

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honored in the sight of Allah is (who is) the most righteous of you... (49:13)

Verses like these from the Holy Quran demonstrate shared historical similarities between Christianity and Islam with a common root in the faith of Abraham and Isaac. In this sense both religions "tend to be universalistic in their outlook" (Blankenhorn, 2009, p.1).

This universalism takes bearing from the five pillars of Islam: The Creed (*Shahada*); Prayer (*Salat*), Almsgiving (*Zakat*), Ramadan: Fast (*Sawm*) and Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) (Ritcher, 2001). At the apex of these pillars is God while the individual is at the base linked inextricably through these pillars that are manifested in the activities of the individual within the social setting of the community. Without activating these pillars in concrete actions to be felt by the community, the individual would have no vital link with God. Hence of the five pillars only the *Shahada* can be

accomplished alone, the profession of faith (Kunkle, n.d). The other pillars are accomplished only by the participation in community life. The community is instituted by God to serve as a true example of fraternity and social justice (2:143). This does not confer superiority but rather a commonality of shared humanity. All believers are "brothers in religion and must not oppress one another, nor abandon assisting each other, nor hold one another in contempt." This *Hadith* teaching intones that the seat of righteousness is the heart which the righteous does not discriminate nor demean a fellow Muslim.

The Golden Rule is found elaborately expressed in Islam underscoring fraternity and care for one another. The Prophet had said "No man is a believer until he wishes for his brother that which he wishes for himself" (*Hadith* No. 12). The Prophet affirmed this by asserting that the most important aspect of faith (Imam) in addition to worshipping God is "To do unto all men as you would wish to have done unto you, and to reject for others what you would reject for yourself" (*Hadith* No. 12).

The Prophet's teaching reflected great compassion as an ideal way of pursuing social justice. The needs of the weak and the poor were to be taken care of. The Prophet taught that "He who helps his fellow creature in the hour of need, and he who helps the oppressed, him will God help in the Day of Travail." The Prophet identified compassionate acts as the most excellent form of behavior before the creator. He stated that:

To gladden the heart of a human being; to feed the hungry, to help the afflicted, to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful, and to remove the wrongs of the injured. Feed the hungry and visit the sick, and free the captive if he is unjustly confined, assist any person oppressed ... whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

These compassionate acts are further simplified in the third pillar of Islam - compulsory charity - almsgiving (*Zakat*). It is not just recommended, it is required of every financially stable Muslim. *Zakat* is viewed as "compulsory charity." It is an obligation for those who have received their wealth from God to respond to those members of the community in need (Mufti, 2006, p.1). *Zakat* is designed to meet the needs of the poor and is also a means to cleanse the Muslim of greed and selfishness while exacting the equitable distribution of goods to the entire community. It is intended to bring unity and betterment to the society as a whole (Caner & Caner, 2001, p.123-124).

Shared community life is the hallmark of both Christianity and Islam. The value is gainfully and widely disaggregated into socially justified acts of love that emphasize compassion for the less privileged. Both the Quran and the Bible have ample theological and scriptural recommendations amplified by the personal examples of the Prophet and Christ.

Tolerance: Means for Interreligious Dialogue, Harmony and Peace

Sufficient evidence has been established so far about the shared values of Islam and Christianity. Muslims and Christians exhorted by Holy Scripture are obliged to activate religious faith through community engagement in demonstrating worship and love for God through acts of human kindness. On charity, fraternity, social justice and love of neighbor, Christians and Muslims all agree. In broader terms, the two religions are in agreement on the oneness of God, Prophecy, Sacred Scripture and much of sacred history. On ethical norms too are shared agreement

on the sanctity of life, humane treatment of others, honesty in all human dealings, kindness towards a neighbor and application of justice (Pell, 2006; Nasr, 2004,).

Despite the permeation of these common values, adherents of the two religions have had cause to rise against each other. In the cause of history, violent outburst has characterized Muslim-Christian relationship. With higher and widespread level of education, easy access to information, courtesy of technology, rather than enhance inter-religious harmony, the 21st Century has witnessed more intra- and inter- religious schisms resulting in open expression of violence. From Iraq to Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan, intra-religious schisms have dominated world headlines. ISIL and Al Qaeda in the Middle East, Al Shabaab in the horn of Africa and Boko Haram in Nigeria have taken to violence to establish or enforce their own presumed version of Islamic values considered 'pure'. In Nigeria since 2001, when Sharia law was introduced in selected states in the North, both Muslims and Christians have violently clashed on different occasions. The cities of Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi and Jos have played host to several occasions of carnage. The lynching of Christians for blasphemy occurred in Kano, Gusau and Abuja in 2016. These and many more instances are sufficient evidence of inter-religious disharmony being experienced in other parts of the world.

The failure of the impact of shared values on adherents of both religions, particularly, the failure to work together through dialogue for harmony and peace is partly due to how often believers of the faiths are blind, arrogant and narrow in their thinking and worldview (Blankenhorn, n.d). Practitioners of these religions have often demonstrated ignorance of the very tenets of their faith. This has the tendency to lead to contemporary extremism or fanaticism of the kind being witnessed around the world. This may seem that we may be notoriously religious but less pious. For instance, Nigerians have been ranked as highly religious, but inter-religious fracas have continued to occur in the country.

Closely related to lack of understanding is the effect of misinterpretation of Holy Scripture. Kenny (1992) notes that there is a significant number of passages in Holy Scriptures that are both hostile and unfriendly to other religions. The misinterpretation of these by teachers and adherents creates tension and may result in violence hurting any form of harmony between Christianity and Islam. Dialogue is at issue here when creating a consensus on grey areas in both religions. But dialogue is not possible without religious liberty to stimulate engagement. It is only in an atmosphere of freedom that meaningful discussions can flow towards a desirable consensus. This further requires utmost caution in proselytizing and the need to emphasize more on the areas of similarities between the two religions. Far more important is for religious leaders to demonstrate vigilance in identifying excesses and refrain from abuse of religious power and its misuse.

Accomplishment of these tasks depends on the level of tolerance to be exercised or observed by adherents of both religions. Islam for instance evokes its teaching as part of a peace package. Quran 2:30 requires that man should maintain peace with Allah, his creator and sustainer, fellow men as well as other creatures he comes in contact with. This is presented as the core responsibility of man. This duty is essential within the context of religious pluralism that must be embraced within the belief in the fundamentality of humanity. Differentiation in humanity and religion is God's creation and was designed to promote the virtue of tolerance. The Quran (2:213) draws out this pluralism when it states that God sent off different Prophets to different people at

different times to teach the same truth of the Oneness of God. Diversity must be tolerated because it is at the heart of achieving harmonious community life. The Quran states:

Had God willed, He would have made you into one community; but (it was His will) to test you in what He gave you. So, compete with each other in doing good works. To God you are all returning, and He will inform you about how you differed. (5:48)

As noted succinctly by Sachedina (2001), religious pluralism is a prerequisite for a peaceful accommodation of differences in the individual and the communal sense of the highest good. Rejection of pluralism is challenging the wisdom of the Almighty God in promoting tolerance. The notion of tolerance is therefore ineluctable in managing diversity and promoting and preserving pluralism. Muslims are encouraged to interact respectfully and gently with non-Muslims through dialogue on religion. This is possible only in the activation of tolerance.

Conclusion

Islam and Christianity, two of the world's dominant religions have enduring and shared values rooted in their fundamental dogmatics and principles. These values are relative and progressive in nature. They are divine in origin and are in complete harmony. Christianity and Islam subscribe to a one God, Prophecy, sacred history and basic ethical standards of sanctity of life, compassionate treatment of others and the application of justice for the sake of love of God.

These teachings are summed up in the Golden Rule as the basis for sharing the same values. The Golden Rule acknowledges our human divinity and diversity which is impossible to eliminate. To live with it and achieve peace and harmony, religious leaders must develop concerted efforts to reorient adherents on the essence of tolerance to achieve religious liberty that would enhance meaningful dialogue. Both adherents need to increase the tempo and avenues of interaction to promote understanding and check misinterpretation of religious passages.

It is this abuse of interpretation and wrongful exercise of religious power that is expanding the arena for fanaticism and bigotry. Growing economic inequality is raising a pool of religious entrepreneurs hence the commercialization of religious movements is fanning schism and intolerance globally.

Political and religious leaders must step back and reflect creatively on our common humanity in the midst of its pluralism and divinity in relation to the universality of the Golden Rule as a fundamental shared value for the realization of religious harmony through dialogue. Human understanding of the truth may never be perfect and disagreement on values should be treated with restraint by being open to other views.

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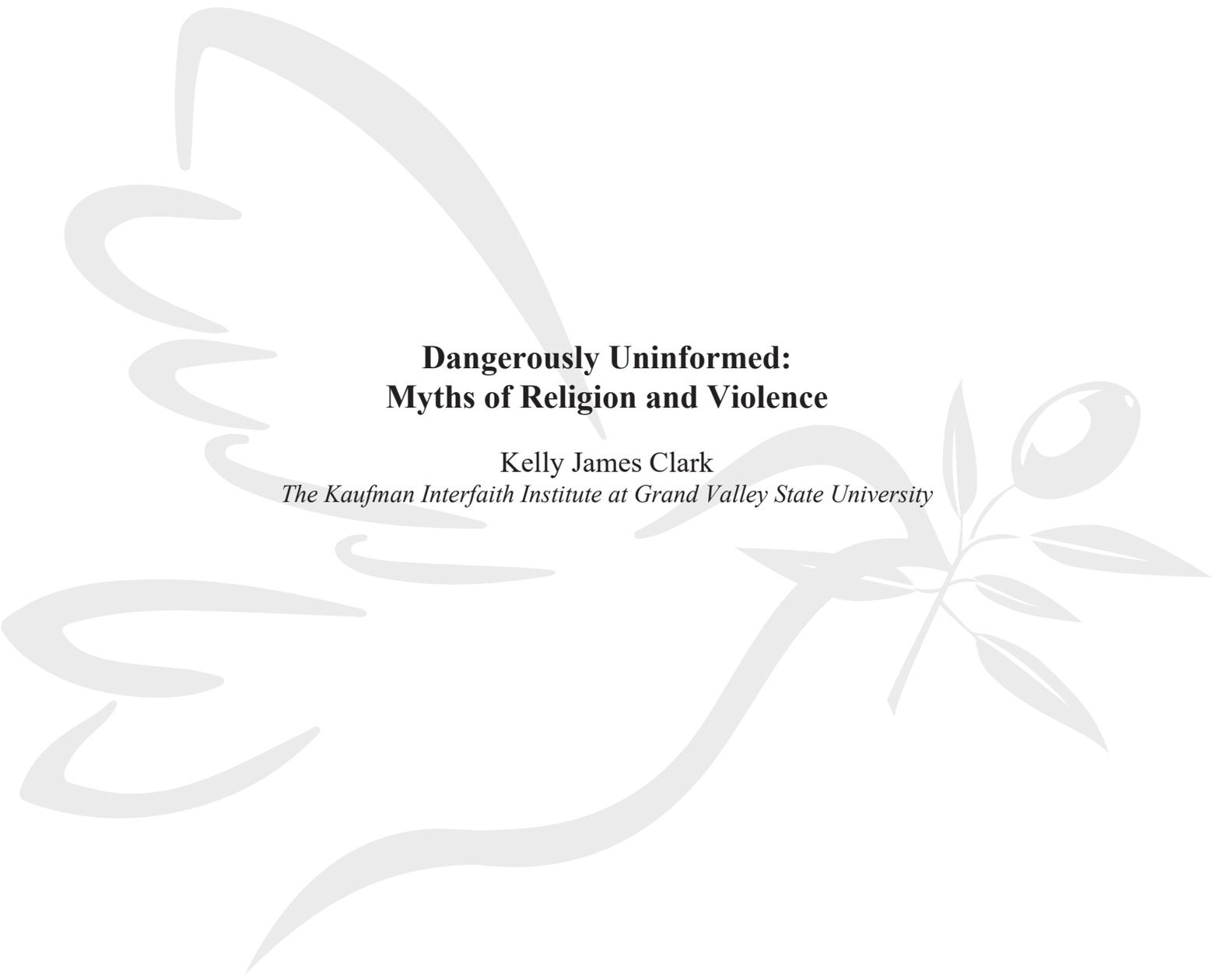
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**Dangerously Uninformed:
Myths of Religion and Violence**

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Abstract

The claim that religion and religion alone motivates extremists to violence is dangerously misinformed. In this paper I will argue that such claims are psychologically suspect and empirically unsupported. Most grievously, attributing extremist violence to religious belief commits the fundamental attribution error. But this is no simple, harmless error. Proponents of this error, especially if they are in positions of power, are likely to *increase* violence. As understanding decreases, violence increases. They are not innocently wrong, they are dangerously uninformed.

Keywords: *religion, violence, terrorism, ISIS, extremism, radicalism, religion and violence*

Introduction

Boudry (2016) claims that religion and religion alone motivates ISIS and ISIS-like extremists to violence. He claims (without citation) that other factors, “socio-economic disenfranchisement, unemployment, troubled family backgrounds, discrimination and racism,” have been “repeatedly refuted.” Thinking that religion plays any lesser motivational role is, he claims, “a dramatic failure of imagination.” Since the claim that religion plays a lesser motivational role in extremist violence is, contra Boudry, empirically well-supported, Boudry’s claim itself is “a dramatic failure of imagination.” Moreover, it is dangerously uninformed.

In this paper I will argue that claims like Boudry’s are psychologically suspect and empirically unsupported. Most grievously, attributing extremist violence to religious belief commits the fundamental attribution error. But this is no simple, harmless error. Proponents of this error, especially if they are in positions of power, are likely to *increase* violence. As understanding decreases, violence increases. They are not innocently wrong, they are dangerously uninformed.

Dangerously Uninformed

It is easy to think that the troubles in Ireland were religious because they were widely reported as Protestant vs. Catholic. But giving each side a religious name obscures the real sources of conflict--discrimination, poverty, imperialism, autonomy, nationalism and shame; no one in Ireland was fighting over theological doctrines such as transubstantiation or justification (they probably couldn't explain their theological differences). It is easy to think that the Bosnian genocide of 40,000 Muslims was motivated by Christian commitment (the Muslim victims were killed by Christian Serbs). But these convenient monikers ignore (a) how shallow post-Communist religious belief was and, more importantly, (b) such complex causes as class, land, ethnic identity, economic disenfranchisement, and nationalism.

It is also easy to think that members of ISIS and al-Qaeda are motivated by religious belief. But blaming such behaviors on religion commits the fundamental attribution error: attributing the cause of behavior to internal factors such as personality characteristics or dispositions, while minimizing or ignoring external, situational factors. As an example: if I'm late, I attribute my tardiness to an important phone call or heavy traffic, but if you're late I attribute it to a (single) character flaw (you are irresponsible) and ignore possible external contributing causes. So, when Arabs or Muslims commit an act of violence we instantly believe that it's due to their radical faith, all the while ignoring possible and even likely contributing causes.

Let's look at some examples. Within minutes of Omar Mateen's 2016 massacre of gays in Orlando, even before learning that he had pledged allegiance to ISIS during the attack, he was labeled a terrorist. Pledging fealty to ISIS sealed the deal for most people – he was a terrorist, motivated by radical Islam. If a white (Christian) man kills 10 people, he's crazy. If a Muslim kills, he's a terrorist, motivated by exactly one thing – his extremist faith.

Yet, Mateen was, by all counts, a violent, angry, abusive, disruptive, alienated, racist, American, male, homophobe. He was likely bi-polar. With easy access to guns. According to his wife and father, he wasn't very religious. His multiple pledges of allegiance to warring factions

such as ISIS, Al Qaeda and Hezbollah suggest that he knew little of any ideology or theology. The CIA and FBI have found no connection with ISIS. Mateen was a hateful, violent, (mostly) irreligious, homophobic racist who killed 50 people on “Latin Night” at the club (Troubled. Quiet. Macho, 2016).

While the structure of motivation for Mateen is murky, it would be bizarre to elevate his religious beliefs (such as they were) to some special motivational status.

Mohammad Atta, leader of the 9-11 attacks, left a suicide note indicating his fealty to Allah:

So remember God, as He said in His book: 'Oh Lord, pour your patience upon us and make our feet steadfast and give us victory over the infidels.' And His words: 'And the only thing they said Lord, forgive our sins and excesses and make our feet steadfast and give us victory over the infidels.' And His prophet said: 'Oh Lord, You have revealed the book, You move the clouds, You gave us victory over the enemy, conquer them and give us victory over them.' Give us victory and make the ground shake under their feet. Pray for yourself and all your brothers that they may be victorious and hit their targets and ask God to grant you martyrdom facing the enemy, not running away from it, and for Him to grant you patience and the feeling that anything that happens to you is for Him. (“Last Words,” 2001)

Surely, though Boudry (2016) would argue otherwise, we should not take Atta at his word. Atta (along with his fellow terrorists) seldom attended mosque, partied almost nightly, was a heavy drinker, snorted cocaine, and ate pork chops. Hardly the stuff of Muslim submission. When his stripper girlfriend ended their relationship, he broke into her apartment and killed her cat and kittens, disemboweling and dismembering them and then distributing their body parts throughout the apartment for her to find later. Makes Atta's suicide note seems more like reputation management than pious confession. Or maybe it was a desperate hope that his actions would attain some sort of cosmic significance that his otherwise insignificant life lacked.

When Wilson (2015), a research fellow at the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict at Oxford University, recently conducted field research with ISIS prisoners, she found them "woefully ignorant of Islam" and unable to answer questions about "Sharia law, militant jihad, and the caliphate." Not surprising then that when wannabe jihadists Yusuf Sarwar and Mohammed Ahmed were caught boarding a plane in England authorities discovered in their luggage *Islam for Dummies* and *The Koran for Dummies*. In the same article, Saltman, senior counter-extremism researcher at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, says that "Recruitment [of ISIS] plays upon desires of adventure, activism, romance, power, belonging, along with spiritual fulfillment."

England's MI5's behavioral science unit, in a report leaked to the Guardian, revealed that, "far from being religious zealots, a large number of those involved in terrorism do not practice their faith regularly. Many lack religious literacy and could . . . be regarded as religious novices" (“MI5 report,” 2008). Indeed, the report argued, "a well-established religious identity actually protects against violent radicalization."

Why would England's MI5 think that religion plays virtually no role in extremism? Boudry is half-right about those "other factors." There is no single, well-established profile of terrorists.

Some are poor, some are not. Some are unemployed, some are not. Some are poorly educated, some are not. Some are culturally isolated, some are not. Nonetheless, these sorts of external factors, while neither necessary nor jointly sufficient, do contribute to radicalization in some people under certain circumstances. Each extremist has his or her own unique socio-psychological profile (which makes their identification nearly impossible).

In parts of Africa, with sky-high unemployment rates for 18 to 34-year-olds, ISIS targets the unemployed and impoverished; ISIS offers a steady paycheck, meaningful employment, food for their families, and an opportunity to strike back at those viewed as economic oppressors. In Syria many recruits join ISIS solely to topple the vicious Assad regime; liberated criminals find ISIS a convenient place to hide from their past. Palestinians are motivated by the dehumanization of living as disempowered second-class citizens in an apartheid state.

In Europe and America, where most of the recruits are young men who are educated and middle class, cultural isolation is factor number one in driving Muslims to extremism (Efraim and Klor, 2017). Young, alienated Muslims are attracted by slick media that offer adventure and glory to their tedious and marginalized lives. German Muslims are motivated by adventure and alienation (Hellmuth, 2016).

Long gone are the days of listening to boring and monotonous Osama bin Laden sermons. ISIS's highly skilled recruiters use social media and personal contact (through the internet) to create personal and communal bonds of otherwise disaffected Muslims who are then enticed to leave their mundane and meaningless lives and fight together for a noble cause. That is, they are motivated by a sense of belonging and a quest for human significance.

One might think that dreams of afterlife virgins are especially conducive to violence. But as far as some greater good goes, just about any ideology will do. Indeed, non-religious ideologies in the 20th century caused vastly more suffering and death than all of the religiously-motivated violence in human history combined (Scarufi, 2016). Adolf Hitler's Germany killed more than 10,000,000 innocent people, while WWII saw the deaths of 60,000,000 people (with many more deaths attributable to war-related disease and famine). The purges and famines under Joseph Stalin's regime killed millions. Estimates of Mao Zedong's death toll range from 40,000,000-80,000,000. The current blaming of religion ignores the staggering death toll of secular ideologies.

Once human beings feel like they belong to a group, they will do anything, even commit atrocities, for their brothers and sisters in the group. I have a friend who fought for the US in Iraq. He and his mates grew increasingly cynical of the US mission in Iraq. Although he was no longer ideologically committed to US goals, he told me that he would have done anything, even sacrificed his own life, for members of his group. This dynamic increases if one is able to disidentify with and dehumanize those who are not in one's group.

Atran (2010), who has spoken with more terrorists and their families than any Western scholar, concurs. In testimony to the US senate in 2010, he said, "What inspires the most lethal terrorists in the world today is not so much the Quran or religious teachings as a thrilling cause and call to action that promises glory and esteem in the eyes of friends, and through friends, eternal respect and remembrance in the wider world" (Atran, 2010). Jihad, he said, is "thrilling, glorious and cool."

Oxford's Harvey Whitehouse directed an international team of distinguished scholars on the motivations of extreme self-sacrifice. They found that violent extremism isn't motivated by religion, it is motivated by fusion with the group.

There is no psychological profile of today's terrorist. They are not crazy, they are often well-educated and many are relatively well off. They are motivated, like many young people, by a sense of belonging, a desire for an exciting and meaningful life, and devotion to a higher cause. Extremist ideology, while not a non-factor, is typically low on the list of motivations.

Dangerously Uninformed

I said that Boudry's views are dangerously uninformed. I've shown why they are uninformed. On to the dangerous part. Perpetuating the myth that religion is the primary cause of terrorism, especially by those in positions of power, plays into ISIS's hands and prevents recognition of our responsibility for creating the conditions for ISIS. ISIS's playbook is, interestingly, not the Quran, it's *The Management of Savagery (Idarat at-Tawahoush)* (Naji, 2016).

ISIS's long-term strategy is to create such chaos that submission to ISIS would be preferable to living under the savage conditions of war. To attract young people to ISIS, they seek to eliminate the "Gray Zone" between the true believer and the infidel (in which most Muslims find themselves) by employing "terror attacks" to help Muslims see that non-Muslims hate Islam and want to harm Muslims. If moderate Muslims feel alienated and unsafe as a result of prejudice, they will be forced to choose either apostasy (darkness) or *jihad* (light).

Boudry (2016), and those like him who hold that religion is the primary or most important motivator of extremists, are helping to squeeze out the gray zone. By tarring Islam with the extremist brush, they perpetuate the myth that Islam is a violent religion and that Muslims are violent. Boudry's mistaken narrative reinforces Western media's predominantly negative portrayal of Muslims as violent, fanatical, bigoted, and terrorists (ignoring the 99.999% of Muslims who are not). And then we're on to Islamophobia.

It is very difficult for Westerners to isolate their understanding and loathing of ISIS and other extremists without sliding into Islamophobia. And increasing Islamophobia, ISIS hopes, will entice young Muslims out of the gray and into the fight. The vast majority of Muslims, it must be noted, find ISIS and other extremist groups tyrannical, oppressive and vicious (Poushter, 2017). Violent extremism is, they believe, a perversion of Islam (as the KKK and Westboro Baptist are perversions of Christianity). They cite the Quran which states that there is no compulsion in matters of religion (Al-Baqara: 256). According to the Quran, war is only for self-defense (Al-Baqarah: 190) and Muslims are instructed not to incite war (Al-Hajj: 39). Abu-Bakr (573-634 CE), the first Caliph following Prophet Muhammad's death, gave these instructions for (defensive) war:

Do not betray or be treacherous or vindictive. Do not mutilate. Do not kill the children, the aged or the women. Do not cut or burn palm trees or fruitful trees. Don't slay a sheep, a cow or camel except for your food. And you will come across people who confined themselves to worship in hermitages, leave them alone to what they devoted themselves for. ("War Ethics in Islam").

Given this background, violent extremism does indeed seem like a perversion of Islam.

Muslim leaders are in a pitched battle against extremist ideologies. For example, in 2001, thousands of Muslim leaders around the world immediately denounced Al Qaeda's attacks on the US. On September 14, 2001, nearly fifty Islamic leaders signed and distributed this statement:

The undersigned, leaders of Islamic movements, are horrified by the events of Tuesday 11 September 2001 in the United States which resulted in massive killing, destruction and attack on innocent lives. We express our deepest sympathies and sorrow. We condemn, in the strongest terms, the incidents, which are against all human and Islamic norms. This is grounded in the Noble Laws of Islam which forbid all forms of attacks on innocents. God Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an: 'No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another'. (Surah al-Isra 17:15)

Finally, I think it is dangerous to attribute extremism to religion and to ignore external conditions, because it makes extremism their problem when it is also our problem. If extremism is motivated by their religion, then they are entirely responsible (and they need to change). But if extremism is motivated in response to external conditions, then those who are responsible for those conditions are responsible (and need to work to change those conditions). As Gilligan (2001) writes: "We cannot even begin to prevent violence until we can acknowledge what we ourselves are doing that contributes to it, actively or passively" (76).

How has the West contributed to the conditions that motivate violent extremism? For starters, we overthrew a democratically-elected President in Iran and installed a despotic Shah (to regain access to cheap oil). After the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, we divided up the Middle East according to our own economic advantage and in defiance of good cultural sense (Sykes-Picot, 2016). For decades we have purchased cheap oil from Saudi Arabia, the profits of which have fueled Wahhabism, the ideological roots of Islamic extremism (Wahhabism, 2001). We destabilized Iraq on false pretenses resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians (Iraq Body Count). We tortured Arabs in defiance of international law and basic human dignity, and have kept Arabs that we know are innocent imprisoned without charge or legal recourse in Guantanamo (Clark, 2013). Our drones have killed countless innocent people and their constant buzzing in the skies plagues children with PTSD (The Psycho Logic of Drones, 2013). And the US's unilateral support of Israel perpetuates injustices against Palestinians.

In short, our shaming, humiliation and harming of Arabs have created the conditions which inspire violent responses. Given the huge power imbalance, the weaker power is forced to resort to guerilla tactics and suicide bombing. The problem is not just theirs. It is also ours. Justice demands that we stop laying the blame entirely on them and assume responsibility for our contributions to the conditions that inspire terror. Without attending to the conditions that are conducive to terrorism, it will not go away. Therefore, carpet-bombing mostly civilian populations within which ISIS hides will just exacerbate these conditions.

Conclusion

Boudry and I surely agree that insofar as extremist violence is motivated by religion, the

religious motivation needs to be resisted. I support the efforts on the parts of Muslim leaders to inoculate young Muslims against the co-option of true Islam by extremists. Boudry's insistence on religious motivation is empirically unsupported. The motivational structure of extremists is vastly more complicated. Moreover, we Westerners have contributed conditions that motivate extremism. We need to work hard and together with our Muslim brothers and sisters to create instead conditions of justice, equality and peace. Even if conditions conducive to extremism are rectified, some true believers will probably continue their violent struggle to create the caliphate. But their pool of recruits will have dried up.

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Combating Terrorism: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Terrorism and the security threats it poses to individual states and the global community currently dominate the public discourse. Scholars, policymakers, and ordinary citizens are engaged in an endless inquiry into the nature, root causes, impacts, trends, patterns, and remedies of terrorism. Although serious academic research on terrorism goes back to early 1970s and 1980s (Crenshaw, 2014), the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States served as a catalyst that intensified research efforts within the academic circles (Sageman, 2014). This literature review seeks to explore in detail five fundamental questions that are at the center of academic research on terrorism. These questions are: Is there a globally accepted definition of terrorism? Are policymakers really addressing the root causes of terrorism or are they fighting its symptoms? To what extent has terrorism and its threats to peace and security left an indelible scar on humanity? If we were to consider terrorism to be a public illness, what types of medication could be prescribed to permanently cure it? What methods, techniques and processes would be appropriate to help affected groups engage in a meaningful discussion on the topic of terrorism in order to generate mutually acceptable and implementable solutions that are based on reliable information and respect for the dignity and rights of individuals and groups? To answer these questions, a thorough examination of available research literature on the definition, causes, and solutions of terrorism is presented. The literature utilized in the review and analysis are peer-reviewed journal papers accessed and retrieved through the ProQuest Central databases, as well as research findings published in edited volumes and scholarly books. This research is a scholarly contribution to the ongoing discussion on counter-terrorism theories and practices, and an important tool for public education on the subject matter.

Keywords: *terrorism, counterterrorism, combating terrorism, terrorism literature, definition of terrorism, causes of terrorism, solutions of terrorism, terrorism research*

Background and Impact Assessment

Terrorism and the security threats it poses to individual states and the global community currently dominate the public discourse. Scholars, policymakers, and ordinary citizens have become active participants in an endless inquiry into the nature, root causes, impacts, trends, patterns, and remedies of terrorism. Although serious academic research on terrorism goes back to early 1970s and 1980s (Crenshaw, 2014), the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States served as a catalyst that intensified research efforts within the academic circles (Sageman, 2014).

Since 9/11, many researchers in the fields of social sciences and humanities from universities around the world have been engaged in the monitoring, data collection, and analysis of terrorism related violence (Freilich, et al, 2009). In the United States, the University of Maryland's National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) has been playing an important role since 2000 in collecting and collating data on terrorism related incidents around the world through its Global Terrorism Database. With available data on terrorism, researchers at the Institute for Economics and Peace found that 2015 was the second deadliest year on record with a total number of 29,376 deaths, and an economic loss of US\$89.6 billion (Global Terrorism Index, 2016).

Several factors could explain the global spread of terrorism. First, it is believed that the emergence of ISIL from the Middle East as an international terrorist network accounts for the rapid spread of terrorism related violence in the Western countries through its affiliates in many countries and its recruitment of lone wolves on social media (Mccauley and Moskalenko, 2014). Second, the militarized engagement of Boko Haram in the northeastern part of Nigeria by the Nigerian military forced Boko Haram members to flee to neighboring countries of Niger, Cameroon, and Chad, from where the group recruited more members and intensified its violent acts against the local populations, government facilities, and the law enforcement (START, 2015). The third factor is the regrouping and rebranding of Al-Qaeda after the killing of Osama bin Laden on May 1, 2011 in Pakistan, and the death of Muammar Gaddafi on October 20, 2011 which created a vacuum for the activities of terrorists in Libya. Al-Qaeda's activities are currently present in Africa - especially in the Maghreb region - and the Arab world through its affiliates in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Syria, Lebanon, Kurdistan, Mali, Algeria, and other countries (Crenshaw, 2014). Fourth, Al-Shabaab's continuous activities in East Africa, particularly in Somalia and Kenya, and its collaboration with other terrorist networks make the global counterterrorism efforts more difficult in that region. The fifth factor is that against the counterterrorism measures and the war on terror by the United States and its allies, the Taliban intensified its terror attacks and war in Pakistan and Afghanistan, with a 29 percent increase in terrorism related deaths and 34 percent increase in battlefield deaths, making it a total of 19,502 deaths in 2015 (Global Terrorism Index, 2016). Without neglecting the other factors that are not mentioned here, the sixth point is the unpredictable nature of the transnationally connected but domestically executed terrorism related attacks by home-grown-lone-wolves in the Western countries (Mccauley and Moskalenko, 2014; King and Taylor, 2011; Moghadam, 2006). The transnational nature of the terrorist attacks that occurred in Western countries, for example, the terrorist attacks in Boston, San Bernardino, Orlando, Paris, Brussels, Ankara, London, Berlin, and

so on, show that terrorism is no longer a Middle Eastern, Asian or African problem. Terrorism poses a serious threat to the national security of Western countries, and the world at large.

Researchers have identified some common drivers of terrorism. In developing countries, there is a correlation between state sponsored political violence combined with existing unresolved intractable conflicts, and terrorism (Testas, 2004; Piazza, 2006; Çınar, 2009). For example, it is believed that the extrajudicial killing in 2009 of Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram, by the Nigerian law enforcement motivated the members of Boko Haram to revenge through violence. The U.S. invasion of Iraq and the dethronement of Saddam Hussein in 2003 are said to have planted the seed for anti-American and anti-Western sentiments in the Arab world (Moghadam, 2006). The killing of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, the war in Syria, and the interethnic war in Iraq created the conditions for the rapid spread of the Islamic State's ideology. It is estimated that between 1989 and 2014, about 93 percent of all the global terrorist attacks occurred in those countries where state sponsored violence and intractable interethnic or interreligious conflicts exist (Global Terrorism Index, 2016). In some developed countries, however, it is believed that youth unemployment, exclusion, underlying grievances, access to weapons, and so on, drive lone wolves to commit terrorist attacks (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008; King and Taylor, 2011).

Although the security threat posed by terrorism is highly felt in countries around the world, it is reported that Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria and Nigeria have suffered the most, accounting for 72 percent of all deaths related to terrorism in 2015. Also, it is believed that ISIL, Boko Haram, the Taliban and al-Qa'ida committed the highest number of terrorist attacks in 2015 while being responsible for about 74 percent of all terrorism related deaths globally (Global Terrorism Index, 2016).

Combatting the threats that terrorism poses to human and ecological security and peace will require concerted, coordinated, and proactive efforts from each of the affected countries as well as the international community. Each country, for example the United States, has initiated counterterrorism programs that involve all the relevant government agencies, civil society, and faith based organizations (Sageman, 2014). Nevertheless, the United Nations, through the General Assembly and the Security Council, has adopted many catalyzing and coordinating resolutions aimed at helping and empowering member states to successfully deal with the challenges they face in their counterterrorism activities. Prominent among the United Nations terrorism related resolutions is the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (United Nations General Assembly, 8 September 2006). It is recommended in this resolution that the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) should help member states develop a global action plan containing four key counterterrorism measures. The four key measures are: measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; measures to prevent and combat terrorism; measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard; and measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism (United Nations General Assembly, 8 September 2006). Each of these measures contain specific actionable items which will be discussed later under the solution subheading using relevant literature on this topic.

However, it is important to note here that the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF), an international forum of 29 countries and the European Union that works “to reduce the vulnerability of people worldwide to terrorism by preventing, combating, and prosecuting terrorist acts and countering incitement and recruitment to terrorism,” believes that applying the United Nations resolution to meet three specific needs is vital. Through its “Life Cycle Toolkit,” the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum recommends that to successfully combat terrorism globally, member states should channel their efforts to three main areas: prevention, detection and intervention, and rehabilitation and reintegration (Global Counter-Terrorism Forum Life Cycle Toolkit, n.d.).

With the above background knowledge on terrorism, the remaining sections of this literature review seeks to explore in detail five fundamental questions that are at the center of academic research on terrorism. These questions are: Is there a globally accepted definition of terrorism? Are policymakers really addressing the root causes of terrorism or are they fighting its symptoms? To what extent has terrorism and its threats to peace and security left an indelible scar on humanity? If we were to consider terrorism to be a public illness, what types of medication could be prescribed to permanently cure it? What methods, techniques and processes would be appropriate to help affected groups engage in a meaningful discussion on the topic of terrorism in order to generate mutually acceptable and implementable solutions that are based on reliable information and respect for the dignity and rights of individuals and groups?

To answer these questions, a thorough examination of available research literature on the definition, causes, and solutions of terrorism is presented below. The literature utilized in the review and analysis are peer-reviewed journal papers accessed and retrieved through the ProQuest Central databases, as well as research findings published in edited volumes and scholarly books.

On the Definition of Terrorism

The definition of terrorism has generated numerous debates within the academic arena, just as the efforts to explain what terrorism is have been a contested endeavor among policymakers (Weiss, 2002; Schmid, 2005). Although the debate on the definition of terrorism could be traced to the 1960s and 1970s (Roberts, 2015), the current arguments on the definition of terrorism revolve around what exactly constitutes terrorism and a terrorist attack (Lentini, 2008).

Scholars and policymakers are stuck in their efforts to outline the criteria for distinguishing terrorism from other state and non-state violence. While some researchers argue that setting globally acceptable criteria for knowing and identifying terrorist acts is important, others believe that such criteria should be relative depending on the situation, location, motivations, and national policies (Weiss, 2002). In-between these opposing positions, the third argument takes a middle ground approach and argues that when we see a terrorist act we will know exactly what it is (Greenstock, 2001, as cited in Weiss, 2002). This means that our knowledge or definition of terrorism should be derived from our perception of what we think and recognize as a terrorist attack. The idea of *when we see it, we will know what it is*, reminds us of St. Augustine’s answer to the question about time. What is time? St Augustine replies: “If you don’t ask me, I know it; but if you ask me, I don’t know” (Augustine, ., & Chadwick, 1992).

Although these arguments on the definition of terrorism persist in the available research

literature, there is a consensus among scholars and researchers that terrorism poses a serious threat to peace and security all over the world (Freilich, et al., 2009). Scholars also agree that the impacts of terrorism on societies in countries around the world are devastating, and that terrorism should be considered as an international crime under the statutes of the International Criminal Court (Lawless, 2007). For this reason, many scholars have argued that to define terrorism, it is imperative to go from the known to the unknown; that is, from the visible effects of terrorism on societies to the unexpressed motivations for committing acts of terror (Newman, 2006). This means that a definition of terrorism should include the impacts of terrorism on the victims, the consequences of terrorist attacks on societies, and the motivations that drive terrorists to inflict harm on others and cause substantial damage and loss to the society and families.

One question comes to mind regarding this visible impacts and motivation assessment argument of terrorism. Could those violent acts that are sponsored by the state actors qualify as terrorism? For the past two thousand years, state actors have directly or indirectly inflicted devastating acts of violence on some populations as a means to achieving their goals, and realizing their interests (Laqueur 2001; Rapoport 2003, as cited in Lentini, 2008). Recently, it is reported by Democracy Now that about 1,500 civilians are directly killed by U.S. airstrikes in Iraq and Syria only in March 2017 (Democracy Now, March 30, 2017). Also, it is reported by Amnesty International that hundreds of civilians were recently killed inside their homes or refuge places in Mosul, Iraq, by the U.S. led coalition airstrikes after receiving orders not to leave their homes from the Iraqi government (Amnesty International, 28 March 2017). In addition, the recent report that the Assad government is using chemical weapon against the Syrian civilians outweigh the normal impact of terror on innocent populations.

The arguments on defining terrorism from the level of impact it has on humans and their societies to the motivations for committing such atrocities, or from motivation to impact, show how complicated, complex and nuanced the use of the term terrorism is within the academic arena. Lentini (2003, as cited in Lentini, 2008) confirms that terrorism is a multifaceted phenomenon. Multifaceted in the sense that terrorism could be understood from many perspectives. It is like a coin with two sides, or a double-edged sword. World icons and Nobel peace prize winners like Nelson Mandela, Menachem Begin, and Yasser Arafat were once labeled as terrorists (Weiss, 2002).

Depending on how it is understood and defined, and considering the motivations of those who resort to violence to achieve their goals, terrorism could have both favorable and unfavorable consequences. From this perspective, some scholars have argued that strategic bombing, for example, could qualify as a terrorist attack (Grosscup, 2006). Military strategic bombing on the civilians located on the side of the enemy, just like the targeted terrorist attack by bomb explosion or suicide bombing which are committed by the known terrorist networks, are all carried out to intentionally inflict psychological and physical damage, as well as a loss on the enemy. So, some authors like Grosscup (2006) question the difference between those military strategic bombing that are intentionally dropped on civilians to weaken the enemy and the suicide bombing or killings committed by those who are labeled terrorists.

In the last analysis, the question that stands out is: who has the authority, ethical standard, moral obligation, and legal parameters to determine and declare a particular group a terrorist

organization? In 1995, Jordan and Weedon published an important research article where they argued that the powerful has always been the one to determine, name, and define contentious global issues (Jordan and Weedon, 1995). For Weiss (2002), the use of violence to achieve a political goal is usually condemned by those who are unsympathetic to the struggle and applauded by those in solidarity with the cause. Boko Haram, an Islamic religious organization that started off peacefully in 2002 in the northeastern part of Nigeria, for example, was declared a terrorist organization on September 14, 2013 when the United States government through the office of the U.S. Secretary of State designated Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) after a series of violent confrontation with the Nigerian law enforcement, beginning from 2009 when the Boko Haram's founder was killed (Ugorji, 2016).

Moreover, scholars like Grosscup (2006) have consistently maintained that defining terrorism and establishing the criteria for determining what is or what is not terrorism have been the preoccupation of those who are in the position of power. Often the underlying conflicts or grievances that motivate groups to violence are not considered before these groups are branded terrorist organizations. A hasty labeling of a group as a terrorist organization without a careful examination of the underlying issues could have many consequences.

Roberts (2015) identifies three types of consequences associated with placing a terrorism label on a group. First, it could lead to misunderstanding and costly mistakes. For example, it was later recognized and acknowledged internationally that the labeling of the African National Congress led by Nelson Mandela of South Africa in 1988 by the United States and the United Kingdom as a terrorist organization was a regrettable mistake. Second, such labels could impede negotiation or mediation efforts with the group, to the extent that it will be impossible to utilize the “*dangerous* mediation” model proposed by Cloke (2001) in mediating fascism and oppression oriented conflict. Third, labeling a group as a terrorist organization may hinder future efforts to fight an enemy of a higher order in partnership with the labeled group, just as the Turkish Kurdish organization (PKK), although labeled as a terrorist organization by Turkey and some Western countries, has been instrumental in fighting ISIS.

However, many scholars believe that to be able to set the parameters for determining what qualifies as terrorism, there is need to distinguish between state actions and non-state actions as they occurred in the past and as they are occurring in the present (Schinkel, 2009). According to this idea, terrorism is nothing but a spillover from what the perpetrators consider to be past injustices and oppression. Some scholars argue that “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” and that “Whom the Israelis call a terrorist, the Palestinians call a martyr” (Weiss, 2002, p. 11).

However, could the state sponsored violence be considered as terrorism? To this question, some scholars argue that the state sponsored military strategic bombing is governed by international laws, and when such laws or treaties are violated, the violators will be charged for committing crimes against humanity and gross violations of human and group rights to existence (Lentini, 2008). Rapoport and Wilkinson (1971, as cited in Roberts, 2015) were the first to emphasize the need to separate terrorism from other forms of political violence. Non-state actors, on the other hand, are viewed differently. Through terrorist attacks, non-state actors are described to be involved in “a symbolic act designed to influence political behavior by extranormal means,

entailing the use or threat of violence” (Thornton, 1964, p. 73, as cited in Roberts, 2015).

Based on this distinction, Hoffman (1998) proposes a definition of terrorism that excludes state sponsored violence on the civilians. Terrorism, according to Hoffman (1998) is defined as the use of violence or a declared threat to use violence against a population or non-combatants including their possessions in order to cause a political change by creating fear in the society. While maintaining that scholars should be cautious in their attempt to define terrorism, Roberts (2015) argues that inasmuch as the core meaning of terrorism is largely accepted while the peripheral meaning is debatable, and given that the meaning of terrorism is not static, the notion of state sponsored terror should be included in the definition of terrorism. Whether the perpetrators are state actors or non-state actors, it is believed that terrorism is “a form of political communication, violence intended to send a message to a watching audience” (Crenshaw, 2014).

Therefore, there is need to situate the definition and analysis of terrorism in a wider theoretical framework (Crenshaw, 2014). But most importantly, scholars and researchers should try to understand how policymakers and the law enforcement conceptualize and define terrorism in their counterterrorism activities. The pioneering research survey conducted by Freilich, et al. (2009) with the American State Police agencies about “terrorism threats, terrorism sources, and terrorism definitions” is very instructive. The researchers provided the respondents with a set of definitions of terrorism that includes those of the state agencies and academic scholars without telling them the sources of the definitions. It is reported that the law enforcement’s understanding of terrorism has about 83.8 percent match with that of the FBI and 40.5 percent match with the state department’s; and lower matches with those definitions from the academic fields, for example, the definitions by Brian Jenkins (27.7 percent) and James Poland (27.7 percent) (Freilich, et al, 2009).

To realize the goal of this paper, the four definitions that emerged from Freilich, et al.’s (2009) survey are stated below.

- FBI: “Terrorism is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.”
- U.S. State Department: “Terrorism is the purposeful threat or use of violence for political purposes by individuals or groups, whether acting for, or in opposition to established governmental authority, when such actions are intended to influence the victim and or a target group wider than the immediate victim or victims.”
- Brian Jenkins: Terrorism is “the use or threatened use of force designed to bring about a political change.”
- James Poland: “Terrorism is the premeditated, deliberate, systematic murder, mayhem, and threatening of the innocent to create fear and intimidation in order to gain a political or tactical advantage, usually to influence an audience” (as cited in Freilich, et al., 2009).

Having reviewed the various arguments on the definition of terrorism, and with the understanding of terrorism through the four definitions stated above, one question that needs to be examined in the terrorism literature is: what do researchers think are the root causes of terrorism? This is the focus of the next section.

On the Root Causes of Terrorism

The root causes of terrorism, just like its definition, are contested in the available research literature. Since there is no consensus on the definition of terrorism, it is difficult to agree on what constitutes the underlying causes of terrorism at the local and international levels (Schmid, 2005; Newman, 2006). However, a quick scan of the major research literature on terrorism from 2002 to 2017 reveals common themes identified by scholars as the primary root causes of terrorism. Central to these themes – which will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs – is the notion of existing or perceived injustices (Weiss, 2002).

Actual or perceived injustice, however, is a complex and vague term. Are these injustices found within the economic, political, social, demographic, psychological, religious, or family domains? In his analysis of previously identified root causes of terrorism, Newman (2006) distinguishes between “permissive structural factors and direct underlying grievances” (p. 751). The structural factors represent the structures that enable, ferment, and perpetuate all forms of injustices. They are the enablers of terrorism at the premanifest conflict processes level (Cheldelin et al., 2008, as cited in Ugorji, 2016). These structures could be local, national or international institutions that ferment poverty, unfavorable social change, unemployment, or forced migration, and so on. The underlying grievances are tangible political issues that have not yet been resolved, including “inequality, exclusion, repression, dispossession, sense of humiliation / alienation, sense of foreign occupation / hegemony, clash of identities / dispute with identity aspect, violent conflict, negative effects of globalization, sudden economic downturns” (Newman, 2006, p. 764). These manifest conflict processes, according to Sandole (Cheldelin et al., 2008, as cited in Ugorji, 2016) could escalate to aggressive manifest conflict processes of which terrorism is a good example.

Nevertheless, both the structural factors and the underlying grievances alone cannot escalate to terrorism. There is need for a catalyzing agency. The catalytic conditions according to Newman (2006) are “leadership, funding, and state sponsorship” (p. 764).

A deep reflection on Newman’s (2006) analysis of the root causes of terrorism reveals some similarities with the works of his predecessors. In 1981, Martha Crenshaw published an important research article entitled, “The Causes of Terrorism” (Crenshaw, 1981) in which she identified two distinguishing categories of causes: preconditions and precipitants. The preconditions are those underlying factors that create the conditions for the emergence of terrorism, and they are a combination of root causes and situational or proximate causes. Examples of the root causes that Sirseloudi (2004) outlined in his research article entitled, “Early Detection of Terrorist Campaigns” (as cited in Schmid, 2005) are “lack of democracy, lack of rule of law, lack of good governance, lack of social justice, the backing of illegitimate regimes, high / rising distributive inequality, historical experience of violent conflict waging, support for groups using terrorist means, vulnerability of modern democracies, and failed states / safe havens outside state control” (p. 133). The precipitants are those catalyzing actions or factors that immediately precede the occurrence of a terrorist attack, and they include a “counterterrorism campaign causing many victims to call “for revenge and retaliation, humiliation of the group or its supporters, threat, failed peace talks, elections, and symbolic dates” (Schmid, 2005, p. 133).

Both the preconditions and precipitants theory of Crenshaw (1981) and the permissive

structural factors and direct underlying grievances theory of Newman (2006) show that that which has the potency of causing terrorism could also be found within the causes of war in the same way that the causes of war could be explained from the causes of conflict, conflict dynamics, situations, environment, and motives. The difficult question is: why do some groups or individuals in a conflict or crisis mode choose terrorism instead of other conflict styles or tactics? Schmid (2005) contends that the choice of terrorism as a conflict style is based on seven factors: the size of the group – small groups are more likely to resort to terrorism than large ones -; resources available to the group including having access to arms and bombs; media coverage of past terrorist attacks, creating the conditions for a sense of fame and heroism; internal group dynamics; “relative group strength compared to the political opponent; the group’s ideology; and the conflict behavior of the opponent” (p. 135).

Although the above root causes of terrorism may seem very intriguing and accurate, some qualitative and quantitative research conducted in the last decade found that, contrary to the popular belief, factors such as poverty and economic downturn or income are not significantly related to terrorism (Testas, 2004; Pedahzur, 2005, Piazza, 2006; Çınar, 2009). Instead, these researchers found that higher education levels could even be an asset for transnational terrorism in some countries (Testas, 2004), and that increased state repression, structure of party politics, political injustices and ethno-religious grievances are significant predictors of terrorism (Testas, 2004; Piazza, 2006; Çınar, 2009). It is very difficult though to explain how higher education could qualify as a root cause of terrorism. It is true that people who have higher education degrees would want to assume the leadership of an emerging political entity or a new state should the use of terrorism result in independence or self-determination. Also, people who have advanced knowledge in internet technology including social media and telecommunication could be a great asset to terrorist networks. However, could education alone motivate people to pursue their goals using terrorism? This question is yet to be answered by researchers.

Nevertheless, existing interethnic or interreligious grievances and conflicts are most likely to escalate, serving as a radicalization pathway toward terrorism. Some scholars have argued that to understand the root causes of terrorism, it is important to explain how radicalization happens (McCauley and Moskalkenko, 2008; King and Taylor, 2011); and what constitutes the profile of lone wolves, particularly “what moves an individual from radical opinion to radical action” (McCauley and Moskalkenko, 2014). McCauley and Moskalkenko (2008) argue that radicalization and its extreme outcome – terrorism - could be explained from the perspective of the social cleavage theory through the dynamics of existing intergroup conflict. People tend to identify with their own group and do everything possible to defend their group. For them, what is branded “terrorism” is nothing but a defense mechanism in solidarity with the group people identify with.

It is true that group members could have strong sentiments for and attachment to their group. But what exactly accounts for the shift from radical attachment to the group one identifies with to a radical action or a terrorist attack against another group? How could the radicalization of homegrown jihadists in Western countries, for example, be explained? These questions are the preoccupation of King and Taylor (2011). In their research on “the Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists,” King and Taylor (2011) found that the root causes of radicalization and terrorism could be explained not only from the social cleavage perspective, but primarily through a combination

of three psychological factors identified as “group relative deprivation, identity conflicts, and personality characteristics” (p. 602).

Depriving a group of what belongs to that group, coupled with other identity based conflicts, are necessary but not sufficient in explaining the gap between “radical opinion and radical action” or in understanding what motivates a terrorist organization or group. For this reason, some scholars argue that in the last analysis it is better to explore the root causes of terrorism through the constituting elements of the profile of lone wolf terrorists, especially through their “personality characteristics” (McCauley and Moskalkenko, 2008). In their research, McCauley and Moskalkenko (2008) discovered two important profiles of lone wolf terrorists which could explain the root causes of terrorism. These are “disconnected-disordered and caring-compelled” (p. 69). The disconnected-disordered are lone wolf terrorists with signs of psychological disorders who are motivated by existing grievances, and because of their access to or mastery of weapons and ammunitions, they are inclined to committing terrorist attacks on civilians or government property. The caring-compelled are those lone wolf terrorists who are motivated by the suffering of other individuals or groups to whom they are strongly connected and are compelled to act in order to “reduce or avenge this suffering” (McCauley and Moskalkenko, 2008). This explains to a high degree why individuals without previous criminal records could instantly commit suicide terrorist attacks in order to be recognized as a martyr by their group members (Moghadam, 2006; Pedahzur, 2005).

The preceding root causes of terrorism, especially suicide terrorism, tend to show that suicide bombers act from a rationally, well reflected, and willful decision making, which makes suicide terrorism “a rational tactical strategy (Pedahzur, 2005, p. 33). However, this position fails to recognize or account for hundreds of minors who are being kidnapped by terrorist organizations, hypnotized, and forced to commit suicide bombing on their behalf. It is my contention and submission that these innocent children do not willingly choose to become terrorists. They are victims of terrorism in the same manner that victims of suicide bomb explosions are. It is important therefore that researchers and policymakers devote more time and resources to understanding the plights and vulnerability of the kidnapped minors and how they could be rescued, as well as how the kidnapping by terrorists could be prevented.

Preventing terrorists from kidnapping minors and recruiting the vulnerable fall within the ongoing search for sustainable solutions to terrorism. In the next section of this literature review, efforts will be made to examine the various theories, methods, techniques and processes proposed by researchers to prevent and resolve terrorism related issues.

On the Solutions of Terrorism

For a long time, policymakers and academics have sought to understand what motivates people to turn to political violence and terrorism in order to know which solutions could be most suitable for terrorism (Sageman, 2014; Taylor, 2014). However, the fact that there are multiple causes of terrorism, and because of the disagreement over what constitutes terrorism, it is difficult to know for sure what the overall solutions to terrorism should be (Sageman, 2014; Crenshaw, 2014). Nevertheless, it is possible to identify specific solutions to terrorist actions based on the

identifiable patterns, locations, known causes, and dynamics.

Also, efforts to prevent, counter or combat terrorism must begin by identifying immediate or short-term and long-term strategies (Pedahzur, 2005). As part of the short-term strategy, it is recommended by Pedahzur (2005) and reemphasized by Lentini (2008) that interveners should first establish trust between the vulnerable population and the government, as well as among the antagonists involved in existing conflicts. Once an atmosphere of trust is established, the long-term approach will entail the use of both the offensive and defensive measures (Pedahzur, 2005). The use of offensive strategies includes the active involvement of the intelligence community from where intelligence is sent to the different stakeholders in the respective security agencies as well as the presidency. Signals from the intelligence will help in determining whether a military intervention or action is needed. The defensive measures include “prevention, crisis management and reconstruction” (Lentini, 2008). Included in the long-term strategy are the imprisonment of leaders of terrorist networks, negotiation, and provision of humanitarian aids to the affected populations (Pedahzur, 2005, p. 189).

Some scholars have cautioned that even though the removal of the leaders of terrorist networks may weaken the capabilities of the network in the short run (Price, 2012, as cited in Crenshaw, 2014), such removals either by military strike, killing or imprisonment may fester strong sentiments among members of the organization and possibly lead to more recruitment of new members (Crenshaw, 2014). In 2009, it was believed that the extra-judicial killing of Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram, by the Nigerian law enforcement while in police custody, would deter members of Boko Haram from committing further violence (Ugorji, 2016). The opposite was the case. Yusuf’s death in police custody triggered intense fighting and terrorist attacks against the Nigerian state and the citizens, leading to the escalation and spread of the conflict.

The Boko Haram example indicates that the use of military force alone cannot solve the terrorism problem (Art and Richardson, 2007, as cited in Crenshaw, 2014). It is therefore imperative that any solutions to terrorism should display “greater clarity in the objectives and terms of reference utilized” (Irwin, 2015). Also, interveners should first seek to understand the limitations of these solutions and their long-term effects on the society before they are deployed.

This means that selecting the solutions alone is not enough. Other strategic factors should be considered. Hoffman (2009) suggests four interconnected elements needed to successfully combat terrorism and defeat it. First, there must be a clear strategy. Second, policymakers should have a defined structure for implementing the solutions. Third, there is need for intergovernmental agency cooperation. And fourth, there should be a unified effort to implement the solutions (Hoffman, 2009). Based on this set of guidelines, a five-point solution is proposed by Hoffman (2009):

- Denial of terrorist sanctuary, elimination of terrorist freedom of movement, and denial of terrorist resources and support;
- Identification and neutralization of the terrorist;
- Creation of a secure environment—progressing from local to regional to global;
- Ongoing and effective neutralization of terrorist propaganda and information operations through the planning and execution of a comprehensive and integrated information operations and holistic civil affairs campaign in harmony with the first four tasks;

- Interagency efforts to build effective and responsible civil governance mechanisms that eliminate the fundamental causes of terrorism and insurgency. (pp. 372-373)

A solitary reflection on these solutions reveals a reactionary pattern. These solutions fail to consider and address the conditions that give rise to terrorism. Also, even though it proposes a counter-narrative measure, it does not recognize the need for rehabilitation and reintegration. These important factors are included in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; measures to prevent and combat terrorism; measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard; and measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism (United Nations General Assembly, 8 September 2006). Similarly, the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum recommends that to successfully combat terrorism globally, member states should channel their efforts to three main areas: prevention, detection and intervention, and rehabilitation and reintegration (Global Counter-Terrorism Forum Life Cycle Toolkit).

Sometimes, it is easy to develop a global strategy on a paper, but very difficult to implement it. The United Nations is a typical example. Before any resolution is passed, the core members of the Security Council will need to reach a consensus. Often, politics and rivalry get in the way, making it difficult for a resolution to pass. The same thing occurs in different countries, especially among the elected officials. Elected officials who are supposed to champion the cause of the citizens and work together for the protection and safety of the citizens end up antagonizing one another. Also, the lack of cooperation between the intelligence community and the academic experts in the field of terrorism research has led to a stagnation in terrorism research (Sageman, 2014). Therefore, there is need to explore the solutions of terrorism through other research methods.

Hence, I propose a future terrorism research aimed at knowing whether group facilitation as a methodological tool could help in finding solutions to terrorism and increasing the effectiveness (Schwarz, 2002; Schuman, 2005) of stakeholders to successfully prevent, counter and combat terrorism. In this future research, the skilled facilitator approach (Schwarz, 2002) will be used to explore answers to three fundamental questions that scholars have not yet answered in the existing literature:

1. How do young people, especially students, define terrorism?
2. What are the views of the young people on what motivates people to commit terrorist attacks?
3. What are the views of the young people on the strategies that could be utilized to prevent, counter and combat terrorism?

Finding answers to these questions is quintessential for youth empowerment, leadership capacity building, and successful resolution of terrorism related conflicts.

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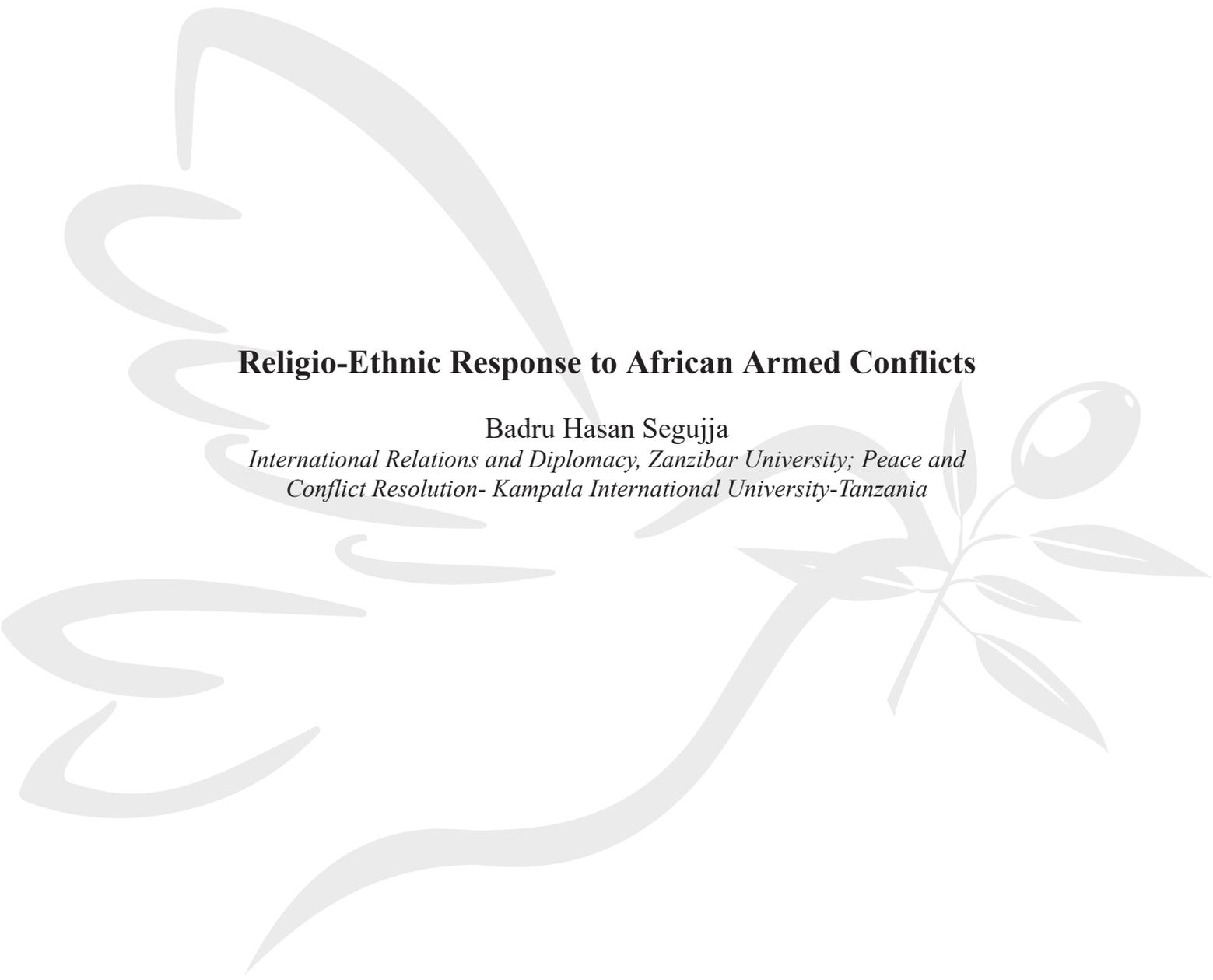
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Religio-Ethnic Response to African Armed Conflicts

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Abstract

This study, *Religio-Ethnic Response to African Armed Conflicts*, was aimed at investigating the root cause and impact of African armed conflicts, and to show how religion and ethnicity can be given opportunities to have a smooth entry point in peacebuilding with some well-grounded conflict management mechanisms. The study discovered that the African continent suffers a number of armed conflicts where women and children have been the most disadvantaged. These conflicts originate from religious and ethnic organizations as a result of theological disagreements, cultural and political dissatisfaction, which all require, among other solutions, religious answers. As people are deprived of access to justice, peace becomes the first victim. While friends and neighbors become permanent refugees if not enemies, militia groups emerge under the umbrella of freedom fighters, and if not checked, they are most likely to resort to criminal activities. The study further discovered that lack of respect for religion and humanity has made life difficult for both the army and the citizens on the continent of Africa. This has made Africa one of the World's war-torn areas throughout history with ethnic and religious solutions not provided. Crimes against women and children continue to increase. Sexual violence is estimated at higher levels and little or nothing has been done to heal the pain caused by war trauma and the post-war situation. The study concludes that as a result of armed conflicts, political instability, diseases, internal displacement, mass migration and refugees' movement are making violence on the continent worse than ever before. The study recommends that religious authorities, particularly Christian and Islamic leaders, as well as ethnic or traditional leaders should put hands together to conduct dialogue in order to help manage and reduce violent conflicts in Africa.

Keywords: *religion, ethnicity, dialogue, states, weapons, peace, misunderstandings*

Introduction

The Origin of Human Supremacy

Africa was developed before the Europeans came. Western Sudan empires, for example, produced fishermen and there were Nomadic Fulani herdsmen up to AD 1500. During this era when religion was the leading factor in civilization, peoples' understanding was on the ideal rather than the material world, and thus less violence was registered until when the people were taught to separate religion from medicine, politics and geography (Hayford and Rodney, 2005).

Africa is one of the world's resource-endowed continent where leaders have failed to make good use of the resources, even though all people on the continent are typically Africans, and these are not at conflict with anybody in the Diaspora (Waters, 1990). This situation has made Africa dominate the international media coverage in terms of high incidences of violence, the frequency of endless armed conflicts, to the extent that in 2007, eight out of ten most unstable countries in the world were in Africa, (Francis, 2008).

Intractable Conflicts on the African Continent

This paper examines the fifty-four-member states of the African continent, and the associated intractable armed conflicts that have frequently been presented on the agenda of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and African Union (AU) but with minimum solutions to have the conflicts amicably resolved. The Great Lakes Region (GLR) of the African continent comprises eleven member states: Angola, Republic of the Sudan, Southern Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo "DRC", the Central African Republic, Kenya and Zambia. The horn of Africa, Central Africa and West African states like Mali, Chad, Nigeria, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Liberia have lived in unnecessary armed conflicts from independence to date. The same is evident in Libya and Egypt. There is a high rate of religious-ethnic armed conflicts within these states, and at times the fighting is against their neighbors, which has led to loss of human lives and dignity.

Statement of the Problem

On the African continent, there are countries like DRC which was made a state where ordinary people were not regarded as citizens but clients of powerful patrons. The patrons also served as clients to other powerful masters of DRC in the Diaspora. On the other hand, the rich Congolese also extracted wealth from the poor and deprived them of their goods. This resulted into widespread corruption and violence (Diamond, 2008). The Congolese people are made up of more than 200 separate ethnic groups and speak distinct languages. The major languages are Kiswahili, Lingala, Kikongo, Tshiluba, and French which is the language used in government, commerce and education. Social discrimination on the basis of ethnicity is widely spread and practiced in marriages, hiring, business and other aspects of life (Alston, 2008). Africans attach great value to historical backgrounds, leading them to identify with one another or to distinguish from their

groups on the basis of certain biological characteristics (Lauer, 2001).

However, such values are never given a chance to bring people together. It suffices to say that conflicts start as a result of poor economic performance, underdevelopment, corruption, bad governance, unemployment, political exclusion, social ethnic marginalization, as well as ethnic victimization. These conflicts escalate into violence when not managed.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive correlation and qualitative research design so as to investigate the causes of African armed conflicts, impact and the relationship between the African armed conflicts and the entry point for religious and ethnic organizations.

The study employed a purposive and simple random sampling as members had equal chances to be sampled. The study sampled 70 members. These comprised religious members from the Muslims and Christian communities, members with interests in ethnic organizations, politicians and political leaders. Non-government organizations that serve as humanitarian and gender equality service providers were also given maximum consideration.

The study used interview guiding questions and questionnaires as research instruments for data collection. Secondary data was also one of the methods of information gathering whereby, valid information was carefully selected and shared with content experts before it was considered important for this study.

Theoretical Perspectives

The study of religio-ethnic response to African armed conflicts is guided by the theory of liberalism which discusses “freedom for the individual” as it is believed that human beings are well natured. Liberalism’s core ideals stress individualism, human rights, universality, freedom from authority, right to be treated equally under the protection of law and duty to respect and treat others as “ethical subjects” as well as freedom for social action (Fukuyama, 1992; Doyle, 1983).

The theory also asserts that we should believe in progress in human nature, in the state system and in the international system. It’s upon this background that, integration towards greater interdependence in the form of transnational ties between countries can lead to peace. Cooperation should be arranged by expert technicians, not by politicians. This means that, African religious societies and ethnic systems have the capability of working together with political leaders in order to manage African armed conflicts that have become intractable.

Literature Review

This study is guided by the following body of literature. Selected information from secular and religious (revealed) books is examined in order to concretize the authenticity of this study.

Armed Conflicts in DRC

Before the downfall of Mobutu up to 2008, different rebel groups were actively fighting in

the eastern DRC where the prevalence of rape, defilement and other sexual violence were described as the worst in the world. This war was described as Africa's First World War, the world's deadliest conflict since World War II, battle of the GLR where 5.4 million people lost their lives as mentioned by Clark (2003).

The genesis of conflicts in the DRC can be traced from its neighbors (Rwanda and Burundi), where the 1994's genocide in Rwanda which was forewarned but those who could take action refused to respond for different reasons (Tajudeen, 2004). In summary, racism and bigotry are cited as one of the major causes of violence in Africa. It should be noted that the history of genocide in Rwanda goes back to 1959, 1966 and the latest one was in 1994. These are all interlinked with that of Burundi of 1965. No one can tell whether genocide will reoccur in the post-1994 Rwanda. One thing is certain: the role of religion was extremely high in fueling violence, but it was expected to provide a long-lasting solution to the genocide.

In the case of the DRC's civil wars where more than 5.4 million people died with the presence of outside or external participants and their forces, it was discovered that not less than a million Hutus were killed in the DRC. The Hutus were forced out of Rwanda by the RPA when it took over power in 1994. This means that whatever change in leadership in favor of the Hutus, civil conflicts are more likely to take place in the republic of Rwanda, Burundi and DRC since whatever goes around comes back.

Religious Response and the Regional Armed Conflicts

Although most of the GLR states profess Christianity, the majority of their leaders kept a deaf ear and closed eyes when the killing of people was taking place in Rwanda. Hundreds were raped, defiled or butchered in religious centers including cathedrals, churches, or schools. At times, nuns led their fellow countrymen into the hands of the waiting killer group popularly known as *Entarahamwe*. These were citizens from the Hutu majority ethnic group who were well trained to kill human beings. Hence, men of the collars were also employed for the job of killing their followers and countrymen (Greal, 2000). These religious centers in which massacres of hundreds of thousands of people took place included Nyarubuye catholic mission with more than 4000 people killed, Kibuye, Kibeho in Rwanda, The Hema, Lendu settlements in DRC and many more others. Whereas in Nigeria, in 2000, ethnic conflicts turned into religious that culminated into attacks by both the Christians and Muslims, causing loss of property and lives (Dogo, Abdu and Ajibauh, 2015)

The Role of Sub-Saharan States in the African Armed Conflicts

With the Dar-es-salam declaration on peace, security, development and democracy in the Sub-Sahara and GLR on 19-20 November 2004, African state leaders were deeply concerned about the endemic conflict and persistent insecurity caused or aggravated by inter alia- economic stagnation and poverty aggravation, mistrust and suspicion between governments. Concerns were also registered on massive violation of human rights and other policies of exclusion and marginalization, gender inequality, use of violence for conquering or conserving power, impunity of crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity, war crimes, illicit trafficking of small arms

and light weapons proliferation of armed groups, organized crimes and illegal exploitation of national resources.

African Children and Military Services

In the same declaration, it was resolved that there should be a prohibition in the recruitment of children into the armed forces or their participation in hostilities. In resolution number 66 of the same declaration, state leaders resolved that all necessary measures should be put in place to ensure that former child soldiers are exempted from compulsory military services, re-integrated into their communities, rehabilitated, counseled and resettled as agreed upon in the Dar-es-salam declaration on peace, security, development and democracy in the Sub-Saharan and GLR of 19th to 20th November 2004.

However, almost everything that could bring peace was covered, and the implementation became a problem, yet the message remained on paper. That is why in situations where child soldiers lost every family member, it becomes difficult for them to drop the gun. This was because the environment was conducive for them in the army than elsewhere since they lost parents and relatives.

Religious Armed Men and Conflict Escalation on the African Continent

According to Vannasselt (2003), between 1990 and 2000, 118 armed conflicts worldwide claimed approximately 6 million lives. In 1999, more than two thirds of conflicts had lasted for more than 5 years and almost one third had lasted for more than 20 years. The effect of these wars spilled and spread to neighboring villages and countries, thus leading to loss of more lives and property. On the African continent, it was possible for these conflicts to spread from one state to another because the Sub-Saharan Regional states did not put in place a strong mechanism to supervise territorial security.

Examples of these religious fighting rebel groups that have affected the population on the African continent and GLR include the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), West Nile Bank Front (WNB) in North West Uganda, Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) in North Eastern Uganda, SPLA in Southern Sudan, Darfur and the rebel groups fighting in Eastern DRC. There are also Seleke rebels and Anti Balaka in CAR, Boko Haram in Nigeria, Alshabab in Somali land. Some of these countries were shortlisted to have caused the world's worst humanitarian crisis since 1990, where out of 11 countries (Gabriel, 2009), 10 were from Africa as chronologically indicated below:

Table showing a list of countries that caused the world’s worst humanitarian crisis since 1990

Year	Country
1990	Angola
1992	Somalia
1994	Rwanda
1996	Zaire
2001	Afghanistan
2002	Zimbabwe
2004	Darfur
2005/ 06	Congo
2007	Somalia
2008	Congo
2009	Somalia / East Africa (Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia and Uganda)

Source: Research 2016

The Impact of Armed Conflicts on the African Continent

The negative impact of these conflicts can be discussed country by country depending on the magnitude of the impact. By 2008, up to 5.4 million people had lost their lives in the first and second Congo wars, including loss of property. People in the Congo were said to have died at a rate of an estimated 45,000 per month. The high death toll was due to widespread disease, famine and violence (Geer, 1998).

There are a number of political, social economic and religious armed conflicts in so many countries of Africa where humanity is highly terrorized, and the terrorists are branded as freedom fighters. Saundry (2008) observed that, armed conflicts in Africa and outside Africa cause a very big social economic negative impact on humanity. Rebels use land mines and powerful weapons which increase the extent of isolation in the rural communities, diminishing their sense of citizenship, and crumbling infrastructures which results in the loss of markets and other economic opportunities.

The civil conflicts further result into trauma, violence and death. The survivors of these conflicts are always traumatized by the memories of their lost loved ones. Most of the refugees and refugee related problems like famine, poverty, illiteracy, and ill health in African states are highly caused by civil conflicts. The Sub Saharan, GLR in particular, has been highly affected, but the DRC has had the deadliest and most complex conflict since 1998, followed by Rwanda where a million Tutsi ethnic group members and Hutu moderates were progressively exterminated in only one hundred days, killings that were organized by the government and implemented by hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens, including judges, human rights activists, doctors, nurses, teachers, priests, friends and relatives or spouses of the victims as described by Melvern (2008) and Mamdam (2001).

In some parts of the continent like Eastern DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Southern Sudan and CAR, people who are about to die get to know about it, but they remain helpless. The only thing they can do is to pay to the killers for a “nice” or quick death as was seen during Rwanda’s 1994 Genocide (Mamdan, 2007). This was because in one way or another, almost everybody who participated in the genocide of Rwanda had a chance to escape into the DRC. Some tricks of killing that were employed in Rwanda were carried on to the neighboring DRC.

The Spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons

According to Schroeder and Lamb (2006), small arms are seized or stolen from government forces, looted from state armories, purchased from corrupt soldiers while others are stolen from private owners. Even other arms are received from the peacekeepers. He further stated that rebels and other armed groups are also major sources of illicit small arms. On the other hand, unlicensed gunsmiths have the collective capacity to produce up to 20, 000 fire arms a year, some of a quality comparable with industrially produced guns. Therefore, the availability of small arms combined with the experience of protracted armed conflict has resulted in the emergence of a gun culture in so many villages on the African continent.

It can therefore be concluded that in order to eliminate small arms and destroy its market on the African continent, reinforcing arms embargoes and bolstering national arms controls plus destroying small arms will not have a decisive effect on the illicit small arms economy unless the root causes of violence and conflict are comprehensively addressed.

This therefore means that most of the African states need to address the root causes of armed conflicts within and between their borders. This can help the regional leaders to look for permanent solutions that can be employed to resolve African armed conflicts. The table below shows some African states with armed conflicts.

Table showing some African states with armed conflicts

Armed Conflicts / Wars	Years of Independence	Colonized by	State	S/N
1964-1965, 1979,1997-2001,2006, 2016...	1960	France (1880)	Congo (DRC)	1
1997-1999	1960	France (1880)	Congo Brazzaville	2
2005-2006, 2015 to date	1960	France (1894)	Central African Republic	3
1997-2001, 2015, 2016... to date	1962	Germany, Belgium	Burundi	4
1961,1975-1995, 1998-2001	1975	Portuguese (1482)	Angola	5
2007 election violence, frequent terrorist attacks to date	1963	Portuguese, British (1890)	Kenya	6

	1964	British (1922)	Zambia	7
Participated in ousting I.AMIN. 1979, Terror attack of 1998 on USA Embassy	1961	Portuguese, Germany (1500), (1885)	Tanzania	8
1979-1991, 1992-2001, 2006	1962	British (1890)	Uganda	9
1963-1972, 1983-2001, 2010, 2015, 2016.... to date	1956	Egypt, British (2600BC), (1898)	Sudan/ South Sudan	10
1963, 1979, 1991-1994	1962	Germany, Belgium, France	Rwanda	11

Source: Field Research 2016

Table showing African conflicts and the impact on humanity in 2005

Refugees 2005	Deaths	Country
438,663	350,000	Burundi
430,625	817,000	DRC
65, 293	300,000	Ethiopia
	1,000,000	Nigeria
40,447	100,000	Sierra Leone
294,760	100000	Somalia
693, 267	2,250,0000	Sudan
10,793	20,000	Zimbabwe

Source: UNHCR, Genocide Watch and Global Refugee Trend (2005)

There are traditional factors that can be identified for causing conflicts in the above African states. These include traditional rivalries over resources, the struggle between entrepreneurs or elite groups from places next to wealth, individuals competing for leadership to use the state for personal wealth. There are other groups that stand up to challenge their states because of failure to enforce its authority over the people's welfare. That is why in the DRC alone, there were almost several fighting groups each within either one of the above-mentioned characters which worked

for the rebels as identity maker that created reason for violence.

Discussion of Findings

The study discovered that the African continent suffers a number of armed conflicts where women and children have been the most disadvantaged. These conflicts originate from religious and ethnic organizations as a result of theological disagreements and other social misunderstandings. Not reconciling using secular justice creates an impression that these organizations have conflict management within their areas of jurisdiction once given an opportunity. This has been discussed below.

Justice for Peace

If the deprived people do not take up arms but stand out to challenge their respective states for the poor services, the complainants are considered as enemies to the authority who should die amidst demonstration. This therefore calls for an understanding that in order to have a sustainable peace agenda on the African continent, there is need to exercise justice and fairness. The leaders must recognize the values and interest of their followers and train them on how to live peacefully and this can be easily done together with religious and cultural input.

Some African leaders lead their governments in the most reckless ways. They lead their people to a disease destination and in fact this is one of the reasons why their leadership style ends with them. It is hard to identify a potential leader other than those elected from the ruling family. In line with other countries where freedom fighters concentrate on the agenda of restoring freedom in their nations, the reality seems to be different for the African freedom fighters.

When Freedom Fighters Become Criminals and Criminals Become Freedom Fighters

It is discovered that most of these freedom fighters struggle for money, sex and power as the last item on their agenda. This is because so many insurgence groups never expect to take power as they have less support and logistics. In the process, a big number of people are kidnapped, raped or defiled while others have their property looted and money stolen.

On the African continent, leaders come to power with celebrations. They keep reminding people not to forget the day and date their governments were born and how old they are, year by year. They are remembered from the time they came to power to the time they leave. It is surprising to note that those who die during their time in power are never recorded and those who lead them to death are not brought to book. Lack of respect for religion and human life has made it difficult for both the army and the citizens to respect each other's blood in the horn of Africa, West Africa, GLR and throughout the continent.

Walter (2006) indicated that the GLR, Central Africa, was one of the Worlds war torn areas that faced violence caused by turbulent political history of nearly 50 years. The worst of this conflict was the Rwandan genocide of 1994, when Hutu tribal members exterminated almost one million members of Tutsi minority. Such overt belligerence subsided, but the neighboring states remained alert for new outbreaks of violence as this can be realized in many states, as religion is in total silence.

The Impact of Africa's Armed Conflicts on Women

It can be described that during the civil wars, more women are raped, and the numbers escalate. Sexual violence in the DRC is estimated at higher levels as stated by Clinton (2009). It was also indicated that the numbers would have been higher had it not been the fear for the deadly HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and other related problems.

According to Ameenah (2005) whose effort was to show the religious rulings on the major problematic issues of female hygiene, a woman in her monthly flowing blood (Haydh), which is not as a result of child birth and the post child birth bleeding (Nifas), are exempted from sex. This is strongly confirmed in the Holly Qur'an Chapter 2:222. Because of the restrictions and difficulties with menses, women feel inconvenienced and thus sex also becomes a health hazard. From the prophetic teachings, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) is mentioned to have fixed a fine to be paid in the Dinar for a person who performs sex with his wife during her menses. He explained that if sexual relations occurred in the beginning of the menses, the penalty was one Dinar and if at the end of the menses, the penalty was half a Dinar. The essence behind the fines is not in the money paid, but the gravity of the offence under which the fine is fixed.

Women at Their Worst

Despite the health situations that women face on monthly basis that do not allow them to have sex, the situation on the African continent becomes a disastrous one for the female creatures. This is at times because they are not given time to narrate their health status as regards obstacles to sex. The study discovered that a big number of women are either raped or defiled even when they are in their menstruation periods or post-child birth bleeding. Sex during child birth bleeding is an abominable act and highly discouraged in all strongest possible terms (Muhammed, 2004; Al – suyuut, 2002; Ibin Kathir, 1997; Swafiy, 1990).

Ebrahim (1994) described rape as a sexual crime which is done with force and violence, and the pregnancy resulting from rape is very unlikely, but one cannot rule out the possibility of its occurrence. In Africa's civil wars, rape related problems need treatment of the physical injuries, crisis intervention with emotional support, and prophylaxis for venereal diseases and medication for potential pregnancies. Despite the above-mentioned problems that need immediate medical attention, more women especially the teenagers fear to report rape cases to medical service providers as a result of dishonor and their chances of getting married would be jeopardized.

The war abuses and rape result into negative attitude towards marriage. There is also poverty and famine which lead to increased prostitution. This causes unwanted pregnancies coupled with incurable diseases like HIV/AIDS and trauma. On the other hand, women are least privileged, poorest, often combined with hard labor and highly affected humans as a result of wars. Some women in the war affected areas face the problem of bearing children whose fathers will never be traced anywhere on earth. This is because these children are the products of rape and defilement since their female parents were not free and responsible to decide for the pregnancies. The alarming situation of rape and defilement in the DRC and other African societies make a number of women to bear children too early or too late, which endangers their brains, bodies and babies.

The level of poverty caused by civil wars in Africa coupled with the environmental hazards in the forests causes miscarriages in many women due to lack of clean water, nutritious food, clothes and shelter which are the basic needs of mankind. The medicine that is available and very familiar is the traditional herbal medicine that consists of leaves, stems and roots but this does little to heal the pain caused by trauma and poverty.

The Impact of Africa's Armed Conflicts on Children

It was discovered that an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 children are serving with armed groups in eastern DRC. Despite the fact that the Congolese national army - the Front for Army of Democratic Republic of Congo - formally ended child recruitment in 2004, many children still served in the national Army by 2012. These included children associated with armed groups, who were integrated into the FARDC of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It became expensive to have these children released into the care of an appropriate child protection agency and relevant UN agencies. This was because these children were not trained in anything other than fighting and killing human beings. Religious institutions and NGOs could be given access to all military installations to identify and remove child soldiers. This was not possible because by the time they were done with the sensitization programs, other stronger fighting rebel groups were already in place calling them to join another struggle, where more rape, defilement and other war crimes were highly expected to occur.

Problems Associated with African Conflicts

The study discovered that armed conflicts that are widely spread across the continent are mostly caused by the states own armed forces. The inaccessibility of the areas in which they usually arise, and the exceptional levels of violence coupled with social disruption that accompany them have not only made guerrilla movements in Africa extremely difficult to study, but also made life difficult for human rights activists. This is true in the sense that in most cases, those who come to rescue others are only given a chance to do their work with strict or rigid deadlines which are at times accompanied by threats of death. These make it difficult to end armed groups (Clapham, 1998).

Outside Africa, it is easy to secure job employment once someone goes to school, because education matters in employment (Eitzen and Leedham, 2001). However, it is observed that so many Southern Sudanese, Somalis, CAR, and Congolese children never went to school, never had time to grow their own food and therefore have no access to jobs so that they could be lifted from poverty. The continent has become the world's manufacturer of future violent members than the expected peace makers and peace builders. To some extent, some children will always dine with those that will kill them the next day, as there will be no value for human life.

The Impact of Refugee Influx as a Result of Ethnic-Religious Wars

On the African continent, the refugee influx and their related problems have never come to an end. The armed groups of LRA, RPA, ADF, SPLA, Ant Balaka, Seleke, Janjaweed Movement,

AQIM, and many more others in Eastern DRC including Al-shabab that has always caused a refugee conducive environment on the GLR are causing more harm than good. In addition to this problem, individual countries have failed to cater for its refugees.

In some situations, refugees fail to contend with the refugee environment and instead form a union and get trained to fight against those who forced them out of their country. This is the same with prisoners of war and other religious groups like Alshabab, LRA, ADF in Uganda, SPLA and others. This implies that they graduate from refugees to rebel groups who turn into freedom fighters from where it makes it easy for them to get internal and external support and continue terrorizing their countrymen while justifying their cause. Thus, this study helps to show that religious and ethnic organizations have a great role to play, and indeed, have the answers to questions regarding Armed conflicts caused by religious and ethnic issues on the African continent.

Conclusion

It can be observed that in Africa, non-military dimensions of security such as environmental degradation, poverty resources, scarcity, ethno-religious and nationalist identities, crimes, drugs, floods and mass migration of people have all threatened individual and societal security, survival, and even national security. Yet, at times the concept of security goes beyond military consideration. As a result of armed conflicts, political instability, internal displacement, mass migration and refugees' movement are making continental violence worse than ever before. It is also important to mention that Africa's abundant mineral and human resources coupled with the enormous wealth they produce, have not, however, translated into poverty reduction, long term economic growth, increased livelihood or welfare for the majority of Africans (Francis, 2008). In a situation where the rich want to get richer thus increasing the inequality gap between the rich and the poor, it makes it clear that the continent becomes a natural resource curse. This makes it clear that Africa's ethnic groups and religious communities have greater opportunities to conduct reconciliation where politicians have not managed to create peace.

In January 2000, the Security Council resolution 1308 stated that HIV/AIDS is a global threat that was not given the urgency that it deserved in some regions of Africa. Wars, political instability, internal displacement, mass migrations and refugee movement were mentioned to have spread the disease in Africa, to the extent that by the year 2000 an estimated 20 million people had died from HIV/AIDS, and 13 million children lost one or both parents to AIDS, and more 40 million people were living with HIV/AIDS. There is a strong belief that religious and ethnic institutions can be entrusted to move together as behavioral agents and as holistic workers to enlighten the African communities on the dangers of wars and their long-term impact which includes AIDS/HIV.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following: religious authorities, particularly Christian and Islamic leaders, should be brought at the forefront to condemn armed conflicts in Africa. This means that if the situation is not well handled in conjunction with religion, we are likely to register

future religious and ethnic violence, which is susceptible of spilling over to the neighboring regions (Adedeji, 1999).

The civil war in Southern Sudan where the Nuer and Dinka in Upper Nile, the Dinka and Baggara, Dinka and Bari compete for leadership and use of natural resources mainly grazing land should be given attention through the use of religious conflict resolution mechanisms. Once given an opportunity, religion and ethnicity can also take an initiative in managing the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria, Alshabab in Somali land and the Great Lakes Region, and many other armed conflicts. Other rebel groups that have affected the population on the Great Lakes Region include, the LRA, ADF, WNBF in North West Uganda, Holy Spirit Movement in North Eastern Uganda, SPLA in Southern Sudan and the rebel groups fighting in Eastern DRC. There are also Seleke rebels and Anti Balaka in Central African Republic, Alqaedah in Maghrib –Mali and many other armed groups whose identity is religion or ethnicity.

In the Dar-es-salam declaration on peace, security, development and democracy in the Sub-Saharan and GLR of 19th to 20th November 2004, state leaders were deeply concerned about the endemic conflict and persistent insecurity caused or aggravated by inter alia- economic stagnation and poverty aggravation, mistrust and suspicion between government. Concerns were also registered on massive violation of human rights and other policies of exclusion and marginalization, gender inequality, use of violence for conquering or conserving power, impunity of crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity, war crimes, illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons proliferation of armed groups, organized crimes and illegal exploitation of national resources. This study recommends that the above resolutions should be supervised from time to time and be implemented effectively. However, religious organizations and ethnic leaders should not be left behind since they have an upper hand as they interact with their community members who are the agents behind the catastrophic situations.

Religious and ethnic institutions should be encouraged to preach against armed violence, and to ensure that children are not trained in the army. Through the same initiative, former child soldiers should be re-integrated into their communities where religious and ethnic institutions have a say. These should be rehabilitated, counseled and resettled for education. The above-mentioned steps should all be implemented and supervised by African states security organs in order to create the conditions for a violent free generation.

Africans should respond towards the ongoing armed and non-armed conflicts by attaching value to the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. These include Gachacha in Burundi and Rwanda, Mato-oput in Northern Uganda, Ubuntu in South Africa and many other mechanisms, depending on the nature of conflicts. This is a humanist carrier that requires one's generosity, intra exceptional good behavior (Omeje, 2007).

People should be recruited for jobs without looking at politics as a determinant. Where possible, loans should be given. Though, work is highly prized as a political value in society, employment links a person to a network of socially rewarding interaction. Without work, people feel disenfranchised from their social political system and become alienated thus leading violent acts (Guy, 1995).

Finally, to the African leaders, there is need to consider the general welfare of the society. Religious and ethnic organizations should be encouraged to put emphasis on the community needs rather than on individual interests (Kaiser, 1990).

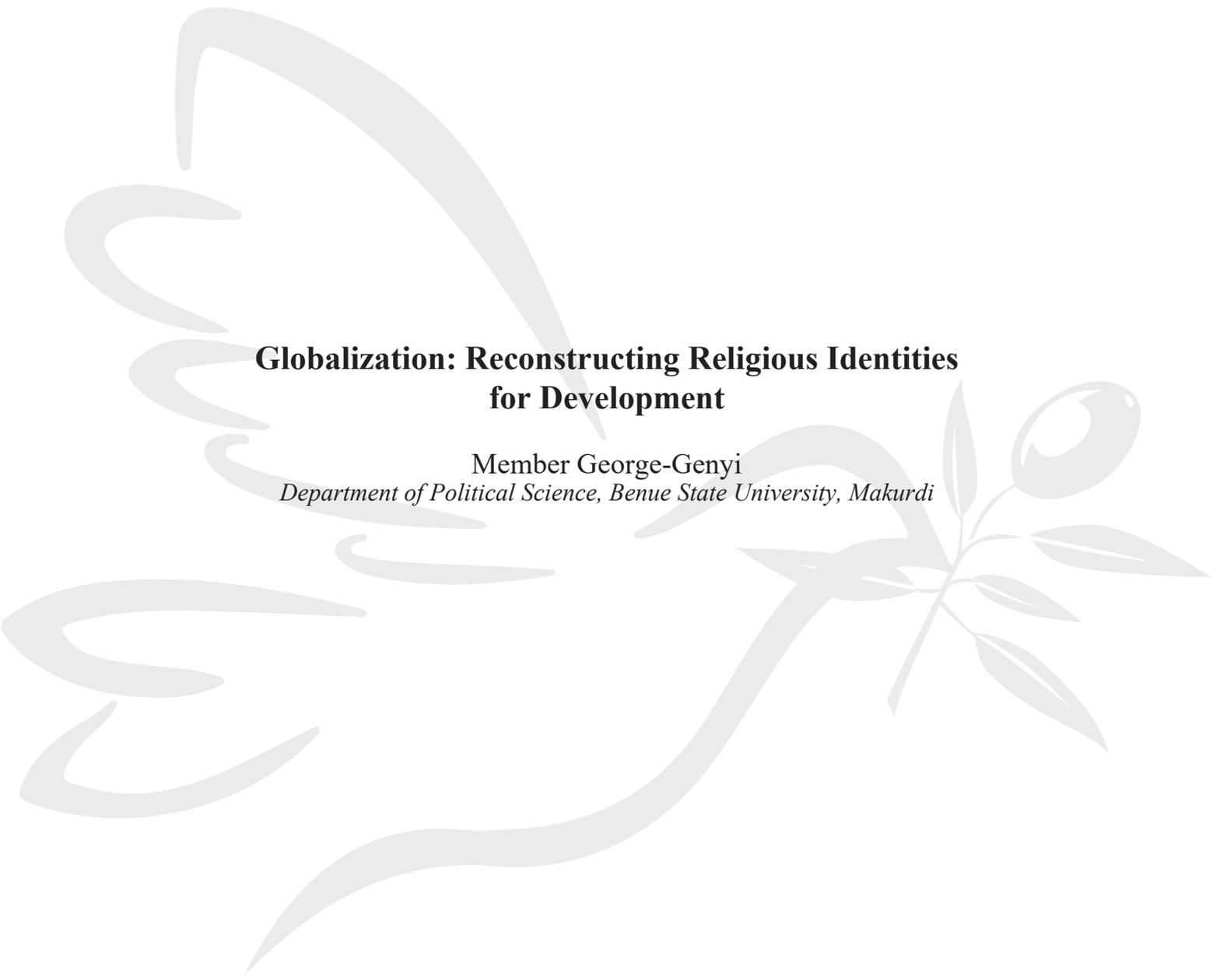
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**Globalization: Reconstructing Religious Identities
for Development**

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Abstract

In an era of nearly unrestricted information flow across territorial borders via technology, long held conservative religious values on the Islamic and Christian divides are being reshaped if not toned down. The point of convergence in shared humanity is therefore emerging despite religious inclinations. Men and women can share space in a bus in traditional Islamic societies, for example in Kenya and Nigeria. Such societies are increasingly recognizing the obvious fact of diversity, but differences should be respected and a critical platform for inclusion in the socio-economic and political processes by these divides is necessary and desirable. Freedom of expression in speech and dress and association is commonly shared on social media platforms and elsewhere without attracting the usual extreme intolerance from conservatives. Spaces for frequency of interaction have increased due to the flow of information and services. As a result, the capacity for tolerance by Muslims and Christians has been expanded in an era of steep competition that must bring many together for access to available space and resources. Religious and political leaders therefore need to leverage on opportunities provided by the forces of globalization to strengthen cooperation between Islam and Christianity for a more peaceful and harmonious world. It is recommended that a conception of religious identity negotiation and reconstruction necessary for development must be sensitive to social contexts, structural factors and power – relations.

Keywords: globalization, tolerance, shared humanity, development, religious identity

Introduction

The phenomenon of globalization has gained currency in contemporary scholarship and has also drawn the attention of national leaders, diplomats, and opinion leaders. This is because of its multidimensionality and its varied implications on individuals, cultures and nations. With the instrumentality of communication and transportation, technology and the role played by the media, globalization has largely contributed to the *deterritorialization* and the blurring of geographical spaces and boundaries.

This is why the world is now referred to by many as a global village where people, cultures and identities interact regularly. It is thus obvious that religion and indeed religious identities have not been vitiated by these changes and the resultant effects brought about by the current wave of globalization.

We state here very quickly that one noticeable interface of globalization with religion has been the fact of its apparent revival and resurgence and the obvious non-relegation to a few countries where their roots originally began. We also note that globalization has not just made religions more conscious of themselves as being “world religions” reinforcing their respective specific identities, but also seeking to appreciate the dynamics of the other religions in an ever-changing world.

This paper seeks to examine the role globalization has played in reconstructing and promoting religious identities around the world and utilizing information and technology in the process of strengthening cooperation especially between the two major religions, Christianity and Islam, in order to entrench tolerance and shared humanity.

Conceptual Issues

(i) Globalization

Globalization has become quite pervasive in the contemporary age. It has become very popular in its economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions. A growing aspect of the globalization problematic is the breaking down of national economic barriers, the international spread of trade, financial and production activities and the activities of transnational corporations and international financial institutions in these processes (Khor 2000). There is a historical context in which this understanding of globalization process is cast namely that the advanced countries of today had engaged developing societies of Africa and Asia over the past five centuries through trade and production activities especially during the colonial period. Economic globalization has accelerated through advancement in technological developments. The liberation of national economies involves breaking down national barriers to economic activities, leading to greater openness and integration of countries in the world markets.

National policies and policy making mechanisms have also been affected by the growing wave of globalization. This is in the areas of economic, social, cultural and technological life of the nations. Thus, the jurisdiction of states and people has come under the influence of international agencies and processes or of big private corporations and economic /financial actors.

This has greatly led to erosion of national sovereignties with attendant consequences especially for developing nations. The breaking down of national boundaries has also led to and is being led

by the free flow of communication and information technology. In this regard, cultures and beliefs have been easily transported across geographical boundaries.

Historically, globalization is the process that started in a small way in the 19th century, and Toyo (2000) records that globalization began when capital moved from Europe to open up new areas in America and Australia, mostly in the building of rail roads, systems and agriculture that would be central to the expansion of capitalism.

In its contemporary form, globalization is driven by variety of forces. These Banjo (2000) argue are flow of financial and economic resources with services and, to a large extent, labor, technology, transport, communications and information technology; the spread of cultures from one corner of the world to the other, and global diffusion of religious ideas as well as ideologies. It can be viewed as an interdependent process associated with peace and progress increasingly with democracy. People, firms, and markets matter the most, and states matter less because it is the economy that drives the states to make decisions and this is fueled by the international division of labor. As the world becomes more interdependent on one another, decisions are made as a collective whole in all fields of human endeavor, and not only by the independent political state.

(ii) Religion and Religious Identity

Religious identity is salient to people at least some of the time and to anybody who belongs to a religion. Indeed, many practices, such as Muslims praying five times a day, Catholics praying the Rosary according to a scheduled time of the day and of the week, and the Jewish observance of the Sabbath regularly make religious identity salient (Benjamin, et al., 2016). It is plausible to note that religion and identity are positively correlated. While religion addresses the issues of beliefs, modus operandi and vivendi, and spiritual teachings which might have an impact on the development of an individual's self-conceptualization, the special role of religion and spirituality in the development of identity cannot be ignored as it deepens our insights into the formation of identity.

Hammond (1988) notes that religion is a derivative of the social circumstances that create the enabling environment for involuntary acceptance of a way of life, especially as a consequence of group membership. For instance, people are made to manifest their sense of unity and belonging as a result of group membership through participation in rituals, ceremonies, belief systems or orientations and behavior towards symbols and objects perceived to be sacred and treated with a sense of awe and wonder. It has been acknowledged that there exists a correlation between religion and ethnicity, and this correlation holds whether one perceives ethnicity subjectively or even when one captures ethnicity using proxies of accumulation or assimilation of an individual into a group. For example, participation or membership in a religion that is characteristic of one's ethnic group is mostly found to be highly correlated with the degree of one's ethnic identity as it is shown with the association of northern Nigeria with Islam and the south with Christianity. The role of religion in different societies and epoch vary. Religion might be a powerful force in one society, less powerful in another, and in some societies, it might have negligible influence. The differential role of religion in different societies and epochs arguably does not eliminate in its entirety, the influence of religion on identity development and evolution over time.

There is no generally acceptable definition of religion due to the nature of the discipline –

which includes diversity of religions, diversity of religious experiences and origins, etc. Religion is derived from the Latin word *religare* meaning “to bind back” or “to rebind”.

Griffiths (2000) notes that etymologically, religion entails a process of reconnecting by worship a missing or broken intimacy between worshippers and the Supreme Being. Pecorino (2000) also states that a definition of religion should include involvement of the totality of life, openness to all kinds of people, dealing with issues in widely different activities, notions and beliefs practiced in both private and social milieus and which have repercussions perceived to be either harmful or beneficial to persons and groups.

Oppong (2013) sees religion as a feeling of man’s absolute dependence encouraged by man’s sense of inadequate protection, provision, sustenance and supremacy thus invoking a sense of dependence on a Supreme Being believed to be all powerful and all knowing. This arises from man’s recognition of his limitations such as inability to explain some of the mysteries of the world, like the origin of man, the origin and even cause of death, life after death, and so on. Man, therefore yearns for a Being that he believes has all the answers and solutions to these complexities and often unanswered puzzles about life.

It can therefore be discerned from the above that man’s acknowledgement of religion and belief in the existence of deity leads to infantile neurosis and irrational actions that leave him exploited. In view of the above definitions, religion appears to deal with the inexplicable relationship between man and the divine, mundane being and transcendental Being.

Proponents of religion sees religion as a force for good and order in the society. From this standpoint, religion plays an important role in terms of helping to ensure harmonious co-existence of human beings. On the other hand, opponents, such as Marx (1985), see religion as a force for evil. It is more of an instrument constructed and invented to oppress the downtrodden and poor masses. According to him, the state promotes inverted belief in religion just to pacify the exploited and oppressed class and consolidate the power of the ruling class in the society. In summary, religion seems to be instrumental in the formation of identity.

(iii) The Concept of Development

The general notion of development entails progress both to an individual and a society. It is a multidimensional process, that embraces the economic, political and social-cultural elements of the society. There is a dimension of development that has moved away from a paternalistic, charity based approach to progress of giving assistance to underdeveloped countries from the developed North. There is a rejection of the vertical conception of development and a proposal for a horizontal model based on what is referred to as shared human responsibility. This states that development is a shared human responsibility and a shared human possibility (Concord Dare Forum, p. 2011).

It is an initiative for the promotion of values that allow people to engage in respectful and open dialogue with others on equal footing, seeking to identify shared agendas for mutual benefits. The focus is on active global citizenship stressing social justice and human development, employing some human right based approach. There is citizenship awareness and critical understanding of the interdependent world and of their own role, responsibilities and lifestyles in relation to a globalized society and to support their active engagement in local and global attempts

to eradicate poverty, and promote justice, human rights and sustainable ways of living.

Sen (1999) opines that the concept of development should be viewed as an integrated process of the expansion of substantive freedoms such as freedom from poverty, famine, malnutrition, premature mortality and access to health. All freedoms are strongly interconnected, and they reinforce each other.

Agaba and George-Genyi (2013) therefore note that there is no single definition or even conceptualization of development, however, there are certain commonalities associated with the concept such as freedoms and the attempts at poverty reduction, increase in economic welfare, improved health and education, and increased political and social freedoms. In all of these, the emphasis is on the wellbeing of the individual in the society and not just improvement in institutions.

Globalization and Religious Identities

The advanced countries of today had engaged developing societies of Africa and Asia over the past five centuries through trade and production activities especially during the colonial period. Economic globalization has accelerated through advancements in technological developments. The liberalization of national economies involves breaking down national barriers to economic activities, leading to greater openness and integration of countries in the world markets.

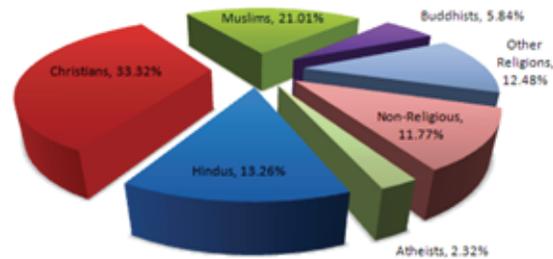
Indeed, Azzouzi (2013) notes that religion and globalization have engaged in a persistently flexible relationship in which the former relies on the latter for its thriving and flourishing while at the same time challenges its hybridizing effects.

Religion is not immune from changes brought about by globalization. This has resulted apparently in making the world a small village where people, cultures and identities come in a daily face to face contact with each other. Religions still have their respective home in specific territorial spaces where they originally appeared and where their respective shrines exist, their inner nature and general purpose to be embraced and practiced by people all over the world prompt them to spread throughout all the geographical spaces of the world. The technologies of globalization have thus come in handy for religions to make good use of. Thus, geographical frontiers have become blurred.

Sahlberg (2004) notes that globalization has two macro-level paradoxical effects on our daily lives. First, it simultaneously integrates and segregates. It integrates world cultures through the global communication networks and less restricted movement of individuals. At the same time, it creates a tension between those who are benefiting more and those who may be marginalized by the market values and consumer cultures that are typical to many societies especially in the areas that suffer from poverty or slower development.

The faculty of Economics and Sociology, University of Lodz has put the population of world religions graphically. Thus: Christianity, 33.32%, Islam, 21.01%, Hinduism, 13.26%, Buddhism, 5.84%, other religions, 12.48%, non-religious, 11.77% and Atheists, 2.32%.

THE DIVISION OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS



Historically, religion has been influenced by the process and course of globalization. Evolving trade routes led to the colonization of Asia, Africa, Central and South America right from the 16th century when the Portuguese traders and merchants set foot on the African soil. They were followed by the religious crusaders and thus religion became an integral part of colonization and later on globalization. It has thus become a major feature in some historical conflicts and the most recent wave of modern terrorism.

In contemporary times, religion is no longer just a set of beliefs that people arrive at by reflection, but a symbolic system which carries out identity and marks out social/ethnic and other boundaries. Indeed, religion provides powerful mechanisms for psychological and social processes and offers distinctive world views and identity (Ysseldyk, R. et al., 2010). Understood in this context, it is a concern for both the planet and humanity requiring changes and efforts from all actors by promoting values that allow people to engage in respectful and open dialogue with others on equal footing, seeking to identify shared agendas for mutual benefits, focusing on active global citizenship wish or emphasis on social justice, globalization and human development, and employing a human right based approach to education and positive campaigns.

As stated earlier, globalization has played a tremendous role in providing a context for the current considerable revival and resurgence of religion. Today most religions operate outside of their traditional milieu and are embraced in such new areas. Indeed, they have spread and scattered on a global scale and as Scholte (2005) makes it clear “Accelerated globalization of recent times has enabled co-religionists across the planet to have greater direct contact with one another” (p. 245). Global communications, global organizations, global finance, and the like, have allowed ideas of the *Transworld Umma* of Muslims and the universal Christian Church to be given concrete shape as it has never been done before.

Being a source of identity and pride, religion is always promoted by its practitioners to reach the level of globality and be embraced by as many people as possible. Muslims, for instance, aspire to establish the Islamic *Umma*, a community of believers. Christianity lays claims to its universal appeal, and information technology at the disposal of these religions via globalization has contributed considerably to their emergence, revivalism and fortification (Turner, 2007). Information technologies, transportation means, and the media have all played important roles in the dissemination of religious ideas and often breaking down misconceptions about the other. A lot of T.V channels, radio stations and print media are founded solely for advocating religions respectively. We find such TV channels as Igrae, EL Honda, etc., essentially religious channels

created for the strengthening and fortification of Islam. There are EWTN, Vatican Radio, and so on, for Christian and Catholic Messages. These technologies have helped religions of different forms, that is, fundamentalist, moderate, etc. to cross geographical boundaries and be present everywhere.

Having facilitated the way for religions to come in contact with each other and provided a context for their flourishing and thriving, globalization has brought such religions to a circle of competition and conflicts. Bryan (2007) notes that “Globalization transforms the generic ‘religion’ into a world-system of competing and conflicting religions” (p.146). This process of institutional specialization has transformed local, diverse and fragmented cultural practices into recognizable systems of religion. Globalization has therefore had the paradoxical effect of making religions (via their religious leaders and elites) more self-conscious of themselves as being world leaders. Typically, religious identities are strengthened by the factor of globalization since the different religions have their distinct internal structures, their connections to different cultures, and their inclusion of different ways of worshipping and practices, as the case with Islam and Christianity. They contradict and are mostly incompatible with each other. The point of becoming hybridized or homogenized has not arisen, yet these religions come in close contact with each other and find ways to promote accommodation and understanding.

There have been clashes and competition, but there have been structures put in place for interfaith dialogue and reconciliation as is done in Nigeria. We note however that it is difficult for religions to cope with globalization values such as liberalism, consumerism, rationalism, etc. These values advocate and promote secularism. Scholte speaks of the anti-rationalist faiths since he equates rationalism with globalization and considers religion anti-rationalist, and by implication anti-globalization. This contemporary revivalist movements have largely replayed a long-term tendency that predates contemporary accelerated globalization whereby certain religious cadres have from time to time revolted against modern secularism and scientism.

Religious Identity Negotiation and Reconstruction for Development

It is becoming increasingly apparent that nations need to live in peace in order to afford societal progress and development. In a world of diversities cutting across political, socio-cultural, economic and religious diversities, tolerance and accommodation by all become imperative, otherwise chaos and conflicts will become the defining features of our existence. It is obvious that there is a struggle over the claims of religious tolerance in this 21st century. Claims are made among the adherents of religions who are seeking for guidance to live in peace and harmony and also to have a mutual understanding for living together. The attempt by nations such as Malaysia to ensure religious tolerance has been associated with struggles and competitions. The dynamics of religious life seem to be promising good advantages but yet there are obvious setbacks. However, the onus is on the believers and adherents of religions to set benchmarks for producing positive outcomes especially as they seek interactions with other religious faithful.

This, therefore, is the imperative for tolerance. There are two main models of tolerance: first, passive tolerance which means accepting differences as factual; second, there is active tolerance, which means being involved with others in the midst of differences and variations. The outcome of tolerance is living side by side peacefully and accepting the variations that exist.

Tolerance certainly is a reciprocal process between two counterparts. Tamring (2008) states that “tolerance in general refers to the willingness of an individual to establish a relationship and co-exist with another individual of a different cultural and social background” (p. 147). Agius and Ambrosewicz (2003) had earlier noted that tolerance is a formula to develop co-existence in a civilized way between sides that are different in terms of faith, belief and view.

Most world religions preach tolerance. In Christianity tolerance either in social or religions claim is also categorized in a good manner as is indicated in the Holy Bible. Here Jesus forbids the apostle John from stopping a man who dispelled evil spirits from another – *saying that anyone who is not against us would be favorably disposed to us* (Mark 9: 38 – 40). In this case, it indicates that Jesus forbids rejecting those who do not believe in him and his teachings.

For Buddhism, the Dharma tolerance is known as *dāta* and the teachings of this doctrine are necessarily based on not just good moral character but great moral tolerance. For Sikhism, the act of hating human beings while at the same time worshipping God is totally unacceptable because this religion teaches that to know God is through the relationship among other creatures.

Based on the above therefore, it is clear that the element of tolerance is perverse in most religions. In Surah, al-Quran explains that justice and goodwill towards others who are of different convictions is one of the main conditions that brought about tolerance (al-Muntahanah 60:8).

Unfortunately, even with this injunction from the different religions, the world has experienced great religious conflicts arising from intolerance of adherents of other faiths. Only in the period covering 1980 – 1995, there were 72 civil wars (ethnic, national, religious and racial wars). This continued after the 1995 aggression of conflicts involving different religions and religion-linked terrorist attacks in Kosovo, Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt, Afghanistan, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Philippines, and a host of others, which were expressed in inter-denominational conflicts and religion-linked terrorist attacks. The Syrian religious conflicts have the main players as Bashar al-Assad and other Islamic groups. These have caused and intensified the refugee problems and migrations. This has heightened the tension within these nations and around the world.

Thus, religion-based conflicts have been on the rise and globalization with its elements has brought the consequences and implications of these conflicts to other nations via the means of integration. The world has thus become more and more multicultural with attendant consequences and implications of conflicts on other nations.

Globalization has through the development of scientific and technological forces it has unleashed, facilitated the extinction of the indigenous development of technology and distorted patterns of production in Africa, for example. This has made their economies dependent on the dictates of the international economic system. It has also reduced the capacity of governments to determine and control events in their countries and thus their accountability and responsiveness to their people, given the fact that the context, institutions and processes by which these decisions are taken are far from democratic. This has led to predisposing factors in these countries for tension, intolerance and consequently religious and ethnic conflicts. Democracy with its emphasis on tolerance and compromise can hardly thrive in an environment of conflicts and thus development has hardly been achieved.

We note also that globalization has its other side which can be explored for development.

Information and communication technologies have eased interaction among countries and peoples thus creating a global village out of a wide and diverse world of cultures and religions. It has opened people's lives to other cultures and all their creativity and to the flow of ideas and values. The availability of information on how other countries are governed and the freedom and rights their people enjoy has helped to reduce suspicion about others, and the way they do things including their creed and faith (Ibrahim, 2013).

Strengthening Religious Cooperation for Development in a Globalized World

Religion and religious identities are not immune from the challenges and effects of globalization. Globalization has increased the spread of religions on a global scale by providing a context for revival and resurgence. Adherents of the different faiths have utilized the instrumentality of the current wave of information and technological advancement to promote and entrench their religions. It is also hoped that the explosion in information technology will offer religious leaders and their faithful the opportunity for dialogue and for more understanding and acceptance of the others' faith.

In Nigeria for instance, there has been a Christian-Muslim dialogue initiative that has helped to build trust and respect, cooperation on humanitarian goals, and theological exchange to deepen understanding of each other's heritage in support of common action. For Christians, dialogue has been promoted by the Catholic Church since the 1960s through Vatican II and by the World Council of Churches (Helkman, 2006).

It is estimated that more than two-thirds of the world's population identify with a religion. Thus, when conflicts assume religious overtones, religious power-brokers can emerge apart from the formal institutions and chains of authority. At the core of its nature, religion is a critical consideration for development programs because it often transcends geographic boundaries and can be used to reach a wider network of followers. The result has both positive and negative implications for the world today. Actors in such religiously motivated conflicts can mobilize followers via information dissemination and awareness for peacebuilding using theological language and shared values by adherents to gain support for peace.

At a time when the world has become a global village, engaging religion and key religious actors in conflict settings can provide unique opportunities to intervene and provide meaning, identity and emotional support, empathy and compassion that can sustain reconciliation and problem-solving across divisions; promote values, norms and motivations that support non-violent approaches to raising and confronting differences.

In West Africa, in response to civil wars in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia, inter-religious councils composed of representations from Muslim, Protestant and Catholic groups provided leadership and resources to rebuild communities and advocated for refugees (USAID, 2009).

In Southern Sudan, peace conferences sponsored by the New Sudan Council of Churches aimed to improve dialogue between the parties engaged in conflicts, and mobilized communities towards local peace programs.

In Kashmir, the International Centre for Religion and Diplomacy has brought together Muslim and Hindu Youths in Kashmir to interact with each other in an attempt to lay the

foundations for long-term mutual trust and understanding. Essentially, inter- and intra- faith cooperation is very necessary for societies that are multi-religious and multi-ethnic to engage in peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding.

Dialogue and cooperation between religions are important. Below are two quotations that highlight the urgency and need for Muslims and Christians and other religions to cooperate. The first is taken from an address made by Benedict XVI (2006) to the Ambassadors from Muslim countries in which he said:

Inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims cannot be reduced to an optional extra. It is in fact a vital necessity on which in large measure our future depends. (p.1)

The second quotation is from a letter signed by 138 Muslim scholars and leaders from across the Muslim world and sent to Christian leaders in 2007. It says:

Muslims and Christians together make up over half of the world's population. Without peace and justice between these two communities, there can be no meaningful peace in the world. The future of the world depends on peace between Muslims and Christians. (Benedict XVI, p.1)

The above statements highlight the need for religious leaders to address the growing polarization between them which have been fueled by war, persecution, injustices and by individuals and groups stirring up religious divisions to achieve political or material gain. In a globalized world where interactions are easy, dialogue between Muslims and Christians is needed now more than ever before to address the issues causing this division. The fact that Muslims and Christians make up over 50% of the world's population makes dialogue and cooperation inevitable.

Conclusion

We have noted in this paper that globalization is a process which is systematically restructuring interactive phases among nations by breaking down barriers in the areas of culture, commerce, economy, religion, information, and communication as well as in several other fields of endeavor. It aims at the universal homogenization of ideas, culture, values and even lifestyles (Rahman & Khambal, 2013).

We also note that globalization has been associated with explosion in information and technological advancement and this has impacted on all aspects of the lives of the people and nations globally.

Globalization and religion have experienced flexible relationship that has impacted on each other in profound ways. Although religions still have their specific territorial origins and spaces, through a globalized world, they have been exported to other climes and practiced by people of other cultures and societies.

Religion has continued to assert its identity in the light of globalization. The question of

which religion is the ideal religion and ultimately the truest has always been raised and debated among people of different religions. Socio-economic and political challenges arising from governance deficits in nations have predisposed nations to the manipulation of religions for selfish and political ends.

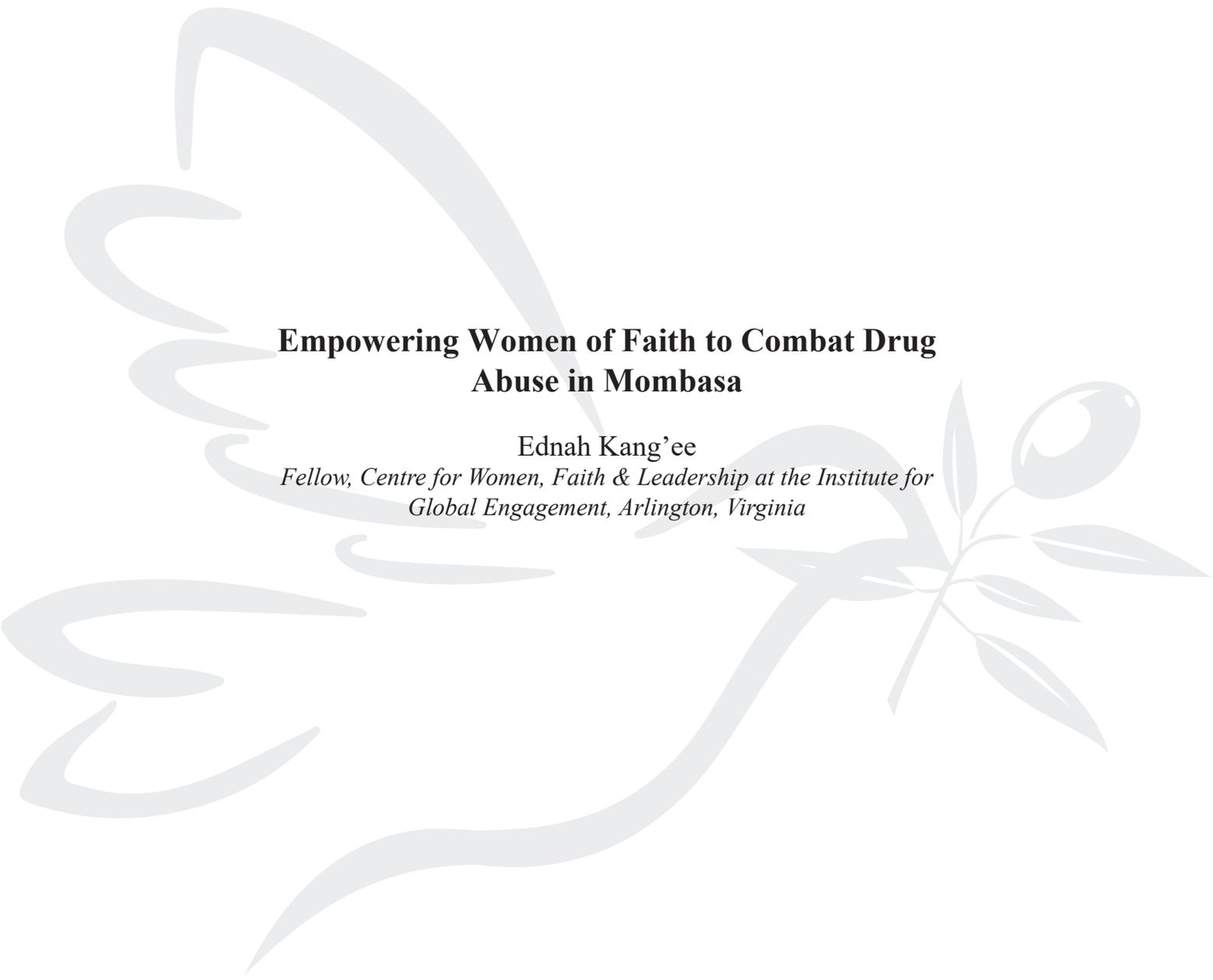
This paper concludes that while maintaining some peculiar levels of exclusivities, the leaders of world religions can take advantage of information technology and the media available due to the workings of globalization and seek to promote religious tolerance and accommodation.

This is necessary for peaceful co-existence and a just society where human progress and, indeed, development can be achieved. Interreligious dialogue alongside other peacebuilding strategies are vital to achieving national development via religious harmony.

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Empowering Women of Faith to Combat Drug Abuse in Mombasa

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Abstract

Mombasa is Kenya's second largest city and East Africa's largest port city, quickly evolving into a major international heroin transit hub with upwards of 40 tons of narcotics estimated to flow through it each year. Women and girls are especially affected by the drug scourge both as victims and casualties. Drug abuse is on the rise with little to no attention from both the citizens and authorities, including the religious community. According to the anti-drug agency, the National Authority for the Campaign against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA), more than 60,000 people are addicted to hard drugs at the Coast. With this, the spread of HIV/AIDS infection among drug users is on the rise. The objective of this study is to determine how women of faith could offer a lasting solution to the drug menace. Islamic and Christian norms are an important motivating factor and a practical tool that motivate women of faith to engage in an important fight against drug abuse in Mombasa. Despite the rhetoric from Kenyan political leaders to address this menace, there is a lack of action in the form of high-level prosecutions or interdiction. Arrests of high level drug peddlers rarely lead to convictions. Lack of adequate early awareness on the effects of drug abuse and unemployment mainly contribute to the prevalence. With inadequate political leadership in addressing the matter, the potential role of religious women in combatting drug abuse is crucial. Religious actors such as the Kenya Muslim National Advisory Council, clergy and lay leaders have united to educate and support heroin and cocaine addicts. There are indications that faith interventions are resulting in reduced drug use in Mombasa, but the problem requires a sustained response. Religious women have a vital role in highlighting the moral and spiritual prerequisite for effective social action. Currently, public awareness of the effects of drug abuse remain relatively low. Key recommendations in this project include an interfaith anti-drug addiction guide to empower religious women to encourage and connect drug addicts through their spirituality, walk together to recovery, and stop and prevent the spread of drug abuse.

Keywords: *Christianity, Islam, faith, drug abuse, peace*

Figure 1 Women of Faith Demonstrating Against Drug Abuse in Mombasa - Jill Craig, Destination Magazine



Background and Context

Mombasa is located at the coast of Kenya with a population of 939,370 residents (Government of Kenya, 2010). It is also the second largest city of Kenya. Majority of the population are women who fall within the 20-30 age bracket (Government of Kenya, 2010). 60% of drug users in Mombasa are below 30 years of age (Korir, 2013). With upwards of 40 tons of narcotics estimated to flow through Mombasa each year, women bear the greatest cost of drug abuse in the city (Gridneff, 2016).

Mombasa's role as a hub for heroin transit is linked to global developments far beyond Kenya. Evidence from various studies as well as anecdotal accounts has shown that as regional conflict escalates in Central Asia and enforcement increases in south-eastern Europe, an alternative route – known by some as the Smack Track – has exploded in popularity (Gridneff, 2016). The route runs south from Afghanistan across the Indian Ocean and through the port of Mombasa. After entering Kenya, the drugs are trafficked through Africa and onward to European and American markets. Initially, hard drugs were not easily available, but as large quantities pass through Kenya enroute to Asia, Europe and the United States, a domestic market for hard drugs has emerged in Kenya, with drug use fueled by price factors. This explains why drugs like heroin cost \$1.90 (USD) per gram in Kenya, the cheapest documented price for a gram of heroin globally, as compared to \$200 (USD) per gram of heroin in the United States of America. Similarly, a gram of meth costs \$2.38 (USD) in Kenya, the fourth cheapest price for a gram of heroin globally, as compared to \$184.25 (USD) for a similar quantity in Singapore (Khosla, 2014).

Due to the high influx of drugs as well as the relative low cost of these drugs in Mombasa, women and girls have become both direct and indirect victims of abuse of drugs. Patterns of violence linked to drugs have increased steadily over time. In 1991 for instance, male students in a mixed school invaded the girl's dormitory and raped more than 70 girls. At least 19 girls lost their lives at the age of 15 (Reuters, 1991). In 2006, a mass rape again occurred against school girls. This time, approximately 15 girls were raped. While several reasons have been advanced by different stakeholders as to the root cause, drug abuse featured prominently (BBC News, 2006).

Survey data on an arms management program assembled by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) also reveal that the Kenyan coast faces a new kind of crisis, with the significant number of tourists visiting the area primarily to have sex with children. Investigations reveal that there is a category of tourists who come to Kenya solely to look for virgins and drugs (Jefferson & Angus, 2002). Most of these tourists – between the age of 45 and 65 - are pensioners who are divorced and/or are seeking to rekindle their sexual lives by having sex with teenagers, who are perceived to be without HIV. The same tourists who are regular drug users then introduce young girls to drugs which eventually leads to abuse. A case in point is the number of young girls who are drug users in Mtwapa, Shella, Malindi, Kilifi and Ukunda (Korir, 2013).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that more than 18,000 Kenyans regularly inject heroin, with almost half of them in Kenya's coast. One women's activist - Mwini Abbas, Program Coordinator of Reach out Center Trust, a drug rehabilitation organization that operates centers in and around Mombasa - said she is concerned that the government's crackdown in drugs was "victimizing the users and not pursuing the barons" (Jefferson & Angus,

2002). There has been lack of action in the form of high-level prosecutions or interdiction of drug barons in Kenya (U.S. Department of State, 2014).

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs commented in a recent report that "Only a tiny fraction of the drugs believed to transit in and through Kenya are seized by authorities." According to a 2015 report by the National Crime Research Centre, out of 13 counties in Kenya, Mombasa recorded the highest number of defilement cases at 60.0 per cent, the highest number of wife/husband battery at 97.7 per cent and rape cases at 66.7 per cent (Ogutu, 2016).

Key Problem / Challenge

Drug abuse is escalating at an alarming rate at the Coast, yet it has received very little attention from citizens and from the authorities. That includes religious communities. Every day three people are initiated into drug use. According to the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA), more than 60,000 people are addicted to hard drugs at the Coast.

With this, the spread of HIV/AIDS infection among drug users at the Coast is growing at an alarming rate. According to Darat, HIV/AIDS International Agency anecdotal study entitled: *Rapid situation assessment of drug abuse especially injecting drug users (IDU's) in Mombasa* in 2009 showed that a high practice of needle and syringe sharing among IDUs has become a means of spread of HIV. The 2015 National AIDS Control Council (NACC) report reveals that women between 15 and 24 account for 21 per cent of the 100,000 cases of HIV infections in Mombasa.

Most drug users are unemployed and the only means by which they can sustain their habit is through crime. Many families at the Coast are broken because of the drug menace, with women being left with the sole responsibility of raising the family. A common feature among male drug users is *abandoned wives*. Most male drug users no longer perform conjugal rights on their wives and some resort to giving their women freedom to look for other men to satisfy their conjugal needs. Consequently, the women are required to bring them money to buy drugs.

The drug trade has not only affected girls but also the young boys, many of whom are orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS. Mombasa, Ukunda, Malindi and Lamu have slowly gained a reputation as an attractive destination for homosexual tourists looking for young boys. A mother asked during a recent protest, 'Who will marry our daughters? All the young men are becoming useless under the influence of drugs.'

Personal and Professional Experience

Ednah Kang'ee's inspiration to recount and act on the grave problem of drugs is closely linked to her own story and her faith journey. Born and raised in Mombasa in a deeply rooted Christian family in the late 70s Ednah Kang'ee recalls how she has lost close family members, friends and neighbors to drugs. Her mother was a daughter of a reverend. Her grandfather had started the Anglican Church in her rural home many years before. It was a tradition for his children, all nine of them, to congregate during Christmas with their families. How she loved

Christmas time! Every evening, her grandfather would share a sermonette, and always had a lesson for the grandchildren children on obedience to God and parents. He was especially keen to counsel the older cousins who were already teenagers as he repeatedly warned them against drug abuse. Ednah recalls that sometimes her teenage cousins would get angry at her grandfather and would try to avoid him during the sermonette. It was only later that she understood why grandpa laid emphasis on the menace.

These lessons from her grandfather influenced Ednah's perspective on the scourge of drugs as she grew older. She was later to discover that some of her teenage cousins had been abusing drugs such as marijuana at a tender age. One aunt told her that she would leave the children, both boys and girls, with money for food items such as milk and vegetables and the next thing she knew the money was lost and no one would take ownership. They had become petty thieves in order to purchase drugs.

She had tried counseling and even calling the police to arrest the children so they would learn that stealing is a criminal offence but still they were uncontrollable, especially during school holidays. This resulted in some girls giving birth out of wedlock, and the boys getting younger girls in the neighborhood pregnant.

Growing up in Mombasa, Ednah recalls her mother and aunties seeking solutions for the children. One of the ideas that was floated was to send the children to boarding schools in the rural areas with the hope that drugs would not be easily accessible. Indeed, some children were sent to boarding schools but some of them were expelled from school. In the company of their friends, they had stolen property belonging to a neighbor of the school while they were under the influence of drugs. The school neighbor was a traditionalist. He believed in witch doctors. He had covered his farm with paraphernalia to protect it from thieves. He had sworn that whoever stole from his farm would suffer irreversible consequences. Indeed, he kept to his word, and one of the boys became mad after the action. To date he is a mad man, he never managed to continue with his education. No treatment has been successful. His father died of depression after seeing his first-born son, born normal, grow into a young man, and later get destroyed by drugs to a point where he became a mad monk. The father had worked hard as a civil servant to ensure that he provided for his family's needs. He died a miserable man.

As an adult, Ednah saw her own sister lose her dear loving husband to drugs. Her sister sang in the church choir and her husband was a congregant, both brought up with Christian values. Her brother-in-law was a reformed drug addict who had not received any counseling. He had been injecting himself with drugs in secret. Three months after her wedding, her sister called her best maid and informed her she had married a drug addict. He could not hide it any more. They attended counseling through the church, family members, professional counselors, and this helped, but only for a short while. Her sister was already expecting their first child.

The couple were even blessed with a second child although at this point he would disappear for days and months with his friends in a hideout. One evening her sister returned from work, to find all her household possessions outside their home. On inquiring on what could have happened, she was surprised when a house agent approached her informing her that the owner of the house had handed over the house to him, claiming that the tenants' rent was in arrears. This was in spite of the fact that together with her husband, they owned the house. As such she had no option but to

seek refuge at a cousin's place with her toddlers despite efforts to convince the house agent that the house was indeed their own. Ednah remembers how painful it was as she helplessly watched her sister struggle to bring up her little ones. Despite numerous efforts to restore their marriage, they ended in a divorce.

Ednah could not sit back and watch as more relatives and friends perished as a result of drugs. Her friend and neighbor was gang-raped by young boys in the neighborhood whilst she returned from purchasing mosquito coils from a nearby retail shop. She had been sent by her mother. That marked the end of girls being sent to the shops in the evening in that estate. The girl had no brother, as they were just the two sisters. Only parents or the male children would go to the shops in the evening. Ednah wondered how long she was to live in fear in that estate?

As if that wasn't enough, Ednah's own brother who only visited Mombasa during school holidays, resorted to drug abuse. He never managed to attend university after his high school. She saw him toil and get odd jobs, which increased his dissatisfaction and distress in life. Her mother and family never stopped praying for him and counselling him. Fortunately, this story has a happy ending that serves as an inspiration. Today, her brother has reformed, is happily married and lives with his family. "Enough is enough," she thought, as a woman of faith, she needed to take action. Having seen it work for her brother, she gained the courage to actively sensitize the public on the effects and spread of drug abuse, starting with the young children she mentors in Sunday school, the youth and the adults. At 21, Ednah started a mission of reaching out to the street children who frequently abused drugs in Mombasa. She would gather her fellow youth from her local church, the Mombasa Memorial cathedral and go to the streets where most of the street children gathered around supermarkets. They would always be smoking *glue* or be high on drugs. Ednah and her friends would speak to the children against drug abuse, and encourage them to join them in church the following Sunday. On occasions, Ednah would organize a retreat with the street children where she would gather some of her clothes and those of some family and friends and they would donate them to the street children. They would then prepare a meal for the children, and hire a van to take the children together with a few friends to the south coast beach of Mombasa, where they would enjoy a picnic while being mentored and counselled against drugs. They would also be encouraged to attend church on Sunday. Her mother and pastor supported this mission. Ednah believes faith without action is dead. She reaches out to the affected and infected in the society to bring about social change and inclusive growth.

Research Findings

There is a lack of adequate data on the extent of drug abuse in Mombasa. It has become difficult to gather information from drug abusers unless you promise to give them money to buy some drugs. An alternative offer for food instead of drugs is not acceptable to them (Masudi, 2011).

In as much as NACADA continues to play an important role in sensitization, its regional reach is limited to only a few areas and it is short of funds and manpower in specialized areas especially social work and research (Korir, 2013).

When convictions occur, they are of lower level couriers and distributors. Public

corruption and graft have helped fuel the drug trade. Rogue police officers in Mombasa have been accused of working with drug peddlers (Standard Digital Newspaper, 2016). Corruption has hampered the fight against drug abuse in the area as the police receive bribes from drug peddlers and drug lords operating in the area. Area residents are willing to give out bribes to have their children, who are arrested in drug related crimes, released from police custody. Promises by Mombasa County Government to set up a drug rehabilitation center have yet to be realized.

Economic factors such as unemployment, poverty and low cost of drugs in Mombasa have contributed to drug abuse in the area. Though many factors contribute to drug abuse in general, a key factor is high unemployment in the region (Kasundu, Mutiso, Chebet, and Mwirigi, 2012).

The prevalence of drug abuse in Mombasa is exacerbated by the lack of awareness of the effects of drug abuse by the residents. According to NACADA, the earliest age of initiation into drug abuse is seven years while the average age for initiation into drug abuse is 19 years. The most abused drug at initiation into drug abuse is bang with 15% of those who start out by using bang transitioning into injecting drugs after two years (NACADA, 2011). Peer pressure is the driving force behind the increase in drug abuse in Mombasa. What starts out as innocent experimentation with abusive substances turns out to be a life of dependency on drugs.

With so little active leadership, the actual and potential roles of religious communities in combatting drug abuse play a vital role. Christian and Muslim women groups are intensifying their campaigns against drug abuse in an effort to transform the hardest hit communities into “ambassadors” against the drugs. The women have been holding interfaith dialogues, providing preventative education, public awareness and life skills training. Some also offer addicts rehabilitation and psychosocial support. The Kenya Muslim National Advisory Council, clergy and lay leaders have united to educate and support heroin and cocaine addicts. There are indications that faith interventions are resulting in some reduced drug use in Mombasa, but the problem requires a sustained response. Educational programs in youth clubs, churches and schools, as well as organized music, poetry and drama classes, established to keep youth vulnerable to drug abuse occupied, have stalled due to lack of funds to sustain them (Nzwili, 2013).

Women activists in Mombasa have worked continuously to defeat this vice, many challenges are encountered notwithstanding. They have held public protests on the streets, for example Miriam Bashir Hussein Ali, aka Mama Kukukali, Coordinator of the Defence Drugs Women, a community-based organization, organizes various support groups for community residents affected by drug use – one group for women who have contracted HIV from their drug injecting husbands, another for women whose children are drug addicts, and one to educate village elders on the subject of drug abuse. She remembers seeing heroin crop up in Mombasa around 1999, and that by 2005 it was a big problem. She believes that the drug problem in Mombasa is particularly bad because it is a port city, and as such the supply comes right off the boat, landing where distributors and suppliers abound (Craig, 2016). On 8th December 2010, hundreds of women in Mombasa walked for a kilometer and a half protesting for hasher punishments for drug suppliers. This was after some Kenyan government officials were issued with a travel ban by the American embassy for suspected drug activity. In April 2011, under the auspices of Kenya Muslim Women Alliance, women in Mombasa took to the street protesting increased cases of youth

indulging in drug abuse and then joining the Al-Shabaab militia. The women demonstrated at the district commissioner's office and presented a memorandum on drug abuse and human trafficking. They too, however, face a lot of victimization and resistance. Anti-drug activists like Farida Rashid and Omar Bagdam have been scalded with acid in the face by known assailants. Such attacks are aimed at instilling fear among anti-drug activists. There have also been no arrests despite victims of such attacks providing names of their assailants to the police (Daily Nation Correspondent, 2011).

Program Response / Design

The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Control) Act No.4 of 1994 of Kenya strongly condemns the possession, use and trafficking of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substances (Revised in 2012). Section 3 of the Act makes it an offense for a person to be found in possession of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substances. It further provides retributive measures for such persons. A person found in possession of such drugs or substances shall be liable to imprisonment for ten years and in every other case to imprisonment for twenty years or a fine of not less than one million shillings or three times the market value of the narcotic drug or psychotropic substance or to both such fine and imprisonment (NACADA Act, 2012).

Similarly, persons found trafficking any narcotic drug or psychotropic substances shall be guilty of an offense. Drug traffickers are liable to a fine of one million shillings or three times the market value of the narcotic drug or psychotropic substance, whichever is the greater, and, in addition, to imprisonment for life. However, the constant rise of drug addicts in Mombasa renders the penalties insufficient.

- The National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse ACT CAP 121B Laws of Kenya (2012) provides for the establishment of the National Authority for the Campaign against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA). Section 5 of the Act provides the functions of this authority among others to include: Collaboration with other lead agencies to facilitate and promote the monitoring and surveillance of national and international emerging trends and patterns in the production, manufacture, sale, consumption, trafficking and promotion of alcohol and drugs prone to abuse.
- Coordinate and facilitate, in collaboration with other lead agencies and non-State actors, the formulation of national policies, laws and plans of action on control of alcohol and drug abuse and facilitate their implementation, enforcement, continuous review, monitoring and evaluation.

To ensure that the Narcotic and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1994, is complied with, Section 20 of NACADA Act, 2012 provides that an authorized officer may, at any reasonable time, enter any place or premises which the officer believes on reasonable grounds that any person or persons are using, in possession or trafficking any narcotic drug or psychotropic substances. Regardless of

the enactment of these laws, enforcement has been a major challenge to trace and arrest the main drug barons.

Religion provides comfort and reconciliation to humanity whenever man strays (Clack, 2014). Despite the pain and disappointments brought about by drug addiction, religion mitigates and offers acceptance to the society. Would an interfaith intervention be most likely to make a major impact in preventing and combating the menace in Kenya, a country that is 90% religious? Yes, channeling programs through women of faith in churches, mosques and temples could make a major impact as these women are spiritual, with the belief of a higher power that helps each individual in his or her journey to sobriety. This can be done through the creation of support groups in houses of worship, with progressive sessions of therapy to help those addicted to move towards recovery. According to a study by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, a few clergy receive any substance abuse training and many psychiatrists and other health care providers refuse to take advantage of the power of spirituality and religion to prevent and treat this disease. The Vatican stepped up to the plate with a manual setting out the church's responsibility in preventing and treating drug abuse (Califano, 2002). Kenya can borrow this practice by providing relevant training to religious actors to help the affected recover from substance abuse and maintain abstinence.

The project adopts a descriptive survey design, use of questionnaires, key informant interview schedules and review of existing literature as the data collection instruments. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used in analyzing the collected data. These included structured individual interviews and focus groups comprising individuals recovering from addictions. The focus was to examine beliefs about the role of their faith in recovery and its usefulness in formal treatment. Likert scale questionnaires labeled as strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree were used to collect data.

Data collected was scrutinized, coded and analyzed using a Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 17.0. Findings were presented through charts, tables and graphs. □

Recommendation

There is need for additional rehabilitation centres in Mombasa. Other researchers have argued that the government should set up rehabilitation centres, training programs on alcohol and drug abuse, establish Employee Assistant Programmes, wellness centres, control sale of prescription medicine, stiff penalties for drug peddlers and ban of advertisement of alcohol on the media. In addition, there is need for all stakeholders to review the alcohol and Drug Abuse policy to include new and emerging drugs in order to mitigate illnesses and deaths associated with emerging drugs (Kahuthia -Gathu, Okwarah, Gakunju, and Thungu, 2013).

Religion provides social resources for rebuilding one's life and encourages abstinence from drug use (Sanchez & Nappo, 2008). This is because it provides a network of friends, a way of spending one's free time and there is a sense of value placed in the individual's potentials and cohesion within the group. There is unconditional support from religious leaders without judgment.

There are a few studies on faith based programs such as Salvation Army, Teen Challenge,

and rescue missions (Pittman & Taylor, 2002). The project recommends a faith based anti-drug addiction program as a suitable program to be used in response to substance abuse in Mombasa. The program is founded in religious faith, which promotes ties to the groups, by helping them to recover their self-esteem and to be re-integrated in the society through new activities and new social bonds and through offering religious and philosophical answers to questions about life.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interfaith Anti-Drug Addiction Guide

This is a guide designed to assist Women of Faith to:

- Challenge drug addiction through sharing of responsibility to combat the menace.
- Participate in peacebuilding at every level of the society.
- Build networks of drug-free citizens and friendship across religious, social and racial divides.
- Research on the spiritual dimension of alcohol and other drug problems.

Background

Comprehensive drug addiction recovery programs should not only address the biomedical, psychological and socio-cultural factors associated with drug addiction but also the spiritual aspect of individuals affected by drug abuse. Spirituality has been highlighted as an important factor in addiction recovery, although little research has explored the relationship between these two phenomena. Spirituality/religion may be an essential factor in alcohol/drug abuse recovery. Individuals currently suffering from drug abuse tend to be less religious, and spiritual re-engagement appears to be correlated with their recovery (Miller, 1998). The length of their sobriety has been positively associated with their re-engagement with spirituality (Carter, 1998). Commitment to a higher power may lessen the severity of relapse episodes (Morgestern, Frey, Mc Crady, Labouvie, and Neighbors,1996).

Aims

This drug addiction recovery program aims at:

- Highlighting the moral and spiritual prerequisite for effective social action.
- Encouraging and connecting drug addicts through their spirituality, to walk together to recovery.
- Engaging women of faith in their role as community leaders in combating drug addiction.

1 Peter 5:8 says: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

(Put a saying of drug addicts).

"O You who believe! Indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful" (Quran: 5:90).

Objectives

This program is designed to encourage participants through spirituality and personal

reflection on awareness of the needs in their lives and communities, and provides steps to take in the recovery process.

Successful completion of this program will connect participants at a deeper level exposing them to the possibility of individual or joint action that they can take to curb the drug abuse menace.

Guiding Principles

- ❖ All our faiths can ignite and enhance the process of recovery.
- ❖ Everyone has a story to share and a need to be heard.
- ❖ Everyone has a part to play and something to contribute for the benefit of the society.

Essentials for Facilitators

- Convene potential participants to explore the whole concept and discuss timing, venue and commitment.
- Facilitators will guide every group to establish their own guidelines. Special emphasis needs to be placed on confidentiality and the quality of listening to each other.
- Facilitators need to ensure that the guiding principles are followed and that the group remains balanced and focused. There should be two facilitators, one can be more focused on time and other logistical elements, while the other can focus on listening and facilitating the process, which is particularly important during the story-sharing session.
- The language and activities will need to be culturally appropriate to the particular group.
- The use of case studies is encouraged throughout, and to illustrate the transformation process is key to every individual.

My Journey My Life Story

A conducive environment should be created where participants feel free to share their life story, emphasizing on noteworthy incidents and experiences that caused them to seek transformation. One or two stories can be shared at the end of each session. A minute of silence should be observed at the end of each story to honor the shared experience. Experience demonstrates that participants generally need about 20-30 minutes to share their stories. However, what's essential is that participants need to feel comfortable.

In any group, there might be a tendency of some participants to naturally feel that what they share may be used against them, or maybe shameful or of less value. Facilitators need to reiterate the ground rules on confidentiality, equal value of each person's story, and contribution.

Venue

It is preferable to meet in a worship sanctuary or a religious environment where participants will find intimate safe space to connect with their spirituality.

It is highly recommended that the venue remains the same throughout the program to enhance familiarity and consistency.

Additional Concepts

A symbolic opening and closing ritual can be effective at the beginning and at the end of the sessions. These may range from prayer sessions, praise and worship, candle lighting, etc.

It can be helpful to connect through scripture reciting, singing, creating art, participating in role plays, poetry, dance, or cooking and sharing a meal depending on the time and the willingness of the group.

Modest working tools such as flip charts, large sheets of paper, markers are important. What is gathered during each session may be recorded and can be used to build upon and refer back to previous sessions. Whatever creative ideas are used, it is important to keep each session lively and stimulating.

Facilitators are encouraged to collect appropriate resources, e.g. stories, DVDs, books, which will be most helpful in their context.

Frequently Asked Questions

Facilitators may be asked many questions. Below are some answers to expected questions.

- **Should facilitators be women only? If so why?**

This Interfaith Anti-Drug Addiction Guide is specifically designed to empower Women of Faith to take the lead in challenging drug addiction among women and girls through sharing responsibility to combat the menace. Women have been most affected by drug abuse with little opportunity to influence the recovery process.

- **Can the guide be used on male participants?**

Absolutely, the guide can be used by groups comprising men only, women only or mixed groups. Participants are free to select groups more appealing to them, in terms of gender, religious norms, age, among other things.

- **Can facilitators be more creative or have to follow everything outlined in the manual?
What are the charges for participating?**

Facilitators are encouraged to use any words whatsoever for as long as the wisdom and the veracity

of the material in the manual are honored. There are no charges for participating. Individual groups may contribute towards refreshments or any particular common venture they may wish to enhance cohesiveness.

- **Is it mandatory for people to attend every session?**

It is very important that participants attend all sessions. Facilitators should ensure the availability of participants for all sessions. There should be flexibility in scheduling time where all participants will be available to attend the sessions. This will help maintain the integrity of the group and building trust amongst each other.

- **Does everyone have to participate in the sharing? What if one feels that their story is irrelevant?**

This is not obligatory; however, facilitators should ensure that everyone is free/comfortable to share. There should be a safe space and ground rules emphasized on to assure the participants of the highest confidentiality.

- **What are the desired outcomes?**

1. Transformation of participants who have chosen to change and stop the menace. They may take steps to reintegrate within the society, family, and religious affiliation.
2. Issues raised during the sessions may form action points which will require further steps to be undertaken either by the group or individuals in the community.
3. Group members or some members may seek to continue to meet regularly to encourage and inspire each other in their new walk in life and collectively tackle issues of concern.
4. Participants may choose to live positively as role models and seek to facilitate other groups.
5. Participants may form partnerships towards a peaceful uprising!

Interfaith Meeting Points

FIRST MEETING

What is Drug Abuse?

The first meeting is to create a safe space for each participant. It is also about the sharing of understanding of what drug abuse really is. In our context, drug abuse not only includes hard drugs but alcohol as well.

INQUIRE

- a) What is your understanding / experience of drugs?
- b) Can we together come up with a definition “Drug abuse is...”

- c) Can we as individuals exercise the power of self-control in order to reject drug addiction?

METHOD

To start with, participants are encouraged to make personal reflections of the lives they led while under the influence of drugs. The facilitator then asks what image first comes to mind when the word drug abuse is mentioned. Participants are encouraged to share their experiences as they all appreciate the range of images created.

Alternatively, another medium such as songs, poetry, writing and art work can be used.

After an appropriate length of time participants can begin sharing in twos or threes or with the whole group. Enough time should be allowed for people to appreciate a deeper understanding of substance abuse.

REFLECT

The emphasis here is to focus on the hope, expectations and visions of transformation that are shared, laying stress on the fact that drug abuse is sinful, unlawful and has damaging effects on individuals. Working together provides an opportunity for people to help each other break away from the bondage. Respect and fear of a higher being can help people deviate from sin and align themselves with God.

Romans 13:1-5 says, “God ordained governing authorities and to resist them is to resist God's ordinance. Those who disobey may be punished by the authorities, and they have also harmed their conscience toward God.”

Islam being the religion of peace and prudence also commands its believer to abstain from all kinds of addiction, not only this, but terms addiction as *Haram* (impermissible / unlawful / illegitimate and its use is likely to commit sin and subject to punishment) and there are clear-cut laws of punishment for the consumer of intoxicant materials and drugs of addiction (Munir et al, 2015).

“O ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling, (dedication of) stones, and (pinnation by) arrows, are an abomination, - of Satan's handwork: eschew such (abomination), that ye may prosper” (Al-Quran 7:31).

SECOND MEETING

What causes / leads me to abuse drugs?

Most people often do not understand how they become addicted to drugs. It is commonly perceived that drug abuse and addiction is just but a societal problem and that the abusers should be able to stop the addiction if they change their behavior. Peer pressure, broken homes, shattered dreams, unachievable goals, poverty, stress of life, unemployment among others have all been used as reasons for drug addiction. The convolution of drug addiction is that it is a disease which affects the brain, hence discontinuing drug abuse is not simply a matter of willpower.

Romans 13:12-14 says, “Cast off the works of darkness, walk properly, not in drunkenness. Make no provision to fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”

INQUIRE

- Individual engagement in drug abuse – these could be school, family, work, etc.
- Ascertain particular issues for the community or country. These may be social, structural or justice concerns. How do they personally influence participants?
- What challenges do the participants face in addressing their needs?

METHOD

Encourage participants to develop a tree, with branches detailing the various influences of drug abuse and their particular issues of concern, with an attempt to uncover the root causes of drug abuse.

Participants are also encouraged to highlight areas in which they are struggling with such as dealing with family members/friends/neighbors who introduced them to drugs, among others.

Sharing at this juncture is important so that participants can evaluate what is beyond them and what they can actually act upon. Recording the issues raised will be necessary for ease of reference.

REFLECT

Classify specific needs or issues. Meditate on the values of participants’ faith. What do the holy books say about our difficulties? What do their faiths say about those who lead us astray?

Matthew 6:13 says that we should pray for God to deliver us from evil and temptation. How can we sincerely pray in this way and then knowingly do things that tempt or encourage us to do evil?

“And be ye not like those who forgot Allah, and He made them forget their own souls! Such are the rebellious transgressors!” (Al-Quran 59:19).

THIRD MEETING

How do I disentangle myself from drugs?

Addiction is complex. Many people think it’s beyond us. Others think it’s a curse. This is because the number of drug addicts has skyrocketed in recent times. But let us explore how our religions view the problem, and how their remedies and worldview might be an antidote.

“O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: Eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters” (Al-Quran 7:31).

INQUIRE

- a) What are my fears, angers, insecurities and injustices in society?
- b) What encouragement do I get from my faith?
- c) What is my purpose in life? Am I willing to surrender to God?
- d) Are there testimonies of those that have turned to God and have been set free from drugs?

METHOD

Explore the group work, lists of fears, angers and injustices in society, discussion. Request the sharing of personal experiences constantly when answering each question. It may be useful to refer back to the issues of concern for this exercise.

REFLECT

Share this testimony and allow for a discussion:

The Girl I Once Knew

By Crystal Ramirez, retrieved from
<http://christianity.about.com/od/drugandalcoholaddiction/fl/The-Girl-I-Once-Knew.htm>

I once knew this girl. She would stand proud and tall as if she feared nothing. Filled with pride in who she was and for what she stood. She lived a hard life. Her father left when she was a child, so she was raised by her mother, grandmother and stepfather. Her stepfather drank a lot and would fight with her mother daily. As she grew older, she grew to hate her mother. She would think to herself, "Why is she so dumb to be treated this way?" She vowed to herself never to be like her mother; to never be mistreated or disrespected by a man or anyone.

She lived in a neighborhood where drugs, gangs, and prostitution were normal. Seeing no other way out, she gave in to the drugs and gangs. They gave her power and control. At 15, she left her house. Dealing on drugs, fighting, and shooting at people was the new daily routine. She began a relationship with a member of her gang. He was just like her; they had holes in their hearts and didn't know how to fill them.

They had three children together, but eventually he was arrested and sent to prison for two years. Feeling desperate and alone with no home, no job, and no money she did what she had always done: sold drugs. This was far from what she wanted for her children.

Long ago, her grandmother had taught her about God and prayer. She remembered that her grandmother would tell her, "God does everything for a reason, Mija, always have faith and pray."

As those words played over in her head, she thought to herself, "I've done too much bad in my life to ever be forgiven." But she looked at those little faces of her children sound asleep and dropped to her knees to pray.

A Better Life

She began to lead a better life for her children. She stopped selling drugs and got a real job, a car and an apartment. After about a month at the job, she met someone who changed her life. Her children saw her new boyfriend as their dad. He treated them as if they were his own, and she loved him dearly for that. He knew about her boyfriend in prison and he was also in a relationship, but they couldn't give each other up. She became pregnant again, so they stayed together. She married him, and they had three more children. The struggle of having seven children began to wear on them. They were working so hard to give them what they never had that they were missing important parts of the children's lives.

No Control

Soon her dad got very sick and couldn't work so they took his family in. She again felt the fear of having no control. Her grandmother's words returned to her, "God does everything for a reason. Have faith and pray." In the hospital chapel with her little brother, she begged God not to take her dad. She went back into her dad's room and told him that she loved him. If he wanted to go it was okay. A tear rolled down his cheek as he squeezed her hand. He died shortly after. She was angry with God for a long time. She and her husband began to drink a lot and go out. They started fighting and turning to others for attention. They were about to lose everything they had built in their nine years together.

Finding Peace

Their children had been going to church and invited them. Soon, they were attending regularly. There she began to have faith again. She believed that God did love her and could make things better. At home, the fighting had simmered down, but the loss of everything was still hovering over them. She swallowed her pride and asked the church if they could help. When she told them what was happening, they prayed with her with no judgment. A weight was lifted, and she felt peace. They still lost the house, but it didn't matter to them as it did before. All that mattered was that they were together and happy.

Testimony of God's Grace

They continued to do church activities and spend more time with their children. They started to see that the life they were living was not what God had intended for them. They began changing without realizing it. One Sunday morning at the end of service the pastor asked if anyone wanted to come up and let God into their hearts. As a song began to play, tears filled her eyes and her body felt as if she was floating. She stood trying to fight back the urge to go up. It's funny how words from a song can tell someone's life; this song described what she went through and how she felt. That day she gave her heart to God. This was my life, this is my testimony. Never fear that life is too unbearable, or that you're all alone. The devil is a liar. God loves you more than you can know. God's grace is for everyone. You just have to open up your heart and let him in (Proverbs 23:17, 20, 21). Specifically, this principle of avoiding temptation should be applied to people who practice intoxication (drunkenness). If we want to avoid their destiny, we should not envy them or mix with them.

FOURTH MEETING

Reform: Whom do I identify with? What do I want to be?

In the last meeting we identified our fears, our purpose in life, encouragement from our faiths and shared a testimony of one who was set free after surrendering her life to God. In this meeting we will focus on the qualities we as individuals aspire for.

Matthew 10:24, 25 says, “A disciple seeks to be like his master.”

Ephesians 4:23 says, “To live differently, we must think differently. We must not seek to be like the world but to use our bodies in God's service.”

INQUIRE

- a) Whom do we look up to?
- b) What is unique about their contribution and character?
- c) Are you ready to reform? What will this mean for your life?

METHOD

Come up with small groups and gather participants who are faced with similar challenges together. Encourage them to have a discussion amongst themselves in turns while talking about their victories and failures in handling these addictions and how they feel they can curb some of these challenges. Let them come up with solutions on how they think their problems of drug addiction can be solved.

At the end of this discussion, bring all the individuals from various groups together to share their collective contribution among other participants.

REFLECT

As a mediator, have a deeper look at all the findings of the participants. Keep in mind the spiritual books that focus on reformation and forgiveness so as to make the participants feel at ease and have a feeling of acceptance after the reformation. Encourage pragmatism around the challenges that might be expected and discuss how to curb them. Emphasize on spiritual guides to clout at the roots of addiction. A holistic view of the human soul is essential. Spirituality provides both a worldview and system that elevate the human being by empowering the soul to fulfill the divine mission. Besides prohibiting behavior that might demean the human soul in any way, spirituality prescribes practical ways of strengthening it.

“Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee, and establish regular Prayer: for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds; and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without a doubt. And Allah knows the (deeds) that ye do” (Al-Quran 29:45).

FIFTH MEETING

Peace within me

In our day-to-day lives we are often faced with challenges. We cannot be completely immune from the temptations of life. In order to steer clear of these situations, there is need of self-acceptance and forgiveness. We need to accept our mistakes and strive to keep ourselves in the spiritual path. During this session, there is need to point out what inner serenity looks like, how we can find it and how it applies to all areas of our lives.

INQUIRE

- a) What does self-acceptance mean to you?
- b) Why is inner serenity important?
- c) What challenges do you face in search of self-satisfaction?
- d) What restores your sense of self-acceptance and forgiveness?

METHOD

A special moment of silence can be observed to reflect on some of the questions. Participants can then share some of their thoughts with one another. It is important to emphasize on honesty and encourage participants to be open-minded and not in any way to make their fellow participants feel like they don't belong but to encourage each of them as they face these challenges. Participants need to know that there is always a support team ready to offer assistance to them when need be. (During this session allow the applicants to use any means of communication they would feel comfortable with. For instance, through songs or drawings.)

REFLECT

It never takes much to fall off the wagon. A slight back slide in our spiritual belief can take us back to the start. It is important to have self-acceptance and forgiveness in order to be able to stand our ground on the changes we have made in our lives. Participants should always be encouraged to surround themselves with people that influence them positively so as to keep steering on the right path.

“The goal of every spiritual being is to be conscious of the stage of his or her own soul, and to endeavor to reach the stage of serenity and stillness that can only come about through a disciplined life in obedience to God.”

(1 Peter 4:12-14) says, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”

SIXTH MEETING

The power of Sharing...Hear and be heard

Genuine, motivated sharing can be life changing. This week's gathering point examines the power of sharing, listening to others and being listened to.

INQUIRE

- a) What is effective sharing, good listening and how do we benefit from it?
- b) What interferes with sharing?
- c) Are we good listeners?

METHOD

You can introduce an exercise:

Retelling the Story

The moderator can use an exercise to show the shortcomings of poor communication and listening skills. She can tell a complicated story about a non-event. Have several people (depending on the amount of time and size of the group, usually about 6) leave the room. Read the story to the first person and the remainder of the participants explaining that this first person must tell the story to the next person to come back in the room. The remainder of the participants observe and track what was left out or was changed in the story. When the first person tells the story to the second, the second then tells it to the third until all the people outside the room hear the story. The last person relays what he/she heard. You can discuss when and how the information was lost or distorted and why.

REFLECT

How did it feel? What was difficult? What was the role of body language? What level of eye contact is appropriate? Listening is important not just because it is kind or considerate but because good listening is transformative for both parties. Identify blocks to good listening. Listening with compassion, without judgment; listening to the feeling behind the words.

James 1:19 says, "Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." Good listening goes hand in hand with the mindset of Christ (Philippians 2:5).

Allah, may He be exalted, has commanded the believers to listen to the Qur'an attentively, in a general command. He says (interpretation of the meaning): "So, when the Qur'an is recited, listen to it, and be silent that you may receive mercy" (Al Quran al-A'raaf 7:204).

SEVENTH MEETING

Quiet Time

Quiet time is the time to fellowship with God and meditate on His word. It helps us shut out all life struggles and tune into a source of wisdom, knowledge, understanding deeper than our

own. The word of God gives us peace of mind, sense of direction, increases our faith and self-confidence.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

INQUIRE

- a) What is your understanding and experience of quiet time?
- b) How often do you set aside a specific time for deep reflection to reconnect with God?
- c) How could you benefit from quiet time?

METHOD

Facilitator can share personal experiences of quiet time. Discuss the values, unconditional love, purity, selflessness and honesty as universal values and guides to discernment.

REFLECT

Observe a moment of silence. Allow participants to reflect on their journey thus far. Let them write their thoughts down and encourage those that are happy to share. Ascertain all hindrances to listening to the inner voice and how to avoid them.

“And put your trust in the Almighty, Most Merciful. Who sees you when you meditate during the night. And your frequent prostrations. He is the Hearer, the Omniscient” (Al-Quran 26:217-220).

EIGHTH MEETING

Moving on... Repentance and Forgiveness

“O you who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance!” (Al Quran, 66:8).

Society has become ensnared by drug abuse and addiction because of disobeying the rules and laws of God. How then can humanity be set free and align with God? It is only through repentance and forgiveness of self and others. This paves way for healing.

2 Chronicles 7:14 says, “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

INQUIRE

- a) Do we acknowledge that drug abuse and addiction is sin?
- b) Are we willing to forgive ourselves and peers/friends/family etc. who influenced us?

c) How do we want to move on?

METHOD

Encourage sharing of the experiences of participants in repenting, accepting or giving an apology. Allow ample time for meditation, for participants to explore any need to forgive self, others or ask for forgiveness. Participants should have the opportunity to express themselves through singing, writing, poetry or in any other way that they may prefer as a symbolic act of reconciliation.

REFLECT

Forgiveness operates through one's faith and belief. When you ask God to forgive you of your sins, your healing is then being applied. It is God's act of love for mankind.

Forgiveness sets us free. It will give any man or woman the ability to live in abstinence. It is the ultimate freedom.

NINTH MEETING

Reformist action

Having extensively shared within the groups, it is now time to delve into the next plan of action. In the previous meeting, members experienced repentance as the only way to returning to God. The understanding here is giving up sin and hating it, regretting falling short in obedience to God, and being determined not to repeat that sin again.

INQUIRE

- a) What actual steps could I/We take in our new walk?
- b) Do I foresee any problem?
- c) How do I walk the talk?
- d) Can I find acceptance in the society?

METHOD

The aim is to distinguish specific concerns and for the groups to work through their own reintegration into the society. A common problem with drug addicts is lack of social skills. Encourage participants to explore behavior therapy. How do they conduct themselves around those that condemn them, or those that influenced them to drugs? How can they strategize to deal with peer pressure?

REFLECTION

Invite role playing with each other on different scenarios meeting with peers, at a social

gathering where people are abusing drugs. Participants have learnt a lot over the past weeks. At this juncture, practical examples on how they are going to cope with the society/environment are necessary. The group could also discuss how members will be each other's keepers. Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers."

"And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus, does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided" (Surat Ali Imran 3:103).

TENTH MEETING

Self-assessment and Commitment

Participants make a self-assessment of their experience of the recovery process, while trying to mirror on new learnings and to consider further action. Depending on how the group has been inspired, members may reflect on committing to action points raised in the ninth week, joint/individual ventures. Participants are welcome to train as facilitators of the Interfaith Anti-Drug Addiction program. They may wish to use their stories, to assist in the recovery process of other future groups.

INQUIRE

- a) In what way has the faith based program helped you in your journey to recovery?
- b) Have you seen the need for change in any of your attitudes or relationships?
- c) What actual steps will you take to put these insights into practice?
- d) Should there be more faith based programs reaching out to others in the community?

METHOD

Evaluate the entire program, responding to the inquiries above, and providing room for members to share with each other. Perhaps come up with an independent or collective product such as a saying, poem, music or pledge that connotes the group's commitment to recovery from drugs and to being ambassadors in helping others in the community. Recommend a closing ceremony where members can have a chance to acknowledge each other.

REFLECT

In essence of appreciating each other, members can share about their journey throughout the program.

James 2:17 says, "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

When people feel true remorse for their sins and try to reform themselves, according to the Qur'an, God accepts their repentance and gives them the ability to rectify the wrong done (Al-Anbiya 21:87).

Appendix B: Facilitators Schedule

Below is a model of the facilitators schedule. Each group is unique in its own way. Facilitators can develop their own schedule according to the group's flexibility.

MEETING ONE

- i. Introduction
- ii. What is drug abuse / common definition?
- iii. Facilitators / volunteers sharing

MEETING TWO

- i. What causes / leads me to abuse drugs?
- ii. Participants stories and request for volunteers who will be sharing in the next meeting
- iii. Challenges in addressing own needs

MEETING THREE

- i. How do I disentangle myself from drugs?
- ii. Fears and insecurities
- iii. Purpose in life
- iv. Testimonies and request for volunteers who will be sharing in the next meeting

MEETING FOUR

- i. Reform; whom do I identify with? What do I want to be?
- ii. What is unique about their character traits?
- iii. Ready to reform? What will this mean to your life?
- iv. Sharing and request for volunteers who will be sharing in the next meeting

MEETING FIVE

- i. Peace within me
- ii. Challenges in search of self-satisfaction
- iii. What restores your sense of self-acceptance and forgiveness
- iv. Sharing and selecting volunteers for next time

MEETING SIX

- i. The power of sharing, hear and be heard
- ii. What interferes with our sharing?
- iii. Are we good listeners?

MEETING SEVEN

- i. Quiet time
- ii. How often do you set aside specific time for deep reflection to re-connect with God?
- iii. How often could you benefit from quiet time?

MEETING EIGHT

- i. Repentance and forgiveness
- ii. Drug abuse; sin or no sin?
- iii. Forgiveness for self and others
- iv. Steps to moving

MEETING NINE

- i. Reformist action
- ii. Problems in walking the talk
- iii. Acceptance in society

MEETING TEN

- i. Self-acceptance and commitment
- ii. Journey to recovery
- iii. Lessons learned
- iv. Faith into action

Appendix C: Certificate of Participation

Certificate of Participation

This is to certify that

has successfully completed
an Interfaith Anti-Drug Addiction Program

on _____ day of _____ 2016

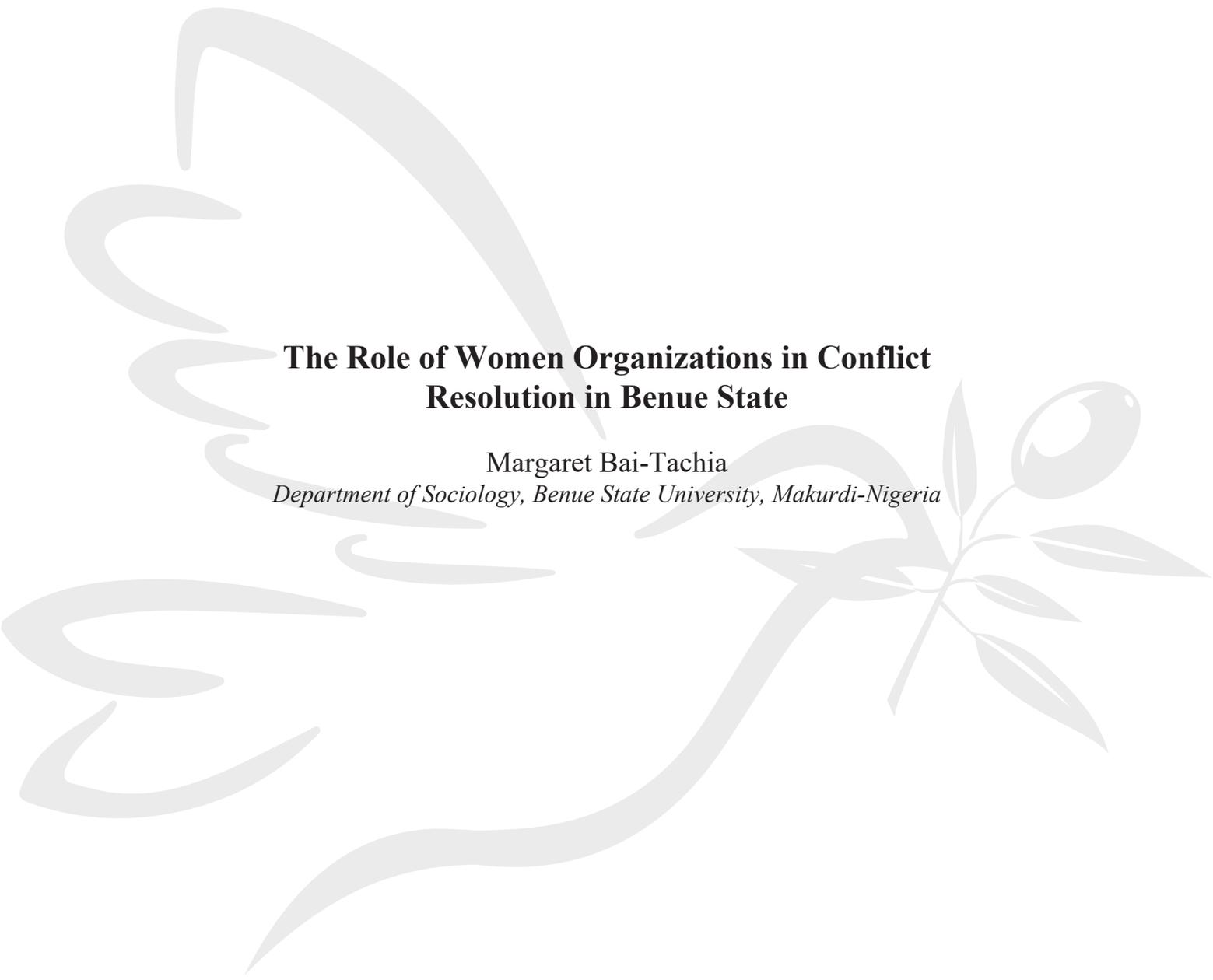
At

Facilitator's Signature

Appendix D: Program Budget

People are not paid to participate, nor is there a fee to attend the Faith-Based program. Groups will have tea and a snack between 10:00-10:30 AM and a light lunch. The role of a moderator is voluntary.

Component	Amount in USD
Training Manuals / Publication	6500
Capacity Building of 12 Moderators -Train the Trainers	10000
Venue / Meals / Expert Fees	10000
Awareness raising / Community mobilization	7000
Monitoring, Audit and Evaluation	N.A.
Communications and Visibility	N.A.
Total	33500



The Role of Women Organizations in Conflict Resolution in Benue State

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Abstract

This paper examined the strategic role women and women organizations play in the resolution of conflicts in Benue state especially in the last five years (2011-2016), with the persistence of the pastoralist / farmers clashes. Benue state has the unfortunate lot of attacks and women have been at the receiving end as majority of them are engaged in agricultural production that sustains the economy and the population. Government has responded in addressing these conflicts, but we must reckon with the great role women under several organizations have sought to interface government in preventing these conflicts and also offering relief materials to the displaced populations. The paper surveyed some of these women organizations and the strategies they have adopted in reducing the conflicts. Using liberal feminist theory as a framework of analysis, the paper showed how socio-cultural factors are constraining the women organization's effort at resolving conflicts. The study demonstrated how the non-confrontational approach adopted by women has continued to douse out the conflicts and helped to ameliorate the conditions of women, children and men affected by the conflicts. It is hoped that stronger collaboration of these women groups and government through legislative provisions will seriously address these conflicts and their negative consequences on the people.

Keywords: *women, women organizations, conflict resolution*

Introduction

Violent conflicts ranging from communal, ethnic, religious, and political have become a recurrent decimal in Nigeria. The situation has become extremely worrisome since the return to democratic rule in 1999 (Imobighe, 2003). In Benue state, the story is not different! Communal, inter-ethnic, political, and more recently, herdsmen and farmers conflict have led to loss of lives and property, increased poverty, and massive displacement of people. Generally, conflict affects all members of the society but in most cases, it is women that suffer the most. During periods of conflicts, women suffer from sexual abuse, psychological pains and carry the burden of caring for children and the aged. In a study conducted in 2001 by USAID cited in Scheper (2002) which analyzed the impact of deadly intrastate conflict on women and women organizations from Rwanda, Cambodia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Georgia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina showed that there are five major impacts of intrastate conflict on women and gender relations:

- a. Violence against civilians, of which 95% is female
- b. Internal displacement, of which 90% is women and children
- c. Redefinition of female identities in the society, both as victims and as perpetrators
- d. Increased poverty and starvation, as a result of targeted destruction of civilian property *and*
- e. Communal violence leading to lasting bitterness, anger and hatred.

The research concluded by observing that in all six countries, the most traumatizing factor for women in conflict is the lack of physical security, both during the conflict and the post conflict demobilization of the militia. It keeps women confined in their homes, not being able to move around freely. Rape was used as a regular tool of warfare and torture in all six case countries (Scheper, 2002). Moreover, many women saw themselves forced to engage in prostitution in the post conflict era, as the only available means of income. Family structures were damaged through death and trauma, resulting in women becoming heads of households and an increased incidence of domestic violence.

Despite the fact that women suffer the most during the period of conflicts, formal conflict resolution mechanisms exclude women in the decision-making process. Falch (2010) underscored the above view by stating that women are often excluded from formal peace negotiations and are marginally involved in political decision-making process. However, since the passing of the United Nations Resolution 1325 in 2000 which advocates for the equal representation of women in key decision bodies, greater political space was opened for women groups to play significant roles in conflict resolution globally (Falch, 2010). While extolling the role of women organizations in the formal mechanism of conflict resolution, Falch (2010) acknowledged that, even though the role of women has not been appreciated, women have continued to play significant roles in community peacebuilding and have made valuable contributions to peace during and after conflict.

In Nigeria and Benue state in particular, since the return to democratic rule in 1999, there has been a proliferation in the number of women organizations that have been playing significant roles in conflict resolutions. For instance, women groups such as Women in Nigeria (WIN), Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN), Women, Law and Development Centre (WLDC), Community Women and Development (COWAD), International Federation of Female

Lawyers (FIDA), Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA), and Catholic Women Organisations (CWO) have all played key roles in conflict resolution in Nigeria. Despite the significant role women organizations have played in conflict resolution in Benue state, their contributions have been neglected. There are two reasons for this. First, due to cultural and religious reasons, women are treated as second class citizens and therefore not given a seat at the table of conflict resolution process. Second, most people in Nigeria tend to believe that the issue of conflict resolution belongs to the realm of government and the business sector only. As a result of this, a comprehensive understanding of the role of women organizations in peacebuilding and conflict resolution has continued to be a major gap in the available literature particularly in the context of developing countries such as Nigeria. It is because of this gap in knowledge that this paper seeks to examine the contributions of women organizations in conflict resolution in Benue state.

Conceptual Clarification

In this paper, concepts such as women organizations and conflict resolution will be explained to sanitize the reader to their meaning and usage in this work.

Women organizations: refer to all voluntary organizations led and managed by women that promote women's welfare and gender equality (Kumar, n.d.). Examples of these organizations in Benue state include Women in Nigeria (WIN), International Federation of Female Lawyers (FIDA), Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA), Catholic Women Organisations (CWO), Association of Market Women, Mzough U Kase, among others.

Conflict Resolution: is a range of processes aimed at alleviating or eliminating sources of conflict (Pisagih, Degri, Ajemasu & Muhammed, 2015). Miller and King (2003) define conflict resolution as "a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through the constructive solving of problems, distinct from management or transformation of conflicts." In their view, Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse (1999), the essence of conflict resolution is to identify the root causes of conflict, address and resolve them, and behaviour is no longer violent, nor are attitudes hostile any longer, while the structure of the conflict has been changed. Mitchel and Banks (1998) refer to conflict resolution as:

- i. An outcome in which the issue in an existing conflict are satisfactorily dealt with through a solution that is mutually acceptable to the parties, self-sustaining in the long run and productive of a new, positive relationship between parties that were previously hostile adversaries; and
- ii. Any process or procedure by which such an outcome is achieved.

Whatever the definition offered, the purpose of conflict resolution is to ensure that conflict is resolved for peaceful co-existence between individuals, groups, communities, and nations.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research design. Secondary sources of data were obtained

from the organizational records of women organizations involved in conflict resolution for a period of five years (2011-2016). In addition, other secondary sources of data such as newspapers, magazines, government records were also used. There are many registered and unregistered women organizations in Benue state. As a result of this, the study used purposive sampling technique to select only registered women organizations that were involved in conflict resolution in Benue state. The rationale for studying women organizations involved in conflict resolutions is because, these organizations have made significant contributions to peace and conflict resolution, but their contributions have not been well documented and acknowledged.

Theoretical Framework

In this paper, liberal feminist theory has been employed to explain the role of women organizations in conflict resolution in Benue state. Liberal feminism is premised on the idea that gender inequality in society is a product of patriarchal and sexist patterning of division of labor (Idyorough, 2005). Based on the assumptions of liberal feminism, gender is socially constructed and is manifest in the division of labor where domestic work that is devalued and not remunerated is assigned to women while work outside the home is highly remunerated and is assigned to men. This whole phenomenon is perpetuated through patriarchal ideology (Idyorough, 2005).

The theory explains the lack of recognition for the role of women organizations in conflict resolution to our cultural beliefs and attitudes. The theory argues that the society believes that it is the men who are supposed to be involved in outdoor activities such as conflict resolution while women are supposed to be involved in menial jobs such as childcare and housekeeping. Consequently, even though women organizations have played important roles in conflict resolution, their roles have not been recognized simply because they are women organizations. Perhaps if these organizations were formed by men, their roles would have been acknowledged. This paper therefore states that, for the women organizations to be deeply involved in conflict resolution and their contributions to be appreciated, there has to be a change in our cultural beliefs and attitudes.

The Role of Women Organizations in Conflict Resolution in Benue State

The contributions of women organizations to conflict resolution cannot be over emphasized. According to Scheper (2002), the responses of local women's groups in dealing with conflict, rehabilitation and peace appear to be remarkably similar around the world too. The women NGOs are mostly active in trauma counselling, micro-credit, voter education, gender awareness, law reform and political advocacy. They draw the attention of authorities to civilian security, e.g. through security sector reforms and greater participation of women in police forces, judiciary and in peace committees (Scheper, 2002).

In West Africa, Alaga (2010) states that women have played significant roles in situations relating to peace and war for centuries, primarily as traditional peace-makers, as priestesses who confer with gods to determine whether it was right to go to war or not, as praise singers for men during battles as a boost to ensure their victory, or as custodians of culture. In each culture there are stories of women who have played some leadership roles as peace envoys or harbingers of peace in their communities (Alaga, 2010).

In Nigeria, there are well documented accounts of the exploits of Nigerian women and women organizations in conflict resolution. According to Idris and Habu (2012), women organizations in Nigeria have played significant roles in conflict resolution. For instance, Pisagih, Degri, Ajemasu and Muhammad (2015) observed that the role of women organizations in conflict resolution in Nigeria can be traced as far back as to the Aba women riot of 1929, the Egba women movement of the early 1920s to the 1950s, the Ogharefe women uprising of 1984. These are circumstances where women organizations in Nigeria organised and exercised their collective power to resolve conflict and build peace.

In Benue state, women organizations have also played significant roles in conflict resolution. Their role has been demonstrated particularly in the conflict between herdsmen and farmers in Benue state between 2011 to 2016 which led to loss of lives and property and left a lot of people in refugee camps, towns and other settlements including Agaigbe, Naka, Atukpu, Tse-Iorbogo and other missionary centers outside the conflict areas, including Mission Station Ajigba of the NKST Church and other Christian centers like the Catholic Church premises in Agaigbe and the voluntary organization in the Local Government Areas (Women Environmental Programme, 2012). In a similar view, the herdsmen have dared not to go near the boundaries of Gwer-west Local Government Area. They were also displaced from where they had found pasture.

During this conflict, Women Environmental Programme (2012) organized a multi-stake holder meeting that brought together the Benue state government, Miyetti-Allah Cattle Breeders Association, traditional rulers in Benue state, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) - Benue state chapter, Ja'amatu Nasiru Islam (JNI), Benue state and Civil Society Organizations. The forum provided a platform for farmers and herdsmen to come together to discuss how to resolve their differences and to educate both parties on other topical issues in the society like population increase and desertification which has increased the migration of herdsmen into the Benue trough/valley thereby exacerbating the conflict between the two groups.

In a similar vein, women organizations such as Catholic Women Organisations (CWO) in Benue state have at different times reached out to different groups for deliberation, negotiation, compromises, and agreements on conflict resolution (Ikelegbe, 2003). Apart from helping to resolve conflict in Benue state, the organization has been able to provide a neutral ground where parties involved in conflict can come together to build bridges of trust, understanding and confidence (Ikelegbe,2003). They have also participated in providing relief materials to victims of conflict. For instance, during the herdsmen and farmer's conflict in the state from 2011 to 2015 for which many citizens of the state particularly women were living in refugee camps across the state, the CWO donated relief materials such as food items, clothing, and free medical treatment to the victims of the conflict.

Other women organizations such as market women association have at different times in the course of the farmers-herdsmen conflict in Benue state used different strategies such as street protest and closing of shops in the market places to draw the attention of local, state and Federal government for peace to return to the state.

Challenges faced by Women Organizations in Conflict Resolution in Benue State

There are different factors limiting the role of women organizations in conflict resolution.

One of the major problems facing women organization in Benue state is lack of funds to implement conflict resolution programs (Ahule & Ugba, 2014; Abari, 2014; Akuadna, 2014). Most of these organizations do not have adequate funds to organize workshops and seminars to educate members of the public on the need to live in peace. Besides, creating a platform where stakeholders involved in conflict can come to the negotiation table also requires funds which most women organizations in Benue do not have. This greatly limits the potentials of women organizations in conflict resolution.

Secondly, in Benue state and Nigeria in general, people still believe and look up to government for the resolution of public problems and conflict. As a matter of fact, Ikelegbe (2003) observed that groups and communities in Benue state have more confidence in the ability of the state to resolve conflict. The implication here is that, even when women organizations have made concerted efforts to reach out to groups involved in conflict, people still believe that they do not possess the requisite influence, resources, integrity, and credibility to intervene and resolve conflict (Ikelegbe, 2003).

Thirdly, both the local, state and federal government in Nigeria have given women organizations and groups outside the realm of the state a marginal role in conflict resolution. There is poor partnership between government and other institutions outside the scope of the state in conflict resolution. In some cases, the state view other organizations and women groups with suspicion. Infact, Odeh (2012) observed that state officials view other groups outside the purview of the state as competitors of power and influence in the public sphere rather than partners in peace process. This also serves as a major setback for women organizations working in the area of conflict resolution.

Fourthly, most women organizations that are involved in conflict resolution lack experience, exposure and skills in negotiation, advocacy, and lobbying techniques (Agbalajobi, 2002). Women have always been kept secluded from the political arena and sphere of decision-making; therefore, in many situations they are unable to participate.

Lastly, women organizations in Benue state are also faced with the challenge of marginalization and stigmatization by powerful government and other non-governmental organizations (Munuve, nd). Besides, they also suffer from physical harassment from local men and security forces which is especially likely to happen in post conflict situations where gender tensions are usually high.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations have been made to improve the involvement of women organizations in conflict resolution in Benue state.

First, there must be change of attitudes among the people regarding the role of women and women organizations in Benue state and Nigeria in general. Women groups should be given greater role in all segments of the society. This can be achieved by sensitizing members of the public through printed and electronic media on the need to give women more political space to participate in decision making process.

Secondly, government at all levels in Nigeria need to partner with women organizations

and other groups to resolve conflict. The state alone cannot resolve conflict in Nigeria. It is the submission of this paper that one-sector-approach would be inadequate to resolve conflicts in Nigeria. Therefore, the government needs to engage a broad-based coalition of actors, and women organizations need a seat on the table if any meaningful progress is to be made. This is because, according to the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, Conflict Resolution Unit states that partnering with women groups in conflict resolution fosters a wider popular mandate for peace, making it more sustainable.

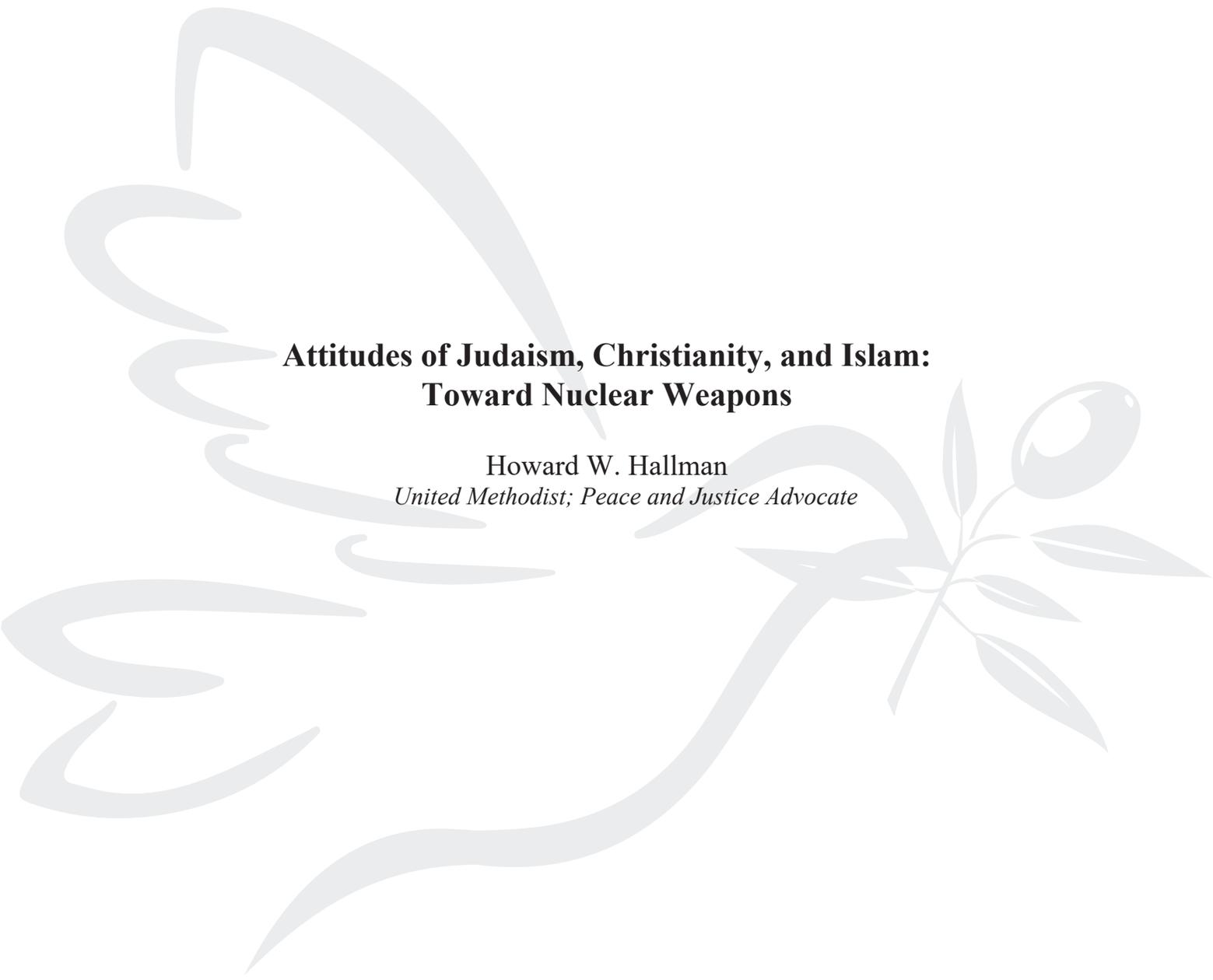
Thirdly, women organizations in Benue state working in the area of conflict resolution needs to be strengthened in terms of training, skills and methods of operation and functioning (James, 2003). Most of these organizations are not well trained and properly equipped to resolve conflict.

Lastly, women organizations in Benue state need to develop alternative ways of raising funds to implement their programs. Most of these organizations depend heavily on foreign donations and this is not adequate.

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**Attitudes of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam:
Toward Nuclear Weapons**

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Abstract

In reviewing Jewish, Christian, and Islamic perspectives on nuclear weapons we find that there is a broad consensus that the use of nuclear weapons would be morally wrong because of the harm to large numbers of non-combatants and the environment. However, a small minority believes that limited nuclear war might be acceptable as a final measure for national defense, and some in the faith community believe that nuclear war would be acceptable as an eschatological event prior to the final Day of Judgment and commencement of a messianic age. Among the three faiths there has been some acceptance of deployment of nuclear weapons as a measure of deterrence for self-defense in order to dissuade other nations from nuclear or conventional attack. However, a growing number reject nuclear deterrence because of the immorality of in effect holding civilian population hostage. Within the faith community there is widespread support for negotiation of arms control agreements and for unilateral actions to reduce nuclear arsenals.

Keywords: *Judaism, Christianity, Islam, nuclear weapons, disarmament*

Introduction

Since the first atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 representatives of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have spoken out on the possession and use of nuclear weapons. Among them there is a broad consensus that nuclear weapons should never be used because of harm to God's creation: massive loss of human lives and disastrous destruction of the environment. Although some believe that it is acceptable for a nation to possess nuclear weapons as a deterrent against nuclear attack or an overwhelming conventional attack from another nation, many insist that it is time to go beyond deterrence and seek the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

Jewish Perspective

In 1962 when the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union was accelerating, Rabbi Maurice Lamm (1962) of the Floral Park Jewish Center in New York made distinction between obligatory wars and optional wars. He concluded that as a matter of self-defense it was obligatory to oppose the quest of the Soviet Union to gain world domination with Communism. That was because Communism violates the basic moral principles of Judaism and Israel would cease to exist as a nation if the Soviet Union ruled the world. Therefore, the expansionist Soviet Union must be opposed with nuclear weapons even if it resulted in a nuclear war that destroyed life on earth. Thus, it would be preferable to be dead than red.

In a rejoinder Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits of the Fifth Avenue Synagogue, who later became the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, took up the issue of self-defense. He noted in 1962 that the Torah and teaching of rabbis allow slaying an attacker to save one's own life (Exodus 22.1 [22.2 in RSVP]; Rashi on BT Sanhedrin 72a). But the defender would not be entitled to forestall the attack at the cost of both lives, such as by blowing up the house. He commented, "In view of this vital limitation of the law of self-defense, it would appear that a defensive war likely to endanger the survival of the attacking and the defending nations alike, if not the entire human race, can never be justified" (Saperstein, pp. 7-8).

Neither rabbi, of course, wanted the world to face that choice of red or dead. Rabbi Lamm favored nuclear deterrence which so far had prevented nuclear war. He wrote, "Constant negotiation between the atomic powers must continue in order to probe new possibilities of peacefully settling the differences between East and West" (Lamm, 1962, p. 177).

Twenty years later when the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified again, the Commission on Social Action of Reformed Judaism took up this issue in a report *Preventing the Nuclear Holocaust: A Jewish Response* edited by Rabbi David Saperstein (1983). The report reviews the five regulations of war, drawn from the *halacha* (Jewish law): force not an end in itself, opportunity for the opponent to choose peace, concern for lives of non-combatants, waged so as not to destroy God's creation, before ever battle reading the rules and regulations of war (Saperstein, 1983, pp. 8-13). As applied to an optional war, the report concludes:

Clearly the speed with which nuclear war could happen, the distance over which it is

fought and the virtual absence of opportunity to use human judgements to regulate the war once the missiles are launched mitigate against the ability of any nation to fight a “humane” nuclear war. From this brief view of the *halachic* stipulations on war, it is evident that nuclear war would violate almost every rule and regulation and would thereby be impermissible. (Saperstein, 1983, p.13)

The report then cites a number of rabbis to show that the weight of the Jewish tradition is clearly arrayed against the *use* of nuclear weapons (Saperstein, 1983, pp. 19-31). But what about the current nuclear build-up and stockpiling? Under what circumstances is *possession* of nuclear weapons per se, permissible or prohibited? In answering the report draws upon the *halachic* concept of *geder* (fence) that some things are prohibited not because they are evil in and of themselves but because they might lead to evil things. Rabbi Saul Berman applied this reasoning to stockpiling nuclear weapons which “will likely lead to consequences which will violate Jewish law” (Saperstein, p. 36). As Rabbi Jakobovits wrote in his 1962 article, “Once the recourse to atomic warfare, even in self defense (retaliation), is eliminated, the *threat* of resorting to it when attacked (deterrent) would naturally have to be abandoned. A threat is effective, and can be justified, only as the possibility to carry it out exists” (Saperstein, p. 36).

This being the case, *Preventing the Nuclear Holocaust* devotes considerable attention to ways of ending the nuclear arms race, such as freeze on production and deployment of nuclear weapons and other methods of nuclear arms control and reduction.

This issue was taken up again in 1991 in a book entitled *Confronting Omnicide: Jewish Reflections on Weapons of Mass Destruction*, edited by Daniel Landes (1991). Fifteen essays offer diverse points of view but have a common concern that God’s creation would be at risk in nuclear war. Pinchas Peli from Ben Gurion University, Be’er Sheva, Israel writes:

As to the universal threat of destruction of the world through the weapons of mass destruction, the view of Torah is crystal clear: The world created by God was meant for life; it was given over to Man to rule, to preserve and cultivate, and not to destroy and mutilate. (Landes, 1991, pp. 72-73)

Translating this into practice, he continues:

One is not allowed to willingly destroy any created being. This prohibition is known in the Halakhah as *bal tash’hit* – Do not destroy. The rabbis, of course, derive this prohibition from Scripture: “When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by wielding an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down.” (Deuteronomy 20:10)

In another essay Professor David Novak picks up this theme and cites rabbinic tradition over the centuries in support of the prohibition of wanton destruction. He concludes: “The evil of nuclear war, which cannot be justified by any of the usual criteria of temporary destruction for the sake of ultimate victory, is to be emphasized continually.” He adds, “It seems that bilateral, not unilateral disarmament is what is required” (Landes, 1991, p. 115).

In an essay on “Nuclear Deterrence and Nuclear War” Professor Walter S. Wurzbarger

believes that “the actual use of nuclear weapons must be ruled out, for it is inconceivable to sanction the very extinction of the human race.” But one-sided renunciation of their use “would rule out any possibility of defense or deterrence against adversaries who threaten nuclear aggression.” Therefore, “we have no choice but to continue to rely on the threat of nuclear retaliation to deter nuclear aggression.” But that choice is fraught with moral problems and must be considered a lesser evil. It would be better to gain universal acceptance of a “no first use pledge” (Landes, 1991, pp. 224-233).

Although the much of the background for discussion about nuclear weapons is the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union with their enormous arsenals, Israel’s possession of nuclear weapons also enters into the picture. In his book *Israel and the Bomb*, Avner Cohen describes Israel’s approach as nuclear opacity – “a situation in which a state’s nuclear capability has not been acknowledged, but is recognized in a way that influences other nation’s perceptions and actions” (Cohen, 1998, p. 2). In his second book *The Worst-Kept Secret*, he uses the Hebrew term *amimut* with connotation of both opacity and ambiguity to describe this approach (Cohen 2010, xxxii). Although the Israeli government has never officially admitted that it has nuclear weapons, enough information has become available to estimate that Israel possesses approximately 80 nuclear weapons (Federation of American Scientists, 2017).

Because of *amimut* the Israeli government has never publicly articulated its rationale for acquiring nuclear weapons. In fact, there is a prohibition against public discussion of nuclear issues, a ban “rigidly enforce by Israeli military censorship (the Censora), which bans any reference to Israeli’s nuclear weapons in the Israeli media” (Cohen, 2010, p. xxix). However, one can project that the policy emphasizes deterrence as a matter of self-defense to prevent an existential threat to Israel. Some Jewish writers consider this legitimate in the present political situation. Others raise a note of caution that actual use would be disastrous.

Christian Perspective

Protestant

After the first atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America asked a commission of theologians to formulate a response. In February 1946 the commission issued a report entitled *Atomic Warfare and Christian Faith* that began with an act of contrition:

As American Christians, we are deeply penitent for the irresponsible use already made of the atomic bomb. We have agreed that, whatever be one’s judgment of the ethics of war in principle, the surprise bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are morally indefensible. They repeated in a ghastly form the indiscriminate slaughter of non-combatants that has become familiar during World War II. They were released without specific warning, under conditions which virtually assured the deaths of 100,000 civilians. (Lunger, 1988, p. 303)

The theologians urged that all manufacture of atomic bombs be stopped, pending the development of international controls and called upon the United States “to affirm publicly, with suitable

guarantees, that it will under no circumstances be the first to use atomic weapons in any possible future war” (Lunger, 1988, p. 305).

Four years later another commission of theologians appointed by the Federal Council of Churches in report on *The Christian Conscience and Weapons of Mass Destruction* came to the opposite conclusion. They noted: “Today, two great dangers threaten mankind, the danger that totalitarian tyranny may be extended over the world and the danger of global war” (Lunger, 1988, p. 317). The tyranny they feared was Soviet Communism which by 1950 had taken control of Eastern Europe and was moving aggressively in other parts of the world. What became known as the Cold War was underway. The report therefore insisted:

For as long as the existing situation holds, for the United States to abandon its atomic weapons or to give the impression that they would not be used, would leave the non-communist world with totally inadequate defense. For Christians to advocate such a policy would be to share responsibility for the worldwide tyranny that might result. (Lunger, 1988, p. 321)

The Commission found it difficult to draw an absolute line between types of weapons. “If, as we have felt bound to acknowledge, certain key industrial targets are inescapably involved in modern war, we find no moral distinction between destroying them with tons of T.N.T. or by fire as compared with an atomic bomb...Christian conscience guides us to restraint from destruction not essential to our total objective” (Landes, 1988, pp. 320-321).

In 1950 the Federal Council of Churches was reorganized as the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC). In years that followed the NCC put aside conditional acceptance of nuclear weapons in some circumstances and became a staunch advocate of their elimination. This history is narrated in a resolution, “Nuclear Disarmament: The Time is Now”, adopted by NCC General Assembly in 2009, that stated:

Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, declared that He had come to bring ‘abundant life’ to humanity. Nuclear weapons, which have the capacity to destroy entire cities and nations, and, indeed, all life on earth, represent the diametric opposite to this. In fact, the only thing that they are capable of producing is ‘abundant death.’ The time has arrived to eliminate all of them, before they eliminate all of us. Be it therefore resolved that the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. hereby recommits itself to the total worldwide eradication of nuclear weapons. (National Council of Churches, 2009)

Over the years the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in the U.S. has also expressed its concern about nuclear weapons. Recognizing that within the membership are those who are committed to peace through strength and those who renounce the use of force as a matter of conscience, NAE has nevertheless favored arms control agreements to scale back the nuclear arms race. In “Nuclear Weapons 2011,” NAE laid out a course that included re-examining the moral and ethical basis for the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, maintaining the taboo against nuclear use, achieving verified mutual reductions in current nuclear stockpiles, and continuing dialogue on the effects of possession and threatened use of nuclear weapons (National Association of Evangelicals, 2011).

Elsewhere in NATO countries the Conference of European Churches and its Church and Society Commission have been active on nuclear disarmament issues, favoring a world free of nuclear weapons and specifically advocating the removal of tactical nuclear weapons from Europe (Conference of European Churches. 2013).

In the United Kingdom many denominations support nuclear disarmament, expressed specifically in opposition to building a new trident submarine. Although the Church of England has tended to defer to the government on continuation of minimal nuclear deterrence, Dr. Rowan Williams, 104th Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking in Nagasaki, Japan in September 2009, said of nuclear weapons:

They are necessarily indiscriminate; that is, they will always kill the innocent. They destroy the living environment; they have long-term effects on every aspect of the material and organic world...To work for a world free from nuclear arms is to work for the sake of that moral and human dignity. □(Williams, 2009)

In 1976 the Canadian Council of Churches established Project Plowshares as its vehicle to build peace and prevent war, and promote the peaceful resolution of political conflict. Developing support for the elimination of nuclear weapons has been a major focus (Project Plowshares, 2017).

On the world stage the Ninth Assembly of World Council of Churches (WCC) in 2006 recalled its long-standing opposition to nuclear weapons.

From its birth as a fellowship of Christian churches the WCC has condemned nuclear weapons for their "widespread and indiscriminate destruction" and as "sin against God" in modern warfare (First WCC Assembly, 1948), recognized early that the only sure defense against nuclear weapons is prohibition, elimination and verification (Second Assembly) and, *inter alia*, called citizens to "press their governments to ensure national security without resorting to the use of weapons of mass destruction" (Fifth Assembly, 1975).

The Second Assembly in 1954 called for "The prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction; including atomic and hydrogen bombs, with provision for international inspection and control, such as would safeguard the security of all nations, together with the drastic reduction of other armaments" (Visser 't Hooft, 1955, p. 146). The Ninth Assembly in 2006 adopted a "Minute on Elimination of Nuclear Arms", noting that "Existing WCC policy urges all states to meet their treaty obligations to reduce and then destroy nuclear arsenals with adequate verification" and that "Churches must prevail upon governments until they recognize the incontrovertible immorality of nuclear weapons" (World Council of Churches, 2006). The Tenth Assembly in November 2013 recommended that governments "*Negotiate and establish* a ban on the production, deployment, transfer and use of nuclear weapons in accordance with international humanitarian law" (World Council of Churches, 2013).

Among Protestant denominations, the United Methodist Council of Bishops in 1986 took up the nuclear weapons in a foundation document, *In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace* (United Methodist Council of Bishops, 1986). They chose the title because God's creation "is under attack...[from] the darkening shadows of threatening nuclear winter... [It is] "a

crisis that threatens to assault not only the whole human family but planet earth itself” (United Methodist Council of Bishops, 1986, p. 92). Given this situation, the bishops in a pastoral letter stated:

Therefore, we say a clear and unconditional *No* to nuclear war and any use of nuclear weapons. We conclude that nuclear deterrence is a position that cannot receive the church’s blessing (United Methodist Council of Bishops, p.92).

For moving toward a nuclear-free world they recommended four measures: (1) comprehensive test ban to inaugurate a nuclear freeze; (2) consolidated of existing treaties and phased reductions; (3) bans on space weapons; and (4) no-first-use agreement (United Methodist Council of Bishop, 1986, pp. 74-78).

The 1988 United Methodist General Conference, the official governing body, endorsed *In Defense of Creation* (United Methodist Church, 1988) and in following quadrennial meetings supported concrete steps toward a world free of nuclear weapons. A 2004 resolution described the doctrine of nuclear deterrence as “morally corrupt and spiritually bankrupt” because “nuclear weapons hold innocent people hostage for political and military purposes” (United Methodist Church, 2004, p. 889).

In the last thirty years all of the “mainline” Protestant churches and the historic peace churches in the United States have taken strong stands against the use of nuclear weapons and have supported policies leading to the elimination.

Orthodox

Orthodox Churches from many nations are members of the World Council of Churches and in that sense support WCC policies on nuclear weapons. They also speak for themselves in their own countries. In the United States branches of the Orthodox Church – Russian, Greek, and others - have joined interfaith initiatives for the elimination of nuclear weapons. In Russia, Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, speaking in 2007 in Sarov, the center of Russia’s nuclear weapons industry, indicated that Russia required nuclear arms to enable it to remain a sovereign state during the Cold War. That is because of the deterrent value of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, he said, the Church favors a world without nuclear weapons (Kirill, 2007).

Roman Catholic

In the Roman Catholic Church, popes have spoken against the use of nuclear weapons since the first atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima. Pope Pius XII (pope from 1939 to 1958) in his 1954 Easter message demanded “the effective proscription and banishment of atomic...warfare,” calling the arms race a “costly relationship of mutual terror” (Pius XII, 1954).

Pope John XXXIII (1958-1963) in his 1963 papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris* called for the cessation of the arms race, noting:

The stock-piles of armaments which have been built up in various countries must be reduced all round and simultaneously by the parties concerned. Nuclear weapons must be banned. A general agreement must be reached on a suitable disarmament program, with an effective system of mutual control. (John XXIII, 1963)

Gaudium et Spes (“Joy and Hope”), a pastoral constitution coming out of the Second Vatican Council and promulgated by Pope Paul VI (1963-78) in 1965, stated:

Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation. (Paul VI, 1965)

However, the document noted that some “scientific weapons” are amassed for retaliation and therefore serve as a “deterrent to possible enemy attack.” But this “is not a safe way to preserve a steady peace, nor is the so-called balance resulting from this race a sure and authentic peace.” A better way is to “labor to put an end at last to the arms race, and to make a true beginning of disarmament, not unilaterally indeed, but proceeding at an equal pace according to agreement, and backed up by true and workable safeguards” (Paul VI, 1965).

When Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) spoke in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Hall in February 1981 he called on heads of state and of government and those who hold political and economic power to pledge ourselves “that war will never be tolerated or sought as a means of resolving differences; let us promise our fellow human beings that we will work untiringly for disarmament and the banishing of all nuclear weapons” (John Paul II, 1981).

Speaking to the United Nations General Assembly in June 1982, Pope John Paul II stated:

The teaching of the Catholic Church in this area has been clear and consistent. It has deplored the arms race, called nonetheless for mutual progressive and verifiable reduction of armaments as well as greater safeguards against possible misuse of these weapons. It has done so while urging that the independence, freedom and legitimate security of each and every nation be respected. In current conditions "deterrence" based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself but as step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable. Nonetheless in order to ensure peace, it is indispensable not to be satisfied with this minimum which is always susceptible to the real danger of explosion. (John Paul II, 1982)

Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013) in a message on World Day of Peace 2006 indicated:

In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims. The truth of peace requires that all - whether those governments which openly or secretly possess nuclear arms, or those planning to acquire them - agree to change their course by clear and firm decisions, and strive for a progressive and concerted nuclear disarmament. (Benedict XVI, 2006)

At the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Msgr Celestino Migliore delivered a message from Benedict XVI encouraging “initiatives that seek progressive disarmament and the creation of zones free of nuclear weapons, with a view to their complete elimination from the planet” (Migliore, 2010).

With this decades-long support for nuclear disarmament the Holy See has become impatient with the lack of progress toward this objective. This was shown in an address by Archbishop Francis Chullikat, the permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, in Kansas City, Missouri in 2011. He said:

The Holy See has never countenanced nuclear deterrence as a permanent measure, nor does it today when it is evident that nuclear deterrence drives the development of ever newer nuclear arms, thus preventing genuine nuclear disarmament.... Nuclear deterrence prevents genuine nuclear disarmament. It maintains an unacceptable hegemony over non-nuclear development for the poorest half of the world's population. It is a fundamental obstacle to achieving a new age of global security. (Chullikat, 2011)

He noted that the Catholic Church had embraced a 1996 decision of the International Court of Justice calling for “negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.” He reiterated the Holy See’s support “for transparent, verifiable, global and irreversible nuclear disarmament and for addressing seriously the issues of nuclear strategic arms, the tactical ones and their means of delivery (Chullikat, 2011).

Pope Francis in 2015 address to the United Nations General Assembly stated:

There is urgent need to work for a world free of nuclear weapons, in full application of the non-proliferation Treaty, in letter and spirit, with the goal of a complete prohibition of these weapons. (Francis, 2015)

In the United States in the early 1980s, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops undertook an in-depth study of war and peace with special attention to nuclear weapons. Working from the moral principles of the just-war tradition, they indicated:

- Every nation has a right and duty to defend itself against unjust aggression.
 - Offensive war of any kind is morally unjustifiable.
 - The intentional killing of innocent civilians or non-combatants is always wrong.
 - Even defensive response to unjust attack can cause destruction which violates the principle of proportionality, going far beyond the limits of legitimate defense.
- (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1983, p. iii)

Applying these principles to nuclear weapons, the U.S. Catholic bishops spoke against initiation of nuclear war and against any use of nuclear weapons to destroy population centers or other predominantly civilian targets even in retaliatory action. They opposed initiation of nuclear war and expressed skepticism of even a limited nuclear war. Following the leadership of Pope John Paul II, they accepted “a strictly conditional moral acceptance of deterrence” but not adequate as a long-term basis for peace (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1983, pp v-vi).

Over the years the U.S. Catholic bishops have retained their strong interest in nuclear disarmament. In 2010, Cardinal Francis George, then President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote:

The horribly destructive capacity of nuclear arms makes them disproportionate and indiscriminate weapons that endanger human life and dignity like no other armaments. Their use as a weapon of war is rejected in Church teaching based on just war norms. Although we cannot anticipate every step on the path humanity must walk, we can point with moral clarity to a destination that moves beyond deterrence to a world free of the nuclear threat. (George, 2010)

For this to happen “the Church urges that nuclear deterrence be replaced with concrete measures of disarmament based on dialogue and multilateral negotiations” (George, 2010).

Islamic Perspective

“A Common Word,” a report addressed by Muslim scholars to Christian leaders, notes that Christians and Muslims together make up more than 55 percent of the world’s population. They then observe:

If Muslims and Christians are not at peace, the world cannot be at peace. With the terrible weaponry of the modern world; with Muslims and Christians intertwined everywhere as never before, no side can unilaterally win a conflict between more than half of the world’s inhabitants. Thus, our common future is at stake. The very survival of the world itself is at stake. (A Common Word, 2007, pp. 72-73)

Jamal Badawi and Muzammil H. Siddiqi in an essay published by the Muslim-Christian Initiative on the Nuclear Weapons Danger offered six powerful reasons for Muslims to oppose the production, deployment, and use of nuclear weapons.

- (1) They represent a serious threat to peace, while peace is a central theme of Islam.
- (2) They are brutal and merciless, and thus violate the Qur’anic description of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as “*mercy to all the worlds.*”
- (3) They are contrary to Islam’s promotion of human fellowship.
- (4) Nuclear weapons do not fall with the scope of legitimate self-defense... Not only do they not discriminate between combatants and noncombatants, but the great majority of victims are likely to be noncombatants... Repelling aggression is permissible in Islam, but only with the minimum cost of life and property. Nuclear weapons cause destruction of the environment that lasts for hundreds, if not thousands, of years.
- (5) Nuclear weapons research and production waste a huge amount of resources.
- (6) While the argument for nuclear deterrence is not un-Islamic in principle, and while such deterrence apparently did work during the Cold War, there is no guarantee that it will work

in the future. Nor is there any guarantee that nuclear weapons will not fall into the hands of non-state actors. (Badawi and Siggiqui, 2005, pp. 26-27)

The authors continue:

Considering all of these points, we must conclude that it is *harâm* (forbidden) to deploy nuclear weapons. The *sharî'ah* of Allah could never approve such weapons. According to the principles of Islamic law, there should instead be a universal ban on their development and possession. No criteria exist that allow some states to maintain nuclear weapons while others are denied of them. (Badawi and Siggiqui, 2005, p. 27)

In applying such beliefs, Iran Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, on a number of occasions has said that possession and use of nuclear weapons are contrary to Islamic law. In 2005, Iran communicated to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that Ayatollah Khamenei had issued a *fatwa* [religious edict] that “the production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons are forbidden under Islamic law and that the Islamic Republic of Iran shall never acquire these weapons” (International Atomic Energy Agency (2005, p. 121). In a letter to the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Khamenei wrote: “We consider the use of such weapons as *haram* (religiously forbidden) and believe that it is everyone's duty to make efforts to secure humanity against this great disaster.” In an address on August 30, 2012 at the 16th Non-Aligned Summit in Tehran, he stated:

The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the use of nuclear, chemical and similar weapons as a great and unforgivable sin. We proposed the idea of ‘Middle East free of nuclear weapons’ and we are committed to it. This does not mean forgoing our right to peaceful use of nuclear power and production of nuclear fuel. On the basis of international laws, peaceful use of nuclear energy is a right of every country.... Our motto is: “Nuclear energy for all and nuclear weapons for none.” (Khamenei, 2012)

Some analysts observe that Ayatollah Khamenei sometimes speaks of production, stockpiling, and use of nuclear weapons and sometimes only use. They speculate that this implies that Iran might want to produce nuclear weapons as a deterrent, but there have been no public statements using deterrence language. Such clarification might occur during ongoing negotiations about Iran’s nuclear capability.

Summary

In reviewing Jewish, Christian, and Islamic perspectives on nuclear weapons, we find many common features.

There is a broad consensus that use of nuclear weapons would be morally wrong because of the harm to large numbers of non-combatants and the environment. Widespread use would be disastrous for humankind and the planet Earth. A small minority believes that limited nuclear war might be acceptable as a final measure for national defense, but most maintain that nuclear weap-

ons are so powerful and indiscriminate that even limited use would be wrong. Although not part of our previous discussion, there are also some in the faith community who believe that nuclear war would be acceptable as an eschatological event prior to the final day of judgment and commencement of a messianic era.

Among the three faiths there has been some acceptance of development, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons as a measure of deterrence for self-defense in order to dissuade other nations from nuclear or conventional attack. However, a growing number reject nuclear deterrence because of the immorality of in effect holding civilian population hostage. Some deterrence adherents believe if deterrence fails and a nation is attacked, nuclear weapons should not be used in retaliation.

There is widespread support for negotiation of arms control agreements and for unilateral actions to reduce nuclear arsenals.

Although not discussed in previous sections, many voices in the faith community observe that the nuclear arms race is a waste of resources and that funds could be better spent for measures that improve human and community welfare.

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