



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**COURSE CODE: ISL447**

**COURSE TITLE: Islam and Inter-Religious Dialogue**



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## **Module 1: Inter- Religious Dialogue: Definition/ Advantages**

### **Unit 1: Definition of Dialogue**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

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##### **3.1 Dialogue Defined**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

Inter- Religious Dialogue as an academic discipline is both interesting and challenging. It is interesting because the holy Qur'an, as a matter of tradition, provides even the minute details of what Inter- Religious Dialogue is all about; the rationale and its *modus operandi*. The students will find practical scenarios of inter- Religious Dialogue in the Quran. This does not come as a surprise given the Islamic Culture of preparing Muslims for interaction with adherents of other faiths for peaceful co-existence.

Furthermore, Muslims are assured of adequate information on any issue under the sun. This notion is captured in the Quran in several ways which include:

“All things have been explained in detail” (Q17:12)

“Nothing have we omitted from the Book” (Q6:38)

On the other hand, inter- Religious Dialogue is challenging when it is viewed from the practical dimension. It is axiomatic that human life is dynamic. It is characterized by incessant changes. For example, a solution applied today to a given social problem may be defied when applied on another occasion due to the dynamism of or unpredictability of human behaviour. Groups of participants in Inter- Religious Dialogue have various pedigrees and different dispositions. As it is customary that Inter- Religious Dialogue is a give -and -take forum, there would be some participants who will prefer to give and not to take when it comes to exchange of ideas. In whatever scenario you find yourself, Islam provides a lead way. However, it must be recognised that Inter- Religious Dialogue is a workshop to students of Religious Studies (in the Islamic or Christian sense). It is a workshop where the aggregate of Religious tenets learned so far at all levels of education is tested for optimal utilization.

### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (a) state the correct definition of dialogue
- (b) show the difference(s) between dialogue and monologue
- (c) list the advantages of dialogue

### **3.1 Dialogue defined**

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2001:321) defines dialogue as a formal discussion between two groups or countries, especially when they are trying to solve a problem, and end a dispute. In the same vein, the Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1991:350) defines

dialogue as a conversation between two or more persons , a similar exchange of ideas and opinions. From the two definitions listed above, you can discern the following meanings:

First, Dialogue is a form of speech involving two groups, persons or countries. Secondly, it is formal in the sense that it is premeditated and organised with a theme, venue and time formally selected. Thirdly, it is meant for settlement, reconciliation and resolution of a conflict. Fourthly, it is a conversation conducted with a view to exchanging ideas and opinions.

Dialogue connotes dualism; a discussion in which two speakers with equal right are involved in a question and answer, give and take fashion. The ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle saw dialogue as a tool or technique of resolving knotty issues. Plato, for example, was fond of using dialogue as a means of selling his ideas. His take was to select a theme, assemble people to dialogue with and through exchange of ideas and opinion collectively arrive at a conclusion which would be mutually acceptable to all parties. He once dialogued with people on how best to evolve a method of giving the Athenian Children equal attention and opportunity and treatment. He wanted to find out whether a system could be evolved that no child would be disadvantaged on account of parental low income. Take Nigeria for example, is it possible to avoid situation whereby a child is taken to school in an air conditioned vehicle, another one goes to the school in a public bus. The third one travels by tricycle or by motorcycle while the last one treks. This is beautifully treated in a book entitled "*The Republic of Plato*". I must quickly hint at this juncture that the book "Republic of Plato" was not authored by Plato in a conventional way of writing a book. Rather, it was a compilation of his ideas and thoughts arranged and published by his student, Aristotle who was a philosopher in his own right.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

By the use of dictionaries excluding the ones that are referred to in this unit, state the meaning of dialogue as different from an ordinary discussion.

### **3.2 Dialogue and Monologue**

The meaning of dialogue comes out clearer when compared to monologue. Monologue is a form of speech in which the speaker is a lone ranger. According to the Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1991:768), Monologue is dramatic soliloquy; a long speech monopolized presentation. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2001:758) defines Monologue as a long speech by one person during a conversation that stops other people from speaking or expressing an opinion. You will notice from the above definition that monologue has characteristic such as:

- a. domination of speech by one person
- b. lack of variety of opinions
- c. lack of comments or contributions from a second or third parties; and
- d. sometimes addressing oneself without an audience or a second party.

Monologue features frequently in dramatic presentations when a character talks to himself. There is also a situation when a character talks to a second party without waiting for or demanding a response. He or she talks none stop. Apart from the dramatic presentation, inaugural lecture by a University Professor (if you have ever witnessed or attended any) is a good example of monologue. Monologue is a typical form of speech by a preacher like an Imam or a Pastor when addressing a congregation in a place of worship. A preacher, in either Islamic or Christian sense, usually has a topic to treat with his audience listening with rapt attention. The preacher speaks on with enthusiasm, demonstration and gesticulation for as long as he or she pleases. Monologue is also the mode of speech for a community leader who has a message to pass on to the community

residents. He meets his fellow community members at a community hall at an appointed date and time. He delivers his speech in a non-stop fashion. This does not mean that monologue is bad form of speech. It all depends on the nature of topic, the occasion and the circumstance. Occasions such as Inaugural Lecture, community address or preaching to congregation in a place of worship are suited for monologue.

By now, it should have been clear to you that the distinction between dialogue and monologue is not superlative. The distinction between them is rather in the type of the topic, the circumstance and occasion. Another distinction is in the caliber of the speaker(s) and the audience; what they stand for and what they represent. Therefore, a conversation between two religious groups (Islamic and Christian) should be conducted in dialogue and not monologue because of reasons to be explained in the following units.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Define monologue to show the difference(s) between it and dialogue

### **3.3 Advantages of Dialogue**

Dialogue is a tool and the normal function of a tool is to make things happen. It is to facilitate enhancement of a target. For example, to make furniture, you need a tool. To mob a kitchen or bathroom, you need a tool. To write an essay, you need a tool. Examples are almost limitless. In human interactions, if you want to resolve a conflict you need dialogue as a tool. If you want to nip a conflict in the bud, you need dialogue. The professional educators use dialogue profusely in teaching. A learner, the educators insist, should not be rendered passive listener. In other words, he should be involved in the classroom activities. He should be encouraged to participate. Dialogue is the tool to enlist his or her participation. It is a method of teaching. There is a political dialogue; a forum where two political parties (or more) meet to discuss a national issue common to all parties. In Nigeria for example, insecurity is an issue that is common to all parties. They can all dialogue on how to stem the trend of kidnapping, pipe line vandalism, armed robbery, etc. The economists can dialogue on Global Economic Meltdown. In recent times, two events dominate international press, especially the electronic media. These are the financial crisis in the European Union (EU) and the Industrial Competition or rivalry between United State of America (USA) and China. On BBC and CNN channels, you watch almost on a daily basis, dialogue on how the EU member countries could collaborate to tame the brute called commercial crisis. On CCTV, a Chinese English TV 24, you watch every day a dialogue on how to finetune the relationship between USA and China in a manner that the competition does not snow ball into confrontation. In drama, characters use dialogue to resolve an issue. Shakespeare in his plays used dialogue as evident in Anthony and Cleopatra. The function of Dialogue in the religious realm is the focus of the next Module.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Describe any dialogue exercise you ever watched and state its type.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

The significance of dialogue in a political arena, economic discourse, educational discussion and dramatic presentation has been highlighted in this unit. This is to enable you appreciate the significance of dialogue in your career as a student of Religious Studies. In the subsequent units, you will be guided how to use dialogue in pursuance of your career.

### **5.0 Summary**

As the word dialogue is defined in this unit, focusing on its meaning, function and relevance, reference is made to plays of Shakespeare, BBC, CNN, CCTV24, etc. This is to let you know that to properly capture what dialogue is all about and to master the use of it, extensive reading is essential.

### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

By means of definition, show what makes dialogue different from monologue.

### **7.0 References/Further Reading**

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## **Module 1: Inter-Religious Dialogue: Definition/Advantages**

### **Unit 2: Inter-Religious Dialogue defined**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **3.0 Main content**

##### **3.1 Classification of Society into Theocracy, Democracy and Pluralistic**

<b>3.2</b>	<b>Definition of Inter-Religious Dialogue</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Definition of Intra-Religious Dialogue</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Rationale for Inter-Religious Dialogue</b>
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<b>5.0</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Tutor Marked Assignment</b>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>References/Further Readings</b>

## **1.0 Introduction**

In the previous unit, you can see how the stage has been set for the treatment of the main course- Inter-Religious Dialogue. The previous unit is indeed a window to what can be rightly called the actual structure. In this unit, questions such as what is Inter-Religious Dialogue? And why do we venture into it? are attempted in order to set you on the path of a journey you will find very interesting. The extent of your comprehension of what follows depends largely on an expose that takes place in this unit.

## **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a. describe stratification of society on social lines;
- b. explain the relevance of Inter-Religious Dialogue to each stratum;
- c. show the difference(s) between Intra and Inter-Religious Dialogue
- d. explain the need for Inter-Religious Dialogue

### **3.1 Classification of the Society**

Classification of the society simply means its stratification into three social realms. The stratification is informed by the attitude of inhabitants of a given community to religion. Basically, religion is part of human life. By intuition, man is sentimentally attached to his creator whom he calls so many names depending on the level of maturity and sophistication of man's psyche. In effect, he thinks about a Supreme Being who created him. He also thinks of how best to adore, and worship Him. Of course, the worship takes various forms. Again, it all depends on man's level of maturity. He does all that without being tagged a Muslim or Christian. This notion of religion is true of an individual as well as of the society. Man graduates from this simple level of free thinking, free choice to a more complex level that is called Islam, Christianity or Judaism.

When a society decides to adopt a religion to the extent of making it the basis of their total existence, you have what is known as a theocratic society. This is defined as a society where all members agree to adopt a given religion as their code of conduct. The religion guides the A-Z of their routine. For example, part 1 Article 2 of the constitution of the state of Kuwait states as follows: "The Religion of the State is Islam, and the Islamic Shariah shall be a main source of

legislation” (1962:6). This is to say that their moral law, economic system, educational system and political institution shall derive from the tenets of Islam. If the Vatican, headed by Pope is taken as a community, by virtue of making Christianity and Catholicism to be the official culture and tradition, it is a theocratic society. This is a society where the leaders combine religious and secular functions. Like in Kuwait (referred to above), Saudi Arabia, Iran where Islam is officially declared the state religion and the political leaders bow to the tenets of Islam and respect the counseling of the Islamic clerics are examples of theocratic society. The intriguing question, what is the relevance of Inter-Religious Dialogue to a theocratic society? This is explained in detail below.

Meanwhile, it should be quickly pointed out that theocracy contrasts secularism. A secular society is where the members resolve to distance themselves from any faith- based practices. Decisions are taken entirely relying on human intellect as the main source of information. The constitution which is a guide in all societal matters is written through the collective reasoning of the members of the society. There is no recognition of God as the creator and law giver. The exponents of secularism give themselves absolute freedom of speech, action and behaviour. Their moral code is not derived from any revealed book and God is not a reference point in taking decisions. Italy, the Vatican’s immediate environment is a secular society.

Countries such as Britain and United States of America are nebulous to classify. Both of them combine elements of religiosity and secularism. For example, while in Britain there is the Church of England, established by King Henry VIII in 1532AD as an organ of the British society, the political, socio-economic and judicial affairs of the British people are run on secular principles (Ency. Britannica Vol.5 p.841). In the same token, the Americans have “In God we Trust” inscribed on their currency, yet the secular principles govern the American public matters. Astonishingly and that is to compound the confusion, the inauguration of an American President (the swearing in ceremony) is conducted with an opening and closing prayers where God’s name is invoked. In this scenario, is Inter-Religious Dialogue of any relevance?

The third part of stratification is Pluralism. This is a situation where citizens of a country willingly adopt amalgamation of religious and secular principles. Nigeria is an epitome of a pluralistic society because traces of both secularism and theocracy abound in the Nigerian public life. For example:

1. Religion is offered in public schools; it is even compulsory in Primary and Junior Secondary Schools.
2. Public holidays are declared to mark religious events such as Christmas, Easter Monday, Good Friday, *Mawlid Nabi*, *Eid al-Fitr*, *Eid al-Kabir*, etc.
3. The government is neck deep in annual pilgrimages to Makkah and Jerusalem.
4. The Government is involved in financing the building and running of the places of worship, especially the central mosque and cathedral in Abuja.

Despite 1-4 above which are some of the traces of a religious society. The public affairs such as political institution, economic system, judiciary and education are managed on the secular maxims. In a pluralistic society like Nigeria, while God is recognized and adored, His worship is not made compulsory. Even as to those who want to worship God, there is no uniform way of conduct. The pluralistic posture of Nigeria is entrenched in the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. Section 10 of the constitution states as follows:



Section 38, sub-section 1-3 further states:

‘The government of the federation and of a state shall not adopt any religion as state religion. Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion including freedom to change his religion or belief and others, and in public or private to manifest or propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance. No person attending any place of education shall be required to take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance of such instruction, religion than his own or a religion not approved by his parents or guardian’.

So in a pluralistic society, there is freedom of worship in a variety of ways and freedom of abstinence from worship such as free thinkers. A pluralistic society, therefore, means a place for all comers, Muslims, Christians, African Traditionalists, Free thinkers, etc. In a pluralistic society, all are equal before the law and no one or group is superior to others. The question arises again: what is the position of Inter-Religious Dialogue in a pluralistic society?

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

By the aid of dictionaries and Encyclopaedia, write out two definitions for each of the three types of society highlighted in this unit with illustrations.

### **3.2 Definition of Inter-Religious Dialogue**

Simply put, Inter-Religious Dialogue is a formal discussion between two religious groups. By way of illustration, Inter-Religious is a discussion that is holding between the mosque and the church when both of them are viewed as institutions representing two different faiths. The illustration in this context is situated as it is related to Nigeria where Islam and Christianity are predominantly professed. This is without prejudice to other religions that are practiced in the country such as African Traditional Religion (ATR). The reason for specifically highlighting Islam and Christianity is explained in the next unit.

It should be reiterated that inter-religious dialogue connotes formal interaction between two or more groups who profess different faiths but together resident in or share common geographical boundaries. It is an exchange of ideas and expression of opinions in a formal setting with a view to resolving an issue of common interest. Inter-Religious Dialogue is anchored on the following criteria.

- a. Freedom of expression
- b. Equal right to make submissions
- c. No domination of discussion by a party
- d. No imposition of ideas or opinions on others
- e. Observation of mutual respect
- f. Observation of courtesy and decency
- g. Avoidance of vulgar language
- h. Control of temperament
- i. None concealment of facts and information

Inter-Religious Dialogue is needed in all strata of society described above *albeit* in varying degrees. This is expatiated upon below:

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

In your capacity as a referee, write a free essay as an advice to the participants in an Inter-Religious Dialogue session.

### **3.3 Definition of Intra Religious Dialogue**

Intra connotes mono as against dual. Intra is about one single unit. It is a form of discussion like Inter. It is also between two groups. But the two groups in the Intra-Religious Dialogue belong to the same faith such as Islam or Christianity. The two groups represent two different Christian denominations or two different Islamic organizations. For example, a discussion between the Sunnis and Shiah is called Intra-Religious Dialogue because both Sunni and Shiah are Muslims. In the same token, a discussion between an orthodox church like the Roman Catholic Church and Deeper Life Church is Intra because both groups are of Christianity. The Antioch conference of 313 between different factions under the supervision of Emperor Constantine was a form of Intra Religious Dialogue. If, as it may happen, the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria holds a discussion with Anwar-ul-Islam of Nigeria, Intra-Religious Dialogue is holding. Furthermore, if different Pentecostal groups hold a discussion, you have an Intra Religious Dialogue. With these illustrations, you must have seen the line clean and clear between a dialogue that is inter and another that is intra. When this narration is applied to the stratification of society detailed above, you can see that Intra Religious Dialogue will be suitable to a theocratic society.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Mention the mode of dialogue suitable to the following scenarios and explain why:

- a. NASFAT and QAREEB
- b. NASFAT and DEEPER LIFE
- c. REDEEMER and BAPTIST

### **3.4 Rationale for Inter-Religious Dialogue**

The search question at this section is: what is the need for Inter-Religious Dialogue? The stratification of the society to theocratic, secular and pluralistic is pointer to the reasons for Inter-Religious Dialogue. At the risk of repetition, inter-religious dialogue is to build bridge between two different groups who are destined to co-exist in the same society, community or a country. The two groups must find a means of knowing each other for the purpose of peaceful co-existence.

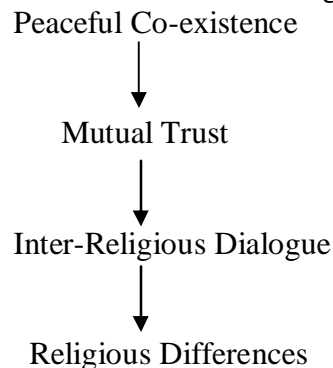
Peaceful co-existence in a society means, members of the community despite divergence in faith:

- a. living in peace and harmony
- b. planning together for the overall development of the community
- c. working together to guard against external attack
- d. putting in place together, strategies to ensure internal security
- e. floating together, a political system that will produce leaders of the community
- f. running together, profit driven ventures

- g. running together, institutions of learning
- h. socializing together in terms of Inter marriage and exchange of visits and gifts
- i. creating an atmosphere of relaxation and liesure.

The pivot on which a-i above revolve is MUTUAL TRUST. In other words, to achieve the above, members of the community must trust each other. They must not be torn apart by religious differences. Religious differences constitute a time bomb that can negate attainment of a-i above. The differences can be and should be discussed. Each group needs to be assured that its interest and welfare will not in anyway be hampered by the religious practices of the other group. Each group wants to be assured that its safety is guaranteed and that is perfectly at home with the other confederating group.

Everything is happening in vicious circle. While, for instance, MUTUAL TRUST is the key to the attainment of peaceful existence (as highlighted in a-i above), Inter-Religious Dialogue is the means of attaining MUTUAL TRUST. This can be graphically illustrated thus:



In summary, the diagram explains that peaceful co-existence depends on Mutual Trust; Mutual Trust is built through Inter-Religious Dialogue. Inter-Religious Dialogue is the means of resolving religious differences that are capable of negating peaceful co-existence.

In any case, Inter-Religious Dialogue is obviously indispensable to any society be it Theocratic, Secular or Pluralistic in as much as peaceful co-existence is desirable. In a theocratic society, when Islam or Christianity is declared the state religion, Intra Religious Dialogue comes handy. In a secular society when the majority of the citizenry are indifferent or outright disinterested in God related issues, what is needed is Inter-Religious Dialogue on assumption that there may be a minority group that passionately believes in God. In a Pluralistic society like Nigeria where all religions are given equal status, Inter-Religious Dialogue is a *sine-qua-non*. Interestingly, in Nigeria, Intra Religious Dialogue is also feasible among different denominations, factions and sections of the same faith.

### Self Assessment Exercise

Make a case for Intra Religious Dialogue in a pluralistic society like Nigeria.

## 4.0 Conclusion

Physical development otherwise known as Nation Building is a task that must be performed in any society irrespective of the diverse religious backgrounds of its citizens. To that extent, any form of impediment to the development must be recognized and nipped in the bud. Religious differences can be a serious impediment to nation building. So, Inter-Religious Dialogue can and should be utilized to resolve religious differences and move forward.

## **5.0 Summary**

To properly capture the essence of Inter-Religious Dialogue, we need to know the composition, the status of the society we are dealing with at a given time. This explains why we have to do classification of society into theocratic, secular and pluralistic. But to draw a straight line between the three societies can be very tasking because a single society sometime can exhibit traces of the societies highlighted. Your task as a student is to look closely at the society in view and find out which traces are more pronounced to make your verdict as to what tag you place on the society.

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

In view of the composition of Nigeria, which form of religious dialogue would you recommend; Inter or Intra and why?

## **7.0 References/Further Readings**

Bidmos, M.A. (2006) Inter-Religious Dialogue: the Nigerian Experience. Abuja & Lagos. Panaf Publishing Inc.

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## **Module 1: Inter-Religious Dialogue: Definition/Advantages**

### **Unit 3: Islamic Method of Inter-Religious Dialogue**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **3.0 Main content**

##### **3.1 Prophet Isa (as) and Maryam his mother in the Qur'an**

##### **3.2 Relationship with Christians**

##### **3.3 Methods of Dialogue**

##### **3.4 Involvement of ATR**

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

#### **5.0 Summary**

#### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

#### **7.0 References/Further Readings**

## 1.0 Introduction

In this unit, you are going to listen to the Qur'an as it talks about Inter-Religious Dialogue in all its ramifications. You may be surprised to see how the Qur'an is replete with information about the *modus operandi* of Inter-Religious Dialogue. This is to prepare Muslims for co-existence in pluralistic settings any where in the world. While interaction with any religious group is detailed, a special attention is paid to interaction with Christians. All along, you will find most interesting, the practical aspect of the Qur'anic expose on Inter-Religious Dialogue.

## 2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a. explain the significance of the Qur'anic information about prophet Isa (as) and Mary;
- b. explain the attitudinal foundation built for Muslims in the Qur'an;
- c. list methods and stages of Inter-Religious Dialogue with Christians
- d. describe the special attention paid to the relationship with Christians.

## 3.1 Prophet Isa (as) and Maryam in the Qur'an

The word 'message' resonates across as we talk about God, the prophets/messengers and human beings. Axiomatically, God sent a message through prophets to human beings. The message is that all prophets should inform their followers (human beings) to worship God and that worship of God is the purpose of creation (Q51:56). The message brought by the prophets becomes an organic unity that binds all of them. The implication of the unity of message is that all prophets share common status in relation to each other and to that extent, human beings who are targeted with the message are supposed to accord the prophets, recognition and respect (Q2:136) and (Q4:64).

While the Qur'an provides minute details about all prophets of God, we shall single out in this unit the information available in the Qur'an about Isa (as) (known as Jesus in the Bible) as well as Maryam (Jesus' mother). The extensive information contained in the Qur'an about Jesus and his mother may not be unconnected with the fact that Isa (as) is the immediate past prophet before prophet Muhammad (SAW) which presupposes the possibility of Muslims sharing neighborhood with Christians around the world as it happened during the life time of prophet Muhammad (SAW) and so they (Muslims) need detailed information about their neighbours.

Muslims are informed thus:

- i. The-miraculous birth of Jesus will be better appreciated when the narration is traced back to the birth of his mother Maryam who was born into a deeply devout family. Maryam's mother had expected a male child as she prayed fervently while in pregnancy that she would dedicate her unborn baby to the service of God (Q3:35-37). But when she delivered of a baby girl, she cried.
- ii. O my lord: Behold: I am delivered of a female child (Q3:36) which portrayed her preference for a male child she had earlier wished to be dedicated to the service of God.
- iii. Nevertheless, Zachariah took custody of Maryam in the chamber. The miracle with Maryam was that whenever Zachariah entered the chamber, he met a variety of food with her and she would always respond to Zachariah's enquiry thus: "From Allah: For Allah provides sustenance to whom He pleases without measure" (Q3:37).

- iv. In a miraculous way, Maryam got pregnant and when she was in the birth labour, she experienced a serious discomfort. Then she was divinely instructed to shake the date tree under which she sat and to eat of the date that would drop. She complied and was peacefully delivered of the baby Jesus (Q19:17-26).
- v. On her arrival at home with the baby, she was bombarded with questions about how and where the baby came from? She pointed to the baby. The baby Jesus talked in defense of his mother. He also gave details of his mission on earth (Q19:30-32).
- vi. One of the first words uttered by the baby Jesus was “assalam alaya”= Peace be on me. (Q19:33). So, Muslims are instructed to say “Peace be on him” whenever his name is mentioned as a mark of recognition and respect; recognition as a prophet and servant of God.
- vii. The Qur’an gives an elaborate account of Jesus’ travail with the Jews and the power brokers of the time. Equipped with the grace of God, he survived the ordeals (Q3:52,61:14etc).
- viii. The Qur’an deals extensively and clearly with the status of Jesus in relation to God that he came and served as servant and prophet of God and he (Jesus) did not hesitate to call himself servant of God (Q4:173, 2:116; 112:1-4; 19:77).
- ix. The second coming of Jesus is instructive since both Muslims and Christians share the concept that he is coming to complete his mission (Q4:159).
- x. The arrest and crucifixion of Jesus are explicitly treated in the Qur’an. The Qur’an considers the two inter-related events as a tight corner in which Jesus found himself and he detested it as he said when the arrest became imminent “how wish this cup is taken away from my mouth.” According to the Qur’an, his wish was granted and God substituted another fellow who was crucified while Jesus was moved away to the high heavens where he stays till his second coming (Q4:157).

The information given to you in 1-10 above about Jesus and his mother is quite sketchy. In the context of this material, that information suffices as an illustration. Given the historical and theological nature of the topic, volumes of writings will be required for detailed treatment. Certainly, you will find 1-10 above sufficient to give you an idea about the background information given to Muslims as a prelude to Inter-religions dialogue.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Copy out from the Qur’an, the verses (as indicated above) that deal with the birth of Jesus, the narration of his mission and his travails with Jews.

### **3.2 Relationship with Christians**

In Islam, a special mode of relationship is packaged for the use of Muslims with the Christians. The mode is to guarantee understanding, mutual trust and peaceful co-existence between them. The mode is packaged in stages. It runs as follows:

#### **1. Attitudinal**

Muslims are orientated to develop positive attitude towards Christians. In a pragmatic approach, Islam lays down a solid foundation to instill decent behavior especially the virtue

of humility in Muslims. First, they should not arrogate to themselves the notion of superiority in matters of spirituality and religiosity. (Q53:32). Secondly, the issue of salvation should be left entirely to God to decide on the day of judgement. To that extent, six religious groups including Christians are identified in the Qur'an among whom Allah has the prerogative preserve to judge who attains salvation. The six groups are Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sabians, Magians and Polytheists (Q22:17).

## **2. Language**

As a mark of respect, the Jews and Christians are referred to in the Qur'an as *ahlul kitab*, the People of the Book. This is in reference to *Tawrah* and *Injil*, the Mosaic scripture and the Gospel. Muslims are, therefore, orientated to use the appellation *ahlul kitab* while addressing Christians (Q4:153; 48:1-4, 59:2-11). Furthermore, there is a stern warning in the Qur'an against using a derogatory, abusive and offensive language in respect of what other religious groups worship. Using an offensive language against any religious group is tantamount to invitation to a retaliation that may target Allah (Q6:108)

## **3. Inter-Personal Relationship**

Islam encourages evolvment of cordial relationship between Muslims and Christians. Specifications are recommended towards promotion of cordial relationship between the two groups. These include exchange of food, inter-marriage, etc. (Q5:5).

## **4. Christian as friends**

A comparison is drawn between the Jews and Christians in the Qur'an in terms of human relations. The Qur'an declares that Christians are kindly inclined towards Muslims as they have affinity and soft spot for Muslims and that some of them even shed tears whenever Allah is mentioned. This is a sharp contrast to the disposition of Jews towards Muslims (Q4:82).

## **5. *Modus operandi* of Inter-Religious Dialogue**

In Islam, talking to Christians is a serious business. It is divinely instituted. What and how of it are described, covering selection of themes, principles guiding contribution, the steps to take in case of a dead lock, etc. (Q3:64).

The 1-5 highlights listed above are a representation of the relationship envisaged between Muslims and Christians. A positive outcome is guaranteed if Muslims adhere to those maxims and Christians respond positively. This shows the grand preparation which Islam puts in place as an agenda for a peaceful co-existence in a pluralistic society like Nigeria.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Using Q3:64, suggest a theme of Inter-Religious Dialogue between Muslims and Christian and describe how the dialogue should be conducted.

### **3.4 Involvement of ATR**

The adherents of African Traditional Religion (ATR) are listed among the six religious groups in the Qur'an 22:17 as quoted above. This is in their capacity as one of the groups that Allah will judge on the day of resurrection. However, the question arises, should the ATR adherents be involved in Inter-Religious Dialogue? To answer this question, let us consider the following factors.

First, Christianity and Islam are missionary religions. It is mandatory in both religions to seek more converts. This is called mission or evangelism in Christianity and Da'wah in Islam. In pursuance of mission and Da'wah, there is usually the risk of stepping on toes; the situation which calls for a method of reaching out between the church and the mosque. Hence, the Inter-Religious dialogue exercise becomes necessary. In contrast, the ATR does not have a mandatory culture of seeking converts. In other words, the type of keen rivalry that exists between the church and the mosque which can sometimes snowball into confrontations is none-existent with regards to ATR. In fact, it is interesting to note that there are cases of ATR practitioners volunteering their children to follow an Imam or an Islamic cleric known as Alufa to embrace Islam and learn Arabic in Western Nigeria. There are others who would also volunteer their children to embrace Christianity and acquire western education.

Secondly, the holy scriptures of the Bible and the Qur'an are available as reference materials whenever the Christian and Islamic tenets are discussed. Comparison is made easy between the two faiths. It should be noted that God is the Author of the books to the extent that both of them are revelations from Him.

In contrast, books that are available as reference materials in respect of ATR are the ones authored by some contemporary scholars. These include *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* by Bolaji Idowu, *Yoruba Belief and Human Sacrifice* by Awolalu, *Ifa* by Wande Abimbola, etc. While the revealed books share their perfection from the perfection of their Author (God), the books authored by human beings are prone to weaknesses and inaccuracies due to the human nature of their authors. The Qur'an alludes to the human weakness when it reads thus:

Do they not ponder on the Qur'an?  
Had it been from other than Allah,  
they would surely have found  
therein much discrepancy (Q4:82).

Say: if the whole of mankind and  
Jinns were together to produce the  
like of this Qur'an, they could not  
produce the like thereof, even if they  
backed up each other with help and  
support (Q17:88).

A critical examination of the factors highlighted above will inform our decision on the qualification of ATR to get involved or not in the exercise of religious dialogue.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Involvement of ATR in Inter-Religious Dialogue: To be or not to be?

### **4.0 Conclusion**

The vocal point in this unit is the calculated attempt made to prepare Muslims for a peaceful co-existence with other religious groups. But it would be noted that more attention is paid to the



relationship with Christians. This special attention may be attributed to two reasons. First, the population of Christians to share neighbourhood with Muslims may be preponderant in relation to others. Secondly, Christians have affinity with Muslims and have soft spot for them.

## **5.0 Summary**

You will appreciate the fact, going by the content of this unit, that Islam being a religion of peace is not a theoretical matter. It is real. The agenda of Islam is to channel all means that can lead to peace and block the avenue that can cause break down of law and order. Since it is not practicable to have a zone where muslims can live in a total segregation from none Muslims, it is necessary to put in place the right mechanism that can nib religious conflict in the bud. The scenario highlighted in this unit does exactly that.

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

Which aspect of the guidelines listed above do you find most robust and most effective in cementing relationship between Muslim and Christian?

## **7.0 References/Further Readings**

1. Bolaji Idowu (1973) African Traditional Religion: A Definition. London. SCM Press
2. Awolalu J.O (1979) Human Belief Sacrificial Rites, London. Longman
3. Abimbola, W. ( 1976) Ifa: An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus. Ibadan. Oxford University Press
4. The Qur'an
5. The Bible

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## **Module 2: Factors Affecting Relationship**

### **Unit 1: Proselytization, Overzealousness/ Bigotry, Holier than Thou Attitude**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **3.0 Main content**

##### **3.1 Proselytization**

##### **3.2 Overzealousness/Bigotry**

##### **3.3 Holier Than Thou Attitude**

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

#### **5.0 Summary**

#### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

#### **7.0 References/Further Readings**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

Inter-Religious Dialogue in all its ramifications is about relationship between two or more religious groups. When the relationship is normal, Inter-Religious Dialogue is necessary to keep it intact. More essentially, should the relationship be strained, Inter- Religious Dialogue is the means for normalizing it. Ideally, relationship between religious groups is supposed to be normal given the fact that religion is about good conduct. But, alas, relationship is often strained among religious groups. In this unit, therefore, you will be taken through various conditions that can adversely affect relationship.

#### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a. identify the effect of proselytization on relationship among religious groups
- b. explain the meaning of holier than thou attitude; and
- c. state the difference between bigotry and overzealousness.

#### **3.1 Proselytization**

When you are trying to persuade a person to accept your view on an issue, you are proselytizing. When you are showing the beauty of your religion to another person for him/her to appreciate and eventually embrace it, proselytization is taking place. Proselytization is what Muslims call Da'wah and Christians call mission or evangelization. Both Islam and Christianity are missionary faiths in the sense that it is mandatory on the faithfuls to invite others to their fold. Muslims and Christians seek converts to their religions. That was the duty of all prophets including Jesus (as) and Muhammad (SAW). And it is a legacy they bequeathed to their followers.

According to the Qur'an for instance:

Call thou all mankind unto thy sustainer's  
path with wisdom and goodly exhortation  
and argue with them in the most kindly  
manner. (Q16:125)

Let there arise out of you a band of people  
inviting to all that is good, enjoining what  
is right and forbidding what is wrong; they  
are the ones to attain felicity (Q3:104)

In the same token, Christians are described as the salt of the earth on account of their character and duty of proselytization (Matt 5: 13-14). An express instruction is given to them as follows:

But as for you, go and proclaim  
the kingdom of God (Luke 9:60)

In 1 Corinthians 9:16, it is stated:

Preaching to the people is not a  
thing I boast about, since it is a  
duty which has been laid on me

By its very nature, preaching can cause stepping on one another's toes because the preachers are competing on the same subjects. This can arise from two perspectives. First, in the process of preaching, the same sets of neutral people are targeted by the Muslim and Christian preachers. Secondly, at some other times, Muslim preachers target Christians to be converted to Islam or Christian evangelists target Muslims for conversion. In the competition arena, frantic efforts are made to outwit each other. A preacher may even over step the boundaries by slandering the opposite preacher. All in a bid to gain attention of the target audience.

Another way by which preaching can adversely affect relationship is when the preachers go out in procession, singing and dancing. Whenever such a dancing procession approaches a mosque where salat, the Muslim prayer, is going on, courtesy demands that the procession should move quietly out of the mosque vicinity and failure to do so could lead to confrontation.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Describe a scenario of confrontation arising out of preaching you have ever witnessed.

### **3.2 Overzealousness/Bigotry**

You cannot be more Christian than pope. This is a popular statement made to tease a Christian devotee who exhibits an exceeding enthusiasm about his/her faith. The same joke applies to a Muslim who demonstrates an exaggerated religiosity in whatever manner. Overzealousness is a kind of hyper religious behavioural pattern displayed by a faithful. This is a situation when the love of one's faith exceeds its knowledge. A lot of the faithful love their religion without a

corresponding knowledge of the religion. Overzealousness can be expressed in a variety of ways. First, it can be expressed in the mode of dress whereby a devotee is dressed in a funny way with a view, according to him/her to projecting the tenet of his/her religion. Out of overzealousness, a faithful can deny him/herself normal hours of sleep at night while observing vigil or *Tahajjud*. Out of overzealousness, a faithful can deny himself sufficient food intake while observing endless fasts. Invariably, in a pluralistic society like Nigeria, some of these overzealous behaviour can be offensive to a neighbor who professes the other religion.

Bigotry is about belief system while overzealousness is about behavior. The common denominator to both of them is exaggeration. A belief system in matters of religion can be over coloured to the point of looking stupid or unreasonable. For example, some devotees believe that it is wrong to use soap to bath or to wash cloths on Wednesday. Some Muslims condemn the use of cutlery on account that the prophet Muhammad (SAW) did not use it. And I will tell such Muslims that they should not travel by plane because the prophet never did. They should not even move around in vehicles. There are Christians who do not use medication except holy water. They even believe a fracture, any illness for that matter can be treated by holy water.

Towards the end of 1999, around November-December, a group of faithfuls in the USA were told by their spiritual leader that the world would end by the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and that it was advisable to end their own lives before the final whistle could be divinely blown around January 2000; the group believed in their leader and all including the leader committed suicide in their shrine. When Ileya meat which is distributed freely by Muslims during their Idul Kabir Festival is thrown into dustbin by some Christian neighbours on account of the meat being that of sacrifice, is bigotry. When some Muslims can borrow money to perform pilgrimage to Makkah at the expense of their children's school fees is bigotry, it is overzealousness. Both bigotry and overzealousness are a function of ignorance of the religion one professes. Both overzealousness and bigotry can be very irritating and offensive not only to the outsiders but also the insiders who profess the same faith as the bigots and zealots.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

If you have once experienced bigotry or overzealousness in your area, describe the practice and suggest how best to tackle bigotry and overzealousness.

### **3.3 Holier Than Thou Attitude**

This is common to both Islam and Christianity. This is a situation whereby a faithful proclaims that he/she knows it all. In matters of religious practice, he/she demands that people should take it from him/her. It is a display of religious arrogance. This mainly manifests in the conduct and utterances of preachers who consider themselves more knowledgeable in tenets of religion than others. They claim knowledge of esoteric meanings especially of the holy scriptures. *Holier than thou attitude* is a common feature among preachers in a pluralistic society like Nigeria where preaching is not regulated. In Nigeria, preaching is an all comers' affair. The practice thrives because of lack of control or guidelines about preaching. In actual fact, Holier than thou attitude can be spotted as the nucleus of bigotry and overzealousness described above. It is also an act of cover up of a defect or deficiency when a preacher desperately and aggressively wants to impress his/her audience about knowledge he does not actually possess. Just as in the preaching, the attitude is in the practice of religion too, a situation where the faithful want to exhibit a very high degree of religiosity and spirituality beyond his real worth. It is hypocrisy when one exhibits religiosity over his actual level of devotion. This set of people are described in the Qur'an as Yuraa'un, those who show off (Q4:142; 107:6).

Holier than thou attitude is when some faithful want to attract praises and admiration for their hypocritical religiousity and exaggerated spirituality. In matters of religion, knowledge and humility go together. One must seek knowledge of the faith he practices and be humble with his practices. A knowledgeable, humble and sincere devotee strives to impress Allah with his acts of devotion as against the hypocrite who is after the admiration of human beings. When one is obsessed of notion of knowing better than others or that he is superior in religiousity to others, he stands the risk of attracting enmity and hatred.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Holier than thou attitude is synonymous to arrogance. Discuss

### **4.0 Conclusion**

The three factors highlighted in this unit which are capable of adversely affecting relationship among various religious groups are inconclusive. They are a tip of the ice-berg. Since human society is dynamic, fraught with changes and challenges, new and old, there will be other factors that can affect relationship. The few pointed out here is to put you on alert. You should watch out for more.

### **5.0 Summary**

The act of Nation Building has been spotted as a reason why the stake holders that is, the Nation Builders who profess different religions should use Inter-Religious Dialogue as a means of keeping their relationship intact. And that religious differences are not allowed to mar their march towards attaining their collective goal. In this unit, the case for Inter-Religious Dialogue is furthermore made in the factors that adversely affect the relationship among various religious groups. If from time to time, there will be challenges that can threaten cordial relationship among various religious groups, Religious Dialogue either intra or inter becomes indispensable. For example, in Islam as well as in Christianity, the faithful will need Intra Religious Dialogue to deal with the effects of bigotry, overzealousness and holier than thou attitude as exhibited by the insiders. In the same token Inter-Religious Dialogue will be needed to deal with the effects of the same factors that affect relationship between the church and the Mosque.

### **6.0 Tutor Marked Exercise**

Give definition of Holier than thou attitude with four examples in words and actions.

### **8.0 References/Further Readings**

Bidmos, M.A. (2006) Inter-religious Dialogue: The Nigerian Experience. Lagos.

Arinze, F.(1990) Church in Dialogue: Working with other Believers. Enugu. San Francisco

The Quran

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## **Module 2: Factors Affecting Relationship**

### **Unit 2: Commercialization of Religion/The Press**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **3.0 Main Content**

##### **3.1 Commercialization of religion**

##### **3.2 The press**

##### **3.3 Miscellaneous factors**

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

#### **5.0 Summary**

#### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assessment**

#### **7.0 Reference/Further Readings**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

It has been pointed in the previous unit that the factors that affect relationship among various religious groups are almost inexhaustible due to the dynamic nature of human society. Against this background, we take on some other factors that are capable of straining relationship. Commercialization syndrome is a potent one as explained below.

#### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a. define Commercialization of Religion
- b. state the effects of Commercialization on relationship
- c. describe the negative role of the Press in religious matters; and
- d. identify other hidden but dangerous factors

#### **3.1 Commercialization of Religion**

Commercialization of religion, you will notice, comes naturally. It is almost unavoidable. For example, someone is called a man of God. He is highly respected in the community because of the assumption that he possesses spiritual power to pray to God on behalf of others. It is believed that such prayers are usually granted. It is normal that such a man of God will be appreciated in cash by those who solicit his spiritual intervention. A barren woman who is eventually blessed

with a baby can go to any length to show appreciation and gratification in various forms. The joy of those who patronize men of God whose requests are granted will know no bounds. Their appreciation can take any form.

In recent years, however, the number of men of God has increased tremendously when it was realized that a man of God can make fortunes from gratification freely showered as a result of successful requests. Gradually, religion became a commercial venture. Thus, commercialization of religion can be defined as using religion for money making purposes. It is using religion and, especially, places of worship as a commercial outfit.

Places of worship nowadays have assumed the status of trading companies. When viewed from this money making angle, commercialization of religion is purely exploitative. The exploitative nature of this syndrome can be easily established through a simple survey. In a week, from Sunday to Saturday for example, make a list of the houses of worship that appear on Radio and Television, record the theme of their preachings. You will discover that all their preachings will center on “year of breakthrough”, “year of abundance”, “year of victory”, “year of favour”, “year of triumph” etc. All their preachings centre on miracles and wonderful things God can do in your life. Thousands of people who believe in these promises patronize them. The number of places of worship that spring up everyday and the level of affluence displayed by many men of God show that the business is booming.

Two factors make the business booming. First, the despair which is rife currently in the country, coupled with a state of hopelessness and desperation. The desperate miracle seekers include the financially hard up, the job seekers, barren women, spouse seekers, desperate politicians to win election; this set of miracle seekers throng places of worship for spiritual intervention.

Secondly, ignorance of what religion is all about. By its very nature, religion is a code of conduct for man to govern all his daily activities. When the code of conduct called religion is honestly applied as prescribed by God all will be well for men. This is so because God created man and man’s activities and then prescribed the appropriate guidelines for man to govern the conduct of his activities; failure to apply the guidelines will result in hardship that the naïve take to the places of worship for miraculous solution.

The effect of commercialization of religion on relationship is serious. In the spirit of business competition, the men of God try to outshine each other to attract more clients. The trick is to show the prospective clients how efficacious and superior a particular house of worship is. The man of God will describe his activities superlatively to convince the prospective clients why his house of worship is the right choice. With this spirit of competition, the relationship between religious groups is strained.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

What would you suggest as the alternative way the men of God can help the desperate faithful attending their places of worship?

### **3.2 The Press**

By the press, attention is focused on radio, television and newspapers. Traditionally, the Mass Media are supposed to entertain, inform and educate. Information, education and entertainment are the customary duty of the Mass Media. Of course, the Mass Media practitioners have professional ethics that govern their practices. But given the fact that these practitioners as human beings, their mode of conduct notwithstanding, can succumb to social forces and bend backwards to commit errors that are capable of straining relationship between religious groups.

The episode of ten million naira (N10mn.) granted by the Shagari administration to build places of worship in Abuja was an example of the press negative role in the religious area. There was a news headline on one of the National Dailies in 1981 that the Federal Government has committed Ten million Naira to the building of a central mosque in Abuja. The report portrayed Muslims as the government's favourites. If the report was true, Christians would be justified to feel bad and annoyed with both the government and its favourites. It was Dr. Chuba Okadigbo (late), a christian and special political adviser to the President, who came out to dispel the misinformation of Ten Million Naira for Muslims. According to him, the government handed down Ten Million Naira each to Muslims and Christians at the same time on the same occasion to build a Central Mosque and a National Cathedral in Abuja. In his words, "the simultaneous grant to Muslims and Christians alike was a reflection of the determination of the Federal Government to maintain neutrality on religious matters." (Daily Times May 4 1981 p2; National Concord May 18 1981; News Nigeria May 18 1981; Daily Sketch June 27 1981 p1)

Unfortunately, not all who read the damaging report might be opportuned to read the clarification.

Quite often, the press, consciously or unconsciously publish reports that can cause damage to the relationship between the church and the mosque.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Through a research, give a newspaper or radio/television coverage that can cause a misunderstanding between the church and the mosque.

### **3.3 Miscellaneous Factors**

You will recall stating in the sub-section 3.1 above that factors responsible for strained relationship are inexhaustible. The inexhaustibility of the factors is what we are poised to establish in this section. Miscellaneous factors are, apart from the ones highlighted earlier, others that are varied and numerous. For example, more often than not, events in other parts of the world do have ripple effect on the relationship between Nigerian Muslims and Christians. In September 2012, a Coptic Christian in USA produced a film titled innocence of Muslims in which Islam is mocked and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is insulted. Muslims in Nigeria, especially the youths violently reacted to the film. (Saturday punch 15-09-12-p38). In this violent reaction, houses were razed and many people fell casualties. Events such as this affect relationship between Muslims and Christians. You need both Inter and Intra-Religious Dialogue to tackle them. Intra Religious Dialogue is needed whereby Muslim leaders counsel the Muslim youth why issues such as the production of the film in question should be handled with caution. After all, there are hundred of writers in America who portray Prophet Muhammad in a respectable and dignified manner. Michael Hark, a none Muslim American ranked prophet Muhammad (SAW) the first of the 100 most influential persons in human history. According to him, Prophet Muhammad is supremely successful in combining secular and spiritual realms. There are other western writers who in their writings pay glowing tributes to Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, if there is an isolated case of a film producer who is looking for attention and picked on Prophet Muhammad as an avenue, Muslim youths must not react in a manner that will make the film maker, the fame seeker attain his goal.. Muslims should not have allowed themselves to be used cheaply. On the other hand, Inter-Religious Dialogue is the right instrument to be used by Muslims and Christians as mature faithfals to brainstorm regarding how external factors should be handled to prevent internal crisis.

The incident of attacking the motor-cade of the rector of Al-Azhar University, Cairo Shaykh Jad Al Haqq Jad al Haqq in Ibadan during his official visit to Nigeria provides another example of miscellaneous factor. Immediately after the official visit of Pope John Paul II to Nigeria in 1982,



Muslims were honoured by the Federal Government of Nigeria to invite a personality of repute and of special interest to Muslims. With the visit of Jad Al-Haqq, Christians had an opportunity to reciprocate the Muslims' kind gesture of good conduct during the Pope's visit. Unfortunately, unexpected occurred, the august visitor's motorcade was attacked by people identified as Christians. The incident calls for Inter-Religious dialogue whereby Muslim and Christians could jointly condemn the incident which was a disgrace to the nation.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

From the foregoing, what do you understand by miscellaneous factors? Give one example.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

The cases treated in this unit represent the religious climate in the country. The climate of suspicion, naivety, misperception of the core of religion, materialism and selfishness. Misperception of religion would be a minor issue if it is exhibited by the congregation alone, the miracle seekers. But the case becomes serious if the men of God, the miracle givers also exhibit misperception of religion. In a climate such as this, factors that are responsible for strained relationship will emerge in different forms and colours.

### **5.0 Summary**

The scenario of the religious climate described above demands two exercises from you as a student of Religious Studies as well as from all concerned. First, you must watch out for factors that can strain relationship between the church and the mosque. Your ability to identify the factors is a pointer to your correct perception of the core of religion. Secondly, you need Intra or Inter Religious Dialogue to be deployed to cleanse the relationship.

### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

Make a clear description of religious climate in your area with illustrations.

### **7.0 References/Furthermore Readings**

Bidmos, M.A. (2006) Inter-Religious Dialogue: The Nigerian Experience, Abuja and Lagos. Panaf Publishing Inc

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## **Module 2: Factors Affecting Relationship**

### **Unit 3: Shariah in Dialogue**

## **1.0: Introduction**

## **2.0 Objectives**

## **3.0 Main Content**

### **3.1 Definition of Shariah**

### **3.2 Application of Shariah**

### **3.3 Shariah in Dialogue**

## **4.0 Conclusion**

## **5.0 Summary**

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

## **7.0 References/ Readings**

## **1.0 Introduction**

Shariah is certainly a big issue in the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. The utterances and reaction of Christians anytime the word Shariah is mentioned or a Shariah related issue is raised are borne out of perception. I use the word perception to be mild and out of courtesy too. But if one is to call a spade a spade, those utterances and reactions are borne out of an attitude bigger than perception. Should we go ahead using the word perception, this unit is set to clear the cloud that envelopes the perception.

## **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a. state the meaning of Shariah;
- b. describe application of Shariah by the use of its sources,
- c, state the significance of Shariah in Dialogue

## **3.1 Definition of Shariah**

I find it very convenient to use the following three verses of the Qur'an as a prelude to the definition of Shariah because the three of them appropriately capture the meaning of Shariah

But Allah has created you  
and your handiwork (Q37:96)  
If any to do fail to judge by  
What Allah hath revealed,  
they are unbelievers (Q5:48)

Let the people of the Gospel  
Judge by what Allah hath  
revealed therein. If any do fail  
to judge by what Allah hath  
revealed, they are those who  
rebel (Q5:47)

The verses are self explanatory. Their analysis goes thus:

- i. Allah created human beings

- ii. He (Allah) also created their handiwork such as eating, drinking, teaching, farming, dressing, legislating, traveling, leisure, raising a family, scholarship awards, nation building, etc.
- iii. He (Allah) has prescribed guidelines for man to govern his activities.
- iv. That the people of Gospel, that is the Christian should govern their activities by the divinely prescribed guidelines

In summary, the three verses listed above are encompassed in the verse that follows:

To each among you have we  
prescribed a law and an open  
way (Q5:48).

God has called the guidelines He prescribed for man to govern his (man) activities and action law and an open way. It is becoming very easy to define Shariah if the four verses quoted above are anything to go by. Shariah, by definition, is the law and an open way which God, the creator of man has laid for him (man) to manage his life.

In the books of Shariah, scholars usually start the definition of Shariah by a literal rendition. They are fond of saying: Literally, Shariah means a path to a watering place, that is, a stream. In this literal definition, Shariah is likened to a stream (water) and a path. This is to say that Shariah is to man what water and path stand for. Water constitutes more than 60% of man's body. Man uses water every day for several purposes. Man goes out every day treading on a path. Water and path are indispensable to man. In the same token, Shariah is indispensable to man. The usefulness, effectiveness and efficiency of Shariah in the life of man are attributed to the originator of Shariah, God who molded man and knows what can make him tick.

Since man did not create himself, he cannot make law for himself because the purpose of law is to make life easy for him. But how much of himself does he know? If he knows himself and all that can make life worthwhile for him he would not have ventured into any action or activity that will create HIV/AIDS for him, Global Economic Meltdown world wars, internal wars, scandals that make some great men and women commit suicide, making and consumption of alcohol, etc. Since the actions of man had created for him, hardship on a number of occasions, he needs someone who knows him accurately to introduce him to himself and prescribe for him guidelines to use in the conduct of his affairs. That is what Shariah stands for.

In fairness to the antagonists of Shariah who passionately hate Shariah, all they know of Shariah is cutting the hand and stoning a sinner to death. Punishment is the only function of Shariah they know or are made to know by he exponents of Shariah. The so called protagonists of Shariah are the culprits. In their application of Shariah, they erroneously amplify the punishment aspect of it. For example, when in the 3<sup>rd</sup> republic, a northern state introduced Shariah, the main aspect of Shariah which was orchestrated was cutting the hand of a goat thief. Shariah is a guide to show man how to eat, drink, dress, cry, laugh, interact in a manner that gives man rest, peace and joy. Shariah, as contained in the verses quoted above, is prescribed for Muslims in the Qur'an and for Christians in the Gospel.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

(a) Code of conduct (b) Law (c) Guide. Which of a-c accurately represent Shariah and why?

### **3.2 Application of Shariah**

By simple deduction, the introductory presentation made in the section 3.1 above would have shown you:

- a. The essence of Shariah
- b. The mandatory nature of application of Shariah, and
- c. The meaning of application of Shariah which is the use of Shariah in running the entire daily routine of man.

You will be amazed to discover that the idea expressed in a-c above is beautifully captured in the Bible according to a statement credited to Isa (as):

Not every one that saith unto me,  
Lord, Lord, shall enter into the  
Kingdom of heaven, but he that  
doeth the will of my Father who  
is in the heaven (Matt. 7: 21)

What is the will of God? How do you do it? Any resemblance or similarity between the will of God in this statement and the will of God mentioned in the definition of Islam?

The will of God means man should serve God and obey his instructions/commandments. The application of the guidelines prescribed by God to manage man's activities is what is meant by doing the will of God. Doing the will of God encompasses worship of Him when worship equals to carrying out His instructions, application of Shariah inclusive.

Application of Shariah as already pointed out is using God's guidelines in running all man's activities including the ones carelessly referred to as secular such as charity, trading, eating, etc.

### **Charity**

And spend of your substance in the cause of Allah and make not your own hands contribute to your destruction (Q2:195).

### **Trade**

But Allah hath permitted trade and forbidden usury (Q2:175).

Also forbidden is cheating by measure in Trade (Q83:1-3)

### **Meal**

...eat and drink but waste not by excess for Allah loveth not the wasters (Q7:31)

Any human activity falls within the purview of Shariah because it is comprehensive and ever current. That Shariah is ever current may look bogus given the dynamic nature of human activities. In other words, is Shariah capable of treating any fresh idea that is emerging in modern time? The sources of Shariah are the Qur'an, the sunnah, the Ijma'(consensus) and Qiyas(deduction). Any subject under the sun will be accommodated in any of the listed sources. The space in this material is not even enough for discussion of each of the sources. For example, global economic meltdown, climate change, HIV/AIDS, Cigarette smoking, etc are some of fresh emergent issues that are accommodated in Shariah. One of the sources of Shariah is Qiyas which means analogy. This is to look at an issue by means of comparison in order to draw conclusion/verdict. Is it right or wrong to smoke cigarette? Of all the sources, Qiyas can be applied to deduce a solution by comparison. In the Qur'an, alcohol is categorically prohibited. The reason given in the Qur'an is that consumption of alcohol is health hazardous and it can also cause enmity among mankind. So, decrease from it (Q5:90-1). By comparison, can smoking cigarette cause any of the hazards listed against alcohol consumption? It has been medically established that cigarette smoking is hazardous to health. To that extent smoking cigarette or any substance like Marijuana is prohibited on point of Shariah. This comparative method can be applied to HIV/AIDS, global economic meltdown, climate change, etc.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Do you consider Shariah applicable in a pluralistic society like Nigeria? Give reasons.

### **3.3 Shariah in Dialogue**

Perception is a major issue in the discussion of Shariah in Dialogue. From the look of things, there is a case of misperception on all angles. Economically, the attitude of those who claim to be lowers and protagonists of Shariah manifests misperception. Regarding the antagonists, their hostile reaction is borne out of ignorance of what Shariah stands for.

A non Muslim, justifiably, will be scared if all a Muslim is going to amplify about Shariah are cutting the hand of a thief, stoning a fornicator to death, compulsorily wearing an unkept beard, dressing a woman in black robe and covering her from head to toe and declaring Jihad as an holy war to eliminate none-Muslims at the slightest provocation.

In the two proceeding sections, 3.1 and 3.2, we have used the Qur'an and the Bible to show that Shariah is about life in its entirety. In Judaism, it is called Mosaic Law. In Christianity, it is called Gospel and in Islam it is Shariah. In all the three religions which are commonly referred to as monotheistic religions, divine laws are prescribed and the faithful have no choice but to apply them to the daily routine. Failure to apply the divine laws, the adherence of the faithful to their proclaimed religions is invalid because their identification with those religions is anchored on their acceptance of the divine laws which are nucleus of the faiths.

If Inter-Religious Dialogue is about togetherness, understanding, mutual trust, bridge building, living together, then, all elements of fear must be eliminated. For example, Christians may be persuaded to stop viewing Shariah as a scare or threat if Muslims stop presenting it as such. The brutality that Muslims associate with Shariah should be replaced by beauty, love and joy which Shariah actually promotes.

On the other hand, Christians must come to terms with the fact that the word Shariah is the Islamic title for the same law written in their Gospel.

The two conditions can be recapped as follows:

- a. Let Muslims exhibit the beauty of Shariah in theory and action. It is time to say enough of brutality, ugly show and orchestration of trivialities.
- b. Let Christian admit that Shariah is a mere label and that the substance which the label represents is the same as the contents of their Gospel.

The stark reality is that Muslims and Christians will be guilty of insincerity to their beloved faiths should they fail to make the two conditions work.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

State any three things that Muslims do in the name of Shariah which Christians find scary.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

According to the verses quoted in this unit, whenever a society claims to believe in God in the Islamic or Christian sense but rejects Shariah, it is a society of unbelievers and rebels. This is to say that religion in either Islamic or Christian sense is incomplete when Shariah is jettisoned. Incidentally, application of Shariah is in the interest of the faithfuls. To jettison it, therefore, is like shooting oneself in the foot.

## **5.0 Summary**

You will find the literal and technical definitions of Shariah very interesting. You will find both of them intertwined as they serve as an explanation to each other. But it should be possible for you to take on each of them for an independent explanation and a full development into a structure that can give you a complete picture of what Shariah is all about. Such an exercise will mirror before you the true image of Shariah.

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

“A refusal to apply Shariah by the faithful is like shooting oneself in the foot”. What does this statement mean to you?

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## **Module 3: Inter-Religious Dialogue Activities**

### **Unit 1: At Local level**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **3.0 Main contents**

##### **3.1 At the University level**

##### **3.2 Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs/Christian Association of Nigeria**

##### **3.3 Nigerian Inter-Religious Council**

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

**5.0 Summary**  
**6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**  
**7.0 References/Further Readings**

**1.0 Introduction**

In recognition of its importance in a pluralistic society like Nigeria, some individuals as well as religious organizations have been active in pursuance of Inter-Religious Dialogue. This unit focuses on Inter-Religious dialogue in action. You will see concerted efforts which many well meaning Nigerians embarked upon from the late sixties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both town and gown are involved because it is considered a noble cause. Given the huge population of personalities and organizations involved, those activists to be reflected in this unit are only representative.

**2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a. state categories of activists who monster efforts to activate Inter-Religious Dialogue
- b. describe the type of contribution made by each category
- c. appreciate the progress achieved by the categories as well as challenges facing them.

**3.1 At the University Level**

Academics in some Nigerian Universities were (still are) in the forefront of the promoters of Inter-Religious Dialogue. Discussion of dialogue activities in the universities is about personalities who are behind the activities. Organizing Da'wah conferences on an annual basis is the main Da'wah activities. Who are the brains behind such conferences? Late Professor Ismail Balogun of the University of Ilorin was very active in Inter-Religious Dialogue through the instrumentality of conferences. His involvement in Inter-Religious Dialogue was so total that he wrote books such as *Religious Understanding and Cooperation in Nigeria*, 1978. He delivered an inaugural lecture entitled *Utilizing Religion for Peace, Unity and Progress in Nigeria*, at the University of Ilorin in January, 1981.

Inter-Religious Dialogue took a new dimension at the hands of C.S. Momoh, a professor of philosophy, University of Lagos. In 1986, C.S. Momoh organized a conference under what he called Dictionary of Philosophy. This maiden conference metamorphosed into what C.S. Momoh called National Association for Religious Tolerance (NARETO). He intended pursuance of Inter-Religious Dialogue through a pragmatic approach by floating an organization which would be dedicated to the purpose, working as a permanent structure.

Professor Abdul Kareem Hussein was another University Don who took bold steps towards building bridges between the Mosque and the Church. His organization known as Islamic Study Group of Nigeria (ISGON) sponsored a national seminar in 1983 to which Christians were involved as active participants to discuss together a topic of national interest. The spirit of Inter-Religious Dialogue planted by Late Professor Ismail Balogun keeps resonating at the University of Ilorin, as the Department of Religions of the University lately resumed a public lecture series on inter- religious cooperation. At the University of Ibadan in the late sixties up to seventies, was Late Professor Bolaji Idowu of the Department of Religious Studies. His

conference would attract Muslims, Christians, ATR practitioners, free thinkers within and without university. In 1973, this writer was opportuned to attend one with the theme *Man and the Question of free will*. To date, University Dons remain conscious of the University responsibility to promote genuine spirit of mutual trust and understanding among Nigerians. Inaugural lectures delivered at the Lagos State University, Ojo and Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye in recent times are reflective of the mood.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

State any two personalities and describe their methods in promoting Inter-Religious Dialogue in Nigeria.

### **3.2 SCIA and CAN**

Your attention is shifted in this section from individuals to religious organizations that are active in Inter-Religious Dialogue. The focus is particularly on two umbrella organizations. These are the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA) and Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). Meanwhile, it is appropriate to start with Lutheran Church of America which is based in Jos. This organization operates under the leadership of Dr. David L. Windibiziri. The outfit holds biennial conferences mainly for the purpose of bridging gaps between the Church and the Mosque.

Also of a comparable status and function is an organization popularly known as NASR, that is, Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions. The Association draws its membership from the teachers of religion, Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religious (ATR) who are mainly lecturers in the tertiary institutions. The operations of the organization centers on organizing annual conferences and publication of a journal known as *Religions. Journal of Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions*.

In contrast, there are organizations that are known as umbrella bodies. They are so called because each of them represents the totality of a religious community. For example while the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) represents the Christian Community in Nigeria, Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs represents the Muslim community as a whole. According to Archbishop John Onaiyekan (2010:12), Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Former President, Christian Association of Nigeria and Co-Chairman, Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), “the initial objective of setting up CAN was to forge unity in Christendom with the motto that reads “*that they may be one*”. The CAN leadership soon realized the need to reach out to the Muslims”. A series of meetings and interactions are, therefore, organized occasionally with Muslims in a dialogue fashion. True to its initial objective of forgoing unity in the Christendom, CAN has done a lot of in-house co-operative activities as the different sections and denominations are brought together in an Intra-Religious Dialogue fashion. Within the context of Inter-Religious Dialogue, CAN has been active in interaction especially with the Muslim leadership. On several occasions, CAN met the Sultan in his capacity as the President of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs. Such meeting had yielded dividends as Archbishop John Onaiyekan pointed out in a public lecture he delivered at the University of Ilorin May 12, 2010

Running parallel to CAN is the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA). The initial objective of SCIA is like that of CAN. In Nigeria, there are so many Muslim organizations which are actively involved in *Da'wah*. If care is not taken, those organizations may be working at across purposes. Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs was born to mediate and



play an advisory role among the Muslim Organisations. SCIA is to enable Muslims in the country speak in one voice on issues that are of national interest or of special interest to Muslims. Meetings and interaction among Muslim organizations on one hand and between SCIA and the Muslim organizations on the other hand are carried out within the context of Intra-Religious Dialogue. However, some cases of religious unrest and skirmishes of war which abound around the country call for interaction between SCIA and CAN and both of them have been doing just that.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

What advice can you give to the leaderships of CAN and SCIA to improve their operations?

### **3.3 Nigerian Inter-Religious Council**

Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) was established in 1999 in Abuja with President Olusegun Obasanjo in attendance. NIREC is entirely out of the initiative of Muslims and Christians. It was borne out of the need to formalize the relationship between CAN and SCIA. Though, it receives both moral and financial supports from the Federal and State governments, NIREC is not a government agency or parastatal. But it is to play, among their activities, some mediatory roles between the Government and the faithful. NIREC is the fruit of the labour of both CAN and SCIA. With NIREC, there is an advisory body which is responsible to the faithful and to the Government. NIREC takes interest in improving the relationship between the Church and the Mosque and proactively dealing with the skirmishes of religious unrest. More importantly, NIREC takes interest in national issues such as corruption, education, insecurity, good governance and moral decadence. NIREC is to work with the Government using religious maxims on resolving these issues. Conferences have been held by NIREC on how to deal with Malaria, HIV/AIDs, Free and Fair Elections in the country. NIREC represents a practical mode of Inter-Religious Dialogue.

NIREC is not the first body to dialogue with the Government. In the colonial era, when Missionaries were using their schools to convert Muslim children who attended missionary schools, they (Muslims) dialogued with the colonial administration on the need to save the Muslim children from the evangelical campaign. The dialogue produced a government primary school built specially for the Muslim children's education. In order to improve the relationship between the government and the faithfuls in the country, the military administration floated an Inter-Religious Advisory Committee in 1987. It was entirely borne out of the Government's initiative. But it died prematurely.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Do you feel the impact of NIREC's activities in your area? If yes, in what form and if no, what do you suggest to NIREC?

### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, you have seen in action, various agents of Inter-Religious Dialogue which include personalities, organizations, umbrella organizations and supra-organizations. One may ask, despite the activities of these agents, why do we still have communal and religious clashes in some parts of the country? Simply means that if with those agents in action we still have communal clashes, the religious climate would have been precarious in the case of total absence of those agents.

## **5.0 Summary**

Some individuals strove for the establishment of organizations. The umbrella organizations such as CAN and SCIA emanated out of the regional organizations. The activities of CAN and SCIA led to the establishment of NIREC. To have a peaceful society of our dream, we need to improve the operations of the agents on ground or float more.

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

What do you see as the major obstacle militating against Inter-Religious Dialogue which the various agents highlighted above should watch?

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**Module 3: Inter-Religious Dialogue Activities**  
**Unit 2: At International level**

**1.0 Introduction**

**2.0 Objectives**

**3.0 Main Content**

**3.1 The Muslim World League**

**3.2 The Vatican**

**3.3 The Unification Church**

**4.0 Conclusion**

**5.0 Summary**

**6.0 Tutor Marked Assessment**

**7.0 References/Further Readings**

**1.0 Introduction**

Inter-Religious Dialogue is recognized world wide as a potent tool for bridge-building between nations. In theory, societies can be stratified into theocracy, secularity and pluralism. In practice, however, hardly can you find a country that is completely free of traces of religious practice. Nations are involved in one form of religion or the other. To that extent, Inter-Religious

Dialogue becomes recognizable and put in motion every where. In this unit, you will be taken through international organizations that are active in Inter-Religious Dialogue

## **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a. state the importance of Inter-Religious Dialogue at the international level;
- b. identify international organizations that conduct Inter-religious Dialogue; and
- c. pin-point the advantages of their activities.

### **3.1 The Muslim World League**

The Muslim World League is popularly known as Rabitah for short. Rabitah (In Arabic) was established in 1961 with its Head Quarters in Makkah basically to promote Da'wah (The Islamic Preaching) in the Muslim countries. It is committed to ensuring that Muslim countries live in peace and harmony. Show-casing the beauty of Islam is the prime objective of Rabitah. It has organs that deal with different areas of human endeavour as related to the Muslim communities. For example, there is Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) which is mandated to promote trade and industrialization among member states. Non-Muslim countries that are ready to benefit from trade facilities of OIC such as loan without interest are welcome. There are others that deal with education, Shariah, etc.

Rabitah takes Inter-Religious Dialogue as a serious business for two reasons. First, in Islam, *La Ikraaha fid-din* (Q2:256), that is there is no compulsion in religion. Every man's right to adopt a religion of his choice must be duly recognized. Secondly, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) interacted with non-muslims during his mission on the basis of fundamental human right. In Madinah where he presided over the government of the day, none-Muslims were not coerced to embrace Islam. They were rather invited to dialogue to discuss methods of peaceful co-existence. Out of the dialogue, emanated what is popularly referred to as the *Wathiqatul Madinah*, that is the document of Madinah containing rules and regulation to govern life in Madinah. The Prophet also wrote letters to the rulers in the surrounding states such as Abyssinia, Egypt, Persia and Rome.

Through Rabitah, Muslims reach out to communities in the world showcasing the beauty of Islam. Vatican is in the forefront of the bodies with which Rabitah interacts. Visits are exchanged regularly between the Vatican and the Rabitah. Bilateral issues between the two bodies are discussed during such visits. The outreach programmes of Rabitah are not limited to the Vatican but are extended to individuals and small organizations. In 1992, for instance, a group of legal luminaries from Europe paid a scheduled visit to Rabitah to get acquainted with the philosophy, operations and advantages of Shariah. Rabitah organized for the group a series of lectures and seminars on Shariah.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

What is the basis of Rabitah's operations?

### **3.2 The Vatican**

The religious climate in the Vatican took a new turn in 1964 when Pope Paul VI set up a special unit known as the Secretariat for non-Christians. The Secretariat was mandated as follows:

- Reach out for the methods and ways of
- operating suitable dialogue with Non-Christian.
- Non-Christians should be known honestly and

esteemed justly by Christians and that in their turn, non-Christians can adequately know and esteem Christian doctrine and life.

This is quoted from a book titled *Church in Dialogue* (1990) by Cardinal Francis Arinze who was later appointed by Pope John Paul II as the head of the Unit. Pope John Paul II who died in 2005 improved significantly on the dialogue culture established by Pope Paul VI. Both Popes brought their personal character of humanness, uprightness and courtesy to bear on the Vatican tradition. Cardinal Francis Arinze who headed the unit for several years put in place so many interactive activities with Muslim World; the activities which were essentially in form of conferences such as follows:

Themes	Place	Date
Family in the Muslim and Christian Traditions	Jordan	1983
Religion and Peace	Nairobi	1984
Spirituality in Islam and Christianity	Rome	1985
Spirituality in Islam and Christianity	Tunis	1956
The Quest for Human understanding and Cooperation	Lebanon	1972
The unity of God and Community of Mankind	Sri-Lanka	1974

The religious climate will change for the better all over the world should the culture of mutual respect, love and humanness established and promoted by those two popes be sustained and allowed to flow down the ladder. If the Catholic Church with its more than one billion members could adopt the policy, an enduring bridge of co-operation and understanding with Muslims would have been built. At present, it is not known what has become of the Secretariat.

### Self Assessment Exercise

Would you recommend the Vatican's Inter-Religious Dialogue culture to other Christian denominations and why?

### 3.3 The Unification Church

This unit attempts to shed light on the Inter-Religious Dialogue activities around the world. Small and big organizations are involved. Rev. Sun Myung Moon, a South Korean Evangelist is one of the personalities who developed keen interest in Inter-Religious Dialogue at the international level. Rev-Moon's Inter- Religious Dialogue took an evolutionary dimension for the beginning was low keyed and gradual. He started his Unification Church organization with the intention of forging unity and co-operation among Christian denominations. He asked philosophically, shall we simply say "I am a Christian?"

The reverend wished for a situation when co-operation, understanding and love among various Christian denominations would overshadow denominational symbols. The reverend expected, a very tall order, a bogus ambition, a day when a Catholic, a Methodist, a Baptist, a Presbyterian, a Pentecostal, etc. would just simply say "I am a Christian".

His initial objective was akin to the ecumenical movement floated and promoted under the auspices of the World Council of Churches. Very soon, Rev. Moon graduated to embrace Muslims and adherents of other faiths into his project. Irrespective of Christians' reaction to his project, Rev. Moon forged ahead undaunted. The organization, popularly known as Unification Church, became well known all over the world with its major centres in USA, UK and South Korea. His methodology is unique. He adopted committee culture whereby each committee is dedicated to a particular issue such as education, world peace, politics, Inter-Religious and youth matters. The committees are to operate at seminars, conferences, workshops and youth camps.

For example, the Council for World Religions was inaugurated in 1991. While on Sabbatical in Britain in 1991/92 session, this writer was opportuned to participate in the organization's Inter-Religious discussion. Rev. Moon, now late, his organization, unification church thrives.

Also in Germany, there are those who believe that developmental efforts without taking cognizance of the contribution of the belief system will amount to exercise in futility. There is an organization known as Konrad Adenaxier Foundation (K.A.F) established in 1981 in Germany. The organization's exponents believe that

The many problems encountered in connection with  
the development of society in these countries (African)  
will only but partially resolve unless the solutions  
adopted take account of consideration of religious belief.

The organization has been very active in conferences and seminars in some African countries. In Britain, an Inter-Faith Net-work was established in 1987 in London. The establishment of the Network was informed by the diversity that characterized the British society. It is recognized, for example, that as you have British Christians and Jews, also there are British Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs. There are others all of which carry with them, their religious belief systems. The purpose of the Inter-Faith Network is to engage these British elements with their diverse belief systems in discussion and interaction targeting understanding and trust. If the British citizens have diverse religious backgrounds, you can appreciate the fact that the religious climate is the same in different parts of the world. It means that every human being, any where in the world, is attached to His/Her creator. He/she relates to his creator in devotion, adoration, worship albeit in a special way. In other words, two person may believe in God but worship Him in different ways. Inter-Religious Dialogue is indispensable anywhere in the world.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

State and discuss with illustration the uniqueness of Rev. Moon's mode of Inter-Religious Dialogue.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

Two organizations highlighted from European axis are not adequately representative for the whole of Europe zone. There are, of course, several other organizations that are active and vibrant in Inter-Religious Dialogue. The Inter-Religious Dialogue enthusiasts from Nigeria should endeavour to identify such European vibrant bodies to interact with and learn from.

### **5.0 Summary**

Two lessons come out strongly from the caliber of personalities and the types of organization treated in this unit. First, that Inter-Religious Dialogue is a group affair, a team work. It is a serious business between two or more groups, nations. Secondly, though Inter-Religious Dialogue is a team work, individuals essentially make organizations tick. The roles played by Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II, Rev. Moon show that organizations will thrive and succeed on the strength of personalities working behind the screen.

### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

Apart from the ones mentioned in this unit, name one personality or organization you know in Nigeria that is active in Inter-Religious Dialogue and describe his method of Inter-Religious Dialogue.

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**Module 3: Inter-Religious Dialogue Activities**  
**Unit 3: Factors Militating Against Activities**

**1.0 Introduction**

**2.0 Objectives**

**3.0 Main content**

**3.1 Insincerity/Diversionary Activities**

**3.2 Argument over Trivialities**

**3.3 The Impact of Commercialization Syndrome**

**4.0 Conclusion**

**5.0 Summary**

**6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

**7.0 References/Further Readings**

**1.0 Introduction**

Units 1 and 2 of this module have been entirely devoted to Inter-Religious Dialogue activities that are on-going at both national and international levels. The volume of the activities can make you believe that all is well with the religious climate around the world. Alas, a critical look at the religious climate reveals some cases of suspicion, distrust and trading accusations. Perhaps, there are some factors weakening the on-going Inter-Religious Dialogue activities. This unit is set to examine such factors.

**2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a. state the extent of sincerity of the dialogue activists.
- b. identify some kind of diversionary activities; and
- c. describe the direct impact of artificial differences/commercialization syndrome.

**3.1 The extent of sincerity of the Dialogue Activists**

As already detailed, the Inter-Religious dialogue activities are intensified around the world. While some interested parties pursue it on an adhoc basis, others approach it on a full time basis. The NIREC in Nigeria, Rabitah in Saudi Arabia and Vatican in Rome adopt a full-time



approach. Even some personalities like Rev. Moon of South Korea adopted full-time approach. The intriguing question is “how much dividends have those activities yielded?” Issues like the 9/11 episode, Afghanistan crisis, Iraq war and the Arab spring give an impression that all is not that well after all.

On the local scene, you will observe the communal clashes in Plateau with religious undertone, the religious insurgence under various guises in parts of the Northern Nigeria are signs of “failed” Inter-Religious Dialogue activities. If in Nigeria, Inter- Religious Dialogue activities have proved abortive, what is amiss? What do we blame or whom do we blame? Largely, the success of any endeavour depends on the intention of the actors. Are the actors really sincere? Do they have genuine faith in their mission? Or is the mission pursued haphazardly? Some events in the country will cast a question mark on the faith of the Nigerian promoters of Inter-Religious Dialogue.

First, in 1987, when the military administration set up the Inter-Religious Advisory Council for the purpose of playing a mediatory role between the Nigerian populace and government and also to advise the government on roles religion can play in governance the membership of the council was made up of the leadership of the Church and the Mosque on an equal basis. For sometime after inauguration, there was a tussle over the chairmanship of the council. Who was to chair the body, Muslim or Christian? What about the secretary? After a protracted debate, members settled down for joint chairmanship; a Christian and a Muslim, meaning that the council had two chairmen. The same thing went for other key positions. The council suffers a premature death. The council members should have taken the advantage of an outfit raised and funded by government to prove the relevance of religion in governance.

Secondly, the operations of pilgrimage in Nigeria speak volumes. For example, Christians asked for government intervention to float for them a pilgrim commission as the Muslim pilgrim commission of Islam. Does the Christian pilgrimage have the same status as Muslims?

If the why (Q3:96), what (Q2:196.2), where (Q3:96), when (Q2:196) and how (Q2:196) of pilgrimage in Islam are explicitly stated in the Qur’an, does the Bible answer explicitly those five questions regarding the Christian pilgrimage? On the other hand, if pilgrimage in Islam is for those who can afford it, what is the business of a pregnant woman, a minor, a destitute, a parent who cannot pay his children’s school fees, a very aged person with pilgrimage? If pilgrimage to Makkah is enough once in a life time, why do some Muslims go twice a year; Umrah in Ramadan and Hajj two months after Ramadan? In view of the foregoing, you may be compelled to cast a doubt on the sincerity of purpose as Nigerians embark on pilgrimage to the holy lands.

Thirdly, in recent times, there has been semblance of firework in the Mass Media by some Muslims and Christians especially from the rank and file of those who constitute membership of CAN, SCIA and NIREC. The subject matter of the firework in the press has been the resurgence of communal clashes in Plateau State and religious unrests in some other parts of Northern Nigeria which have resulted so far in loss of lives and property. Some Muslim and Christian leaders have chosen the Press for trading blames, accusations and counter accusations on the incidents. In a state of sincerity and trust, NIREC should have been the right platform to discuss issues such as this.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Describe any incident of communal clash or religious unrest you witnessed in any part of Nigeria of recent.

### **3.2 Argument over Trivialities**

More often than not, Muslim and Christians engage each other in fierce arguments over issues that are quite insignificant. These are the issues that do not touch the core of Christianity or the core of Islam. In module four which comes after this, there is an extensive discussion of shared values which are the tenets that are core in Islam and Christianity and, incidentally, common to both religions. What we term trivialities in this context are such issues that do not bother on the core areas of the two religions. They are issues that can be amicably settled at the level of CAN versus SCIA or at the level of NIREC. For example, there is no reason for the kind of controversy generated by school uniform for a female Muslim student. Raising dust over what she wears to school is a reflection of loss of trust between the Church and the Mosque. Other issues such as a Weak-end holiday that is considered a privilege to one religion at the expense of other religion, public holidays to mark religious festival, government patronage of one religion to the detriment of the other, the accusation that may turn out to be invalid on investigation are mark of insincerity.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise**

State any scenario of a quarrel between Muslims and Christians over a trivial matter.

### **3.3 The Impact of Commercialization**

In unit 2 of module 2 above, Commercialization of Religion in all its ramifications has been extensively discussed. The impact of commercialization is hereby specifically highlighted to illustrate how insincerity becomes an issue. In the spirit of commercialization, every religious group aims at wining more members. It is a game of number in a commercial atmosphere because the more members in a given religious outfit, the more money for the proprietor. When religious groups compete for more members, statements that the opposite camp will find offensive are made. Every group would use the language of promotion and persuasion in making his group the preferred place of worship to the prospective cliental. In the process, the groups insult, abuse and embarrass each other. How can the competitors be sincere with each other? If members of NIREC belong to individual groups that are poised to enlarge the membership of their outfits, to what extent can they rob minds together in an Inter-Religious Dialogue atmosphere? Can they plan together and together execute the plan?

#### **Self Assessment Exercise**

What is the significance of sincerity in a corporate venture?

### **4.0 Conclusion**

The case before us is paradoxical. Despite the ongoing Inter-Religious Dialogue activities, there is no much to show for its effectiveness. Instead of enthronement of peaceful co-existence, there is an escalation of religious unrests. It means therefore that the ongoing Inter-Religious Dialogue activities are ineffective. But why one may ask? It is so because of the insincerity of the participants who have private and personal interest to protect. There must be a project that can neutralize the effect of insincerity.

### **5.0 Summary**

Clash of interest is the issue being examined in this unit. When a private interest and a corporate one interface, the result could be catastrophic. At NIREC level for instance, there is the national

interest to protect through instrumentality of Inter-Religious Dialogue. Members of NIREC are supposed to deliberate on ways and means of tackling the wave of insecurity or corruption in the country as a contribution from the Church and the Mosque. The deliberations and plans may suffer set back if the members of NIREC, as illustrated in the sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3, are working with divided interest.

#### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

What can you suggest as a project to neutralize the effect of insincerity?

#### **7.0 References/Further Readings**

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## **Module 4: Shared values/Methods**

### **Unit 1: Definition of Shared Values**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **3.0 Main Content**

##### **3.1 The Meaning of Shared Values**

##### **3.2 Examples of Shared Values**

##### **3.3 The Significance of Shared Values**

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

#### **5.0 Summary**

#### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

#### **7.0 References/Further Readings**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

What is the basis for Inter-Religious Dialogue? What is the content of Inter-Religious Dialogue? What is the method of Inter-Religious Dialogue? In the previous modules, the first question “what is the basis for Inter-Religious Dialogue?” has been extensively dealt with. For example, in all intent and purpose, Inter-Religious Dialogue aims at creating peaceful co-existence in a pluralistic society. It is to generate mutual trust, create peace and harmony.

But at the Inter-Religious Dialogue forum, what do we say and how do we say it? Shared values are what we say. Again what are the shared values and how do we say it? To answer these questions, let us turn to the main content.

#### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a. state the meaning of shared values;
- b. list examples of shared values and
- c. explain the significance of shared values.

#### **3.1 The Meaning of Shared Values**

It is amazing that Christianity and Islam have certain tenets in common. The commonality of the Christian and Islamic tenets is neither by accident nor a sheer coincidence. Rather, the commonality is due to the fact that the tenets of both faiths are from the same source-God. It means that both prophets Jesus(AS) and Muhammad (SAW) and indeed all prophets before them received their messages from the same source. A statement credited to Jesus in Matt.7:21 reads as follows:

Not every one that saith unto me,  
Lord, Lord, shall enter into the  
kingdom of heaven, but he that  
doeth the will of my father which  
is in the heaven.

By definition, Islam means “Total surrender to the will of God”. One should not be surprised by the phrase “The will of God” that is the connerstone of both Islam and Christianity. Both faiths are termed monotheistic, while monotheism means belief in one God whose will must be done. Doing His will in terms of worship is the purpose of creation in the first instance.

Monotheism is expressed in both Islam and Christianity as follows:

For I come down from heaven not to do my own  
will, but the will of him that sent me (John 6:38)

For it is written thou shalt worship the Lord thy  
God, and Him only shalt thou serve (Matt.4:10)

And your God is one God; There is no god but  
He. Most Gracious, Most Merciful. (Q2:163)

Verily, I am God. There is no god but Me ?  
So, serve thou me only. And establish  
regular prayer for my remembrance.

We hereby define shared values as the common teachings and lessons which constitute the core message in Islam and Christianity. The prophets are called messengers of God to the extent that they convey a message from God to human beings. What is the message? Worship me! God instructed. According to Jesus:

For I have not spoken of myself but  
the father which sent me. He gave me  
a commandment, What I should say,  
and what I should speak. (John 12:49-50)

Not a messenger did we send before thee  
without this inspiration sent by Us to him:  
that there is no god but I; Therefore  
worship Me and serve Me (Q21:25)

Two lessons resonate so far, namely: that the messengers of God were instructed to inform their people that (a) God is one and (b) they should worship Him. Therefore, oneness of God and His worship are basic to all messengers of God. When these two fundamental beliefs are broken into minute details for implementation, we have shared values.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Search for more verses from the Qur'an and the Bible which centre on oneness of God and worship of God.

## **3.2 Examples of Shared Values**

Flowing out of the foundation laid in 3.1 above, we have below a few examples of teachings/tenets that are common to Christianity and Islam.

### **1. Monotheism**

The first of all commandments is,  
hear oh Israel, the lord our God is  
One Lord. There is one God; and there  
Is none other but He (Mark 12:29-31)

## **2. Polytheism (Shirk)**

Thou shalt not make unto  
thee any graven image or  
any likeness of anything that  
is in the earth beneath, or  
that is in the water under  
the earth. Thou shalt not  
bow down thyself to them,  
nor serve them; for I the  
Lord thy God is a jealous  
God (Ex 20:4-5)

## **3. Heat Cleansing**

Keep thy heart with all  
diligence for out of it  
are issues of life (Prov. 4:23)

## **4. Justice**

But let judgment run down  
as waters, and righteous as  
a mighty stream (Amos 5:24)

## **5. Worship**

Thou shalt worship the  
Lord the God and Him  
only shalt thou worship  
(Matt 4:10)

## **6. Interest in Business Transaction**

Thou shalt not lend upon  
usury to thy brother, usury  
of money,.....  
But unto thy brother thou  
shalt not lent upon usury  
(Deut. 23:19-20)

## **7. Goodness to Parents**

Say, He is God, the One and only the  
External, Absolute. He begets not, nor  
is He begotten. And there is non comparable  
unto him (Q112:1-4)

Join not in worship others with  
Allah, for false worship is indeed  
the highest wrong doing (Q3:13)

Allah forgives not that partners  
should be set up with Him (Q4:48)

By the soul and the proportion and order  
given to it.....

Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and  
fails that corrupts it (Q91:7-10)

Do not let hatred of a people  
prevent you from being just.  
Be just; that is nearer to  
righteousness (Q5:8)

And I did not create the Jinn  
and mankind except to worship  
me (Q51:56)  
O mankind, worship your Lord who created  
you and those before you that you may  
become righteous (Q2:21)

But Allah has permitted  
trade and has forbidden  
interest (Q2:275)

Hearken unto thy father  
that beget thee, and  
despite not thy mother  
when she is old (prov.23:22)

Honour thy father and thy  
Mother; that they days  
May be long upon the land  
Which the Lord His God  
Given thee (Ex 20:12)

### **8. Humility**

I can of myself do nothing; as  
I hear I judge (John 5:36)

He gave me commandment  
what I should say and  
what I should speak  
(John 12:49)

### **9. Last Day**

And many of them that  
steep in the dust of the  
earth shall wake, some  
to everlasting life, and  
some to shame and  
everlasting contempt  
(Daniel 12:2-13, Rev. 7:9-17)

### **10. Alcohol**

It is not for kings to drink wine,  
Nor for princess strong drink  
Lest they drink and forget the  
law and pervert the judgment  
of any of the afflicted. Give strong  
to him that is ready to perish  
(Prov. 31:4-8, 11. 1 Cornt 9:16  
Gen 1:26-7)

### **11. Vicegerency of God**

And God said, let us make man in  
Our image, after our likeness: and  
Let him them dominion over the fish  
In the sea, and over the fowl of the  
air, and over the cattle, and over all  
the earth, and over every creeping

And your Lord has decreed that  
you worship not except Him, and  
to parents, good treatment  
wherever one or both of them  
reach old age with you, say not  
to them uffin and do not repel them  
but speak to them a noble word.  
And lower to them the wing of  
humility out of mercy and say:  
My Lord, have mercy upon them  
as they brought me up, when  
I was small (Q17:23-4)

Say, I am not an innovation  
among the messengers, nor do  
I know what will be done with  
Me or with you. I follow that  
which is revealed to me by  
inspiration (Q.46:9)

Say I am a man like yourselves  
But inspiration has come to me  
that your God is one God (Q18:110)

And fear a day when you  
will be returned to Allah.  
Then every soul will be  
Compensated for it earned  
and they will not be  
wronged (Q2:28).

O ye who believe! Intoxicants  
and gambling, sacrificing to stones,  
and divination to arrows are  
an abomination of Satan's  
Handiwork. Eschew such  
abominations, that ye may prosper (Q5:90)

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels,  
I will create a vicegerent on earth.  
(Q2:30)

He said: O my people! Worship Allah.  
Ye have no other God but Him.  
It is He who hath produced you

thing that creepeth upon the earth  
(Gen. 1:26-7)

from the earth and settled you  
there in.....(Q11:61)

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

From the eleven points of convergence listed above, highlight the one that strikes you most and explain why.

### **3.3 The Significance of Shared Values**

The eleven points of shared values highlighted above signify that:

- a. The two faiths of Islam and Christianity are from the same source (God). Had it been the reverse, that is multiple sources (gods), the teachings would have reflected sharp differences bearing identities of the gods. A theological study of Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, for example, may produce teachings that are incongruent due to the different philosophies of the two sources.
- b. Since the purpose of religion on earth is to maintain peace, God could not have assent conflicting messages in a manner that can cause chaos therein.
- c. The messengers of God may be numerous but they are like the numerous ambassadors of a nation who in different parts of the world will carry the same passport, the same constitution and the same message from their (one) Head of state.
- d. Since the followers of each prophet cannot live in a geographically isolated place from another group, the tenets of a one group's religion must not be offensive and irritating to the other.
- e. The commonalty that expressly and manifestly characterized the teachings of Islam and Christianity points to the possibility of many differences that are orchestrated by the practitioners of the two faiths being artificial.
- f. Arising from (e) above is that the artificial differences could emanate from the spirit of commercialization.
- g. The commonalty of core teachings raises a serious question on the names Islam and Christianity. If God sent the same teachings to His creatures, would he have given the same message different names? Further more, who supply the two names-(Islam and Christianity)? Bolaji Idowu in his "African Traditional Religion: A Definition (1973:136) States:

Of all religions it is the busy hand the  
curious, the outsider who supply the  
name. The exemption is Islam, which  
came into being with its own name.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Looking at the shared values as objectively as you can, what do you consider to be their significance?

### **4.0 Conclusion**

The core teachings of Islam and Christianity as exemplified in the shared values will produce an ideal human being who loves, creates and maintains peace; live in peace within himself and with



other fellow human beings. The efficacy of the shared values in doing that is not in doubt because the Christian and Islamic teachings are like a mill, a grinding machine which will turn grains to powder or soft substance ready for making cake or baking bread. In case the practitioners of Islam and Christianity have not demonstrated the expected result, what is amiss? Could it be that their practice of the religion has been haphazard?

### **5.0 Summary**

The eleven elements of shared values treated in this unit are inconclusive. They are selected only in a representative capacity. Both the Bible and the Qur'an are full of teachings in their hundreds that are identical. If you read the two books properly, you will discover a lot of teachings that will fall under the title shared values. Through constant reading of the two books, you will be amazed by the degree of commonality of their messages. What is the advantage of the commonality syndrome to the Muslims and Christian in their quest for peaceful co-existence? This is the subject of the next module.

### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

What does the term shared values mean in monotheistic religions? Give four practical examples you witnessed with relevant quotations from the Qur'an and the Bible.

### **7.0 References/Further Readings.**

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Bidmos, M.A. (2006) Inter-Religious Dialogue: The Nigeria Experience. Abuja and Lagos, Panaf Publishing Inc.

The Qur'an

The Bible

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## **Module 4: Shared Values/Methods**

### **Unit 2: Qualifications/Qualities of a Dialogist**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **3.0 Main Content**

### **3.1 Description of a Dialogist**

### **3.2 Qualifications/Qualities of a Dialogist**

### **3.3 The Mission of a Dialogist**

## **1.0 Introduction**

So far, we have been dealing with dialogue per se and dialogue activities in relation to religion. You will notice that a line has been drawn between dialogue per se and Inter-Religious Dialogue as a special area. This unit is set to precisely shed light on the personality of a dialogist in the realm of Inter-Religious Dialogue. In this realm, who is a dialogist? What qualifies him to participate in or initiate Inter-Religious Dialogue? These and other related issues will be examined in this unit.

## **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a. describe the personality of a dialogist,
- b. state the qualities/qualifications of a dialogist; and
- c. explain what the mission of a dialogist is all about.

### **3.1 Description of a dialogist**

Literally, a dialogist is the one that writes a dialogue. However, in the context of this module, a dialogist becomes a specialist. He is a discussant with a mission. He is an informed participant in a dialogue with a difference. He is a participant in a dialogue that revolves around religion. It is an exchange of ideas on religion in which two parties are involved. The dialogist in this context is an Imam, a Pastor, a Theologist, a Stake-holder. He is a Preacher. He is a professional of a sort. He is a representative of a party. He is more than an individual with an individual or personal agenda. He is a co-discussant, a team worker, who, apart from facing an opposite group is a member of a group. In other words, whenever he is out to face a group, he is not alone. He is in a team of fellow dialogists who join him to present the same argument and represent the same school of thought. The personality of a dialogist becomes clearer as his qualifications and qualities are stated.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

What is the difference between a dialogist per se and an Inter-Religious Dialogist?

### **3.3 Qualifications and Qualities**

In view of the nature of the subject matter, a dialogist must possess both academic and professional qualifications. By academic qualifications, we are referring to qualifications that give him general knowledge like Secondary School Certification, a University (tertiary) degree or diplomas. The advantage of the general academic qualifications is to be sure that the dialogist is versatile. For example, since he will be dialoging with non-Muslim, he must master English Language which is going to be the medium of expression at the dialogue forum.

Professional Qualifications include the *Thanawiyyah* certificate, that is an evidence of attendance of an Arabic school which is an equivalent of seminary in the case of a Christian dialogist. The *Thanawiyyah*/Seminary is to expose the dialogist to the rudiments of Islam (or that of Christianity) and a solid foundation in Arabic which he requires to be able to use Arabic materials in Islamic Education. He should have a good grasp of Shariah at the degree or post graduate level because Inter-Religious Dialogue is theology based. His knowledge of *Tafsir*, the exegesis of Al-Qur'an and Science of Hadith must be very deep. Given the fact that Inter-Religious Dialogue revolves around exchange of ideas with Christians, a Muslim dialogist must be abreast of the Bible knowledge. The Christian dialogist, on the other hand, should have good knowledge of the Qur'an because the Qur'an and the Bible are the primary sources of information, which are reference points to the dialogists.

Qualities have to do with personal traits and disposition. These include reliability, patience, intelligence, eloquence, involvement (practice) and control of temperament. The first quality a dialogist should possess is eloquence, that is the ability to express his thought as clearly as possibly. He must be able to communicate well. He must reach out well. He must make himself and his idea clearly understood. His diction must be devoid of any ambiguity. Secondly, he must be able to control his temperament. Dialogue can be provocative. When provoked by the opposite party, he must have the capacity to suppress the anger. Thirdly, a dialogist must have integrity. There should be no personal agenda. He must be sincere in his submission. He must not conceal information nor craft invalid statement to gains undue attention or victory. Fourthly, he must be intelligent enough to match argument with argument. He must be able to detect a fowl play in case the opposite party gives false information or quotes the Bible out of context. Above all, a dialogist must be a practicing Muslim. He must talk out of experience and knowledge rather than out of sentiment and emotion. On both sides, the dialogists must be insiders who are grossly involved.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Which of the qualities of a dialogist do you consider most important and why?

### **3.2 The Mission of a Dialogist**

The mission of a dialogist is both civic and religious. The role played by Emperor Constantine in 313 AD to organize the conference of Antioch where different Christian groups deliberated on Christian theological differences was civic. Hitherto, the quarrel over biblical differences had almost torn the empire apart. The dust was settled by the Emperor's intervention. He was on that occasion a dialogist who played a civic role. A dialogist is a promoter of peace and peaceful co-existence in the society by means of proactively stalling civil unrests. It is the responsibility of a dialogist to foresee disturbances which misunderstanding over religious matters can cause in a community and through dialogue nip the disturbances in the bud. If the dialogists can play their role well, no country will experience break down of law and order as a result of religious quarrels.

The mission of the dialogist at the same time is religious. As a preacher, a Muslim dialogist is obliged to explain to people what religion in the Islamic sense was designed to attain in the society. Given the fact that Islam is a religion of peace, designed to create peace and maintain it, the Muslim dialogist is duty bound to strive to attain the Islamic goal on earth. If the will of God which is spreading peace on earth must be done, some people must serve as agents. The dialogists are the agents. Their instrument is Inter-Religious Dialogue which if maximally utilized can provide a permanent process of ensuring peace in the society. The dialogist is to explain the tenets of religion the way that lay persons in the church or the mosque will appreciate

the intended message of religion. The major factor of quarrel in religion is ignorance. The Muslim dialogist (and Christian) can and should as a matter of religious obligation strive to dispel ignorance. Quarrel in matters of religion can be forestalled if ignorance is tackled headlong.

### **Self Help Assessment Exercise**

Explain the interconnectedness between the civic and religious roles of a dialogist.

### **Conclusion**

Qualifications and qualities occupy a prime position in the Inter-Religious Dialogue business. The personality of a dialogist and his contributions or performances generally depend on his qualifications and qualities. The dialogue can break down or even cause more trouble rather than solving any if the dialogists are ill-equipped. None of the qualifications and qualities detailed above is negotiable. Should a dialogist lack any of them, he cannot be effective.

### **5.0 Summary**

The dialogist should show his mission as a window to the whole exercise of Inter-Religious Dialogue. Knowing the mission, what is involved and what Inter-Religious Dialogue is all about, the dialogist will be face-to-face with the reality which is the enormity of the exercise. If your role is to explain the religious tenets, to promote peace, to forestall confrontation, to exchange ideas with the opposite group, you should ask yourself certain questions. Am I qualified? Can I cope? Am I a square peg and a square hole? The honest Muslim or Christian dialogist will raise those posers and more. He can go ahead if the answer to the posers is in affirmative; other wise, he should take the right option.

### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

If you were to be selected as a dialogist to represent your religion, which of the qualifications and qualities stated above do you possess, which of them do you lack and what effort can you make to adequately equip yourself?

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**Module 4: Shared Values/Methods**

**Unit 3: Methods of Conducting Inter-Religious Dialogue**

**1.0 Introduction**

**2.0 Objectives**

**3.0 Main Content**

**3.1 Current Method**

**3.2 Proposed Method**

**3.3 The Modus Operandi**

## **4.0 Conclusion**

## **5.0 Summary**

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

## **7.0 References/ Further Readings**

### **1.0 Introduction**

There are reasons for raising the question of effectiveness of inter-Religious Dialogue exercise that has spanned more than four decades in Nigeria. For example, suspicion between Muslims and Christians is high, Press war is on the increase and the occurrence of religious unrests rampant. What is really amiss? If the on-going inter-religious activities are ineffective, perhaps the method of conducting them is faulty. What, then, is the old method? What is the proposed one? And what is the guarantee of the effectiveness of the proposed one?

### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a. describe the current method
- b. state the proposed method
- c. make a justification for the proposed method

### **3.1 Current Method**

Having witnessed a host of Inter-Religious Dialogue exercises at home and abroad, this writer can give an eye witness account of the method usually employed by the dialogists. It is like a stereo-typed method. It takes about four stages. There will be a formal opening when opening remarks by the MC and Chairman's speech are delivered. This involves welcome addresses and exchange of pleasantries. This is followed by paper presentations. The contents of the papers usually centre on what Muslims are doing which Christians find offensive. In the same token, Muslims will raise an alarm about what Christians do that Muslims find unacceptable. Examples are allegation that Muslims received undue privilege from the government. That Christians enjoy undue privilege of weekend holiday which enables them go to the church on Sundays leisurely; non-allocation of land to build churches in the places where Christians are minorities; that Muslims are disadvantaged in the ministerial appointments etc. Accusations and counter accusations of this nature are usually stock-in-trade of the Muslim and Christian dialogists. This segment of an Inter- Religious Dialogue conference lasts for about three days.

Next is the preparation of resolutions/communiqué. After the adoption of the communiqué, the delegates depart. Over the last four decades of intensive Inter-Religious Dialogue, the pattern has not changed. It should be noted that each time the resolutions are adopted, there was never a time when a mechanism of implementation was discussed. Passing resolutions is a matter of fulfilling all righteousness. The resolutions are not really meant for implementation; they are rather cosmetics. Little wonder there is nothing to show for Inter-Religious Dialogue sessions.

The Press war is another factor which negates the potency of Inter-Religious Dialogue. The same dialogists who interact with the opposite group at Inter-Religious Dialogue sessions will engage each other in fire-works on pages of news papers (The Nation 14-01-13; the Punch 27-01-13).

### **Self Help Assessment Exercise**

Describe any Inter-Religious Dialogue session you ever witnessed or News Paper releases you ever read.

### **3.2 The Proposed Method**

The proposed method is premised on two considerations. First, the status of the dialogists and, secondly, professionalization of Inter- Religious Dialogue. First, till date, it would be noted that Inter-Religious Dialogue is an all comers' affair. It has been a free for all business. Any Muslim or free thinker irrespective of educational background can participate in Inter-Religious Dialogue.

In unit 2 above, qualifications and qualities of a dialogist are stated. To make a meaningful contribution, the prospective participants must possess those qualifications and qualities. Inter-Religious Dialogue is supposed to be the business of the insider, the concerned, the involved, the practitioner, the stakeholder and the informed.

The participant must have a sense of mission, to preach; to correct, to create and maintain peace and to fulfill the will of God on earth. A lackadaisical generalist cannot fit into the frame defined above.

On the other hand, Inter-Religious Dialogue must be given a human face. It must have a defined status. It must be professionalized in a manner that makes it reserved for the competent, specially selected few with requisite qualifications and qualities. Inter-Religious Dialogue must target an objective. And when an objective is set, there must be a demonstrated determination and commitment to the attainment of the objective.

What constitutes the objective of Inter-Religious Dialogue in Nigeria? It is the maintenance of peace which is the purpose of Inter-Religious Dialogue else where. The added impetus to the Nigerian situation is that the insecurity in Nigeria is attributed to corruption. The corrupt practices, it is believed, in the high places lead to insecurity. But who are the corrupt people? Since Muslims and Christians in both public and private sectors of the economy constitute the over whelming majority, the onus is on the pastors and Imams, men of God and preachers of the two faiths who exercise spiritual control over those teaming population of the corrupt people can and should use their privileged position to bring the corrupt members of their congregation to the path of sanity.

Armed with their qualifications and qualities, with a deep sense of commitment to the service of the nation when the service of the nation became worship, the dialogists set a target to be termed the Nigeria Project.

What is Nigeria Project? Nigeria project is a situation whereby Muslim and Christian dialogists resolve to rid Nigeria of corruption through the instrumentality of the shared values. This will be an easy task for the dialogists if it can be established that nine out of ten of the corrupt people profess either Islam or Christianity. The Pastors and Imams can reach out to the corrupt people who are members of the congregation. But what is the modus operandi of this project?

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

How can the service to the nation become a worship?

### **3.3 Modus Operandi**

For the sake of emphasis, it is reiterated here that the Nigeria Project is the new proposed method. It has two advantages over the current method that will become the old as soon as the proposed one adopted is implemented. First, it practically diverts attention of the dialogists from the tradition of accusations and counter accusations to the lofty objective of service to the nation.

You will see in the *modus operandi*, how the paradigm shift is a natural flow from ephemeral to substance.

The *modus operandi* uses workshops and committees as the facilitators and meeting points contrary to the seminars and conferences as the case in the old tradition where papers are read and resolutions adopted for files and shelves.

The proposed workshops sets two tasks: (a) setting broad objectives and (b) setting up committees that will handle specific assignments.

**a. Broad Objectives:** This workshop aims at developing ways and means of cleaning the Nigerian society of corruption by the use of shared values which are drawn from the Bible and the Qur'an.

**b. Committees** are set up to handle each of the following assignments:

- i. Manifestations of corruption in Nigeria (this is to list corrupt practices which have so far kept Nigeria undeveloped)
- ii. Identification of shared values (12 already identified in module 4:1)
- iii. Sermons (specimen of how to use shared values in sermons)
- iv. Curriculum (specimen of how to use shared values are enshrined in the curriculum)
- v. Text book (the text books that flow out of the curriculum)

The assignment of the first committee is to identify and describe the sharp practices which are referred to as corruption in Nigeria. This is to make a case for the NIGERIA PROJECT which now becomes the basis for Inter-Religious Dialogue.

### **Illustration**

#### **Heart cleansing**

Heart cleansing is one of the shared values that can be effectively used to tackle corruption in Nigeria. Corruption as a phenomenon has defied all known measures put in place to fight it. These include public execution of armed robbers, establishment of antigraft agencies, imprisonment, confiscation of properties, etc. all of which have proved abortive because corruption is a function of the heart. It is a reflection of the state of the heart. If the heart is clean, it will issue out good thought and desirable actions. And in case the heart is in a state of filth, dirty thought and bad actions will come out of it.

So, the heart should be subjected to constant cleaning as the Qur'an and Bible recommended.

He has attained salvation

keep thy heart with

he who purified his heart (Q91:9)

all diligence, for out

of it are issues of life (Prov. 4:23)

It is the job of the committees set up to workout the modality of the use of shared values as a means of heart cleansing.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Why in your opinion the imprisonment cannot stop corruption.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

The tradition of accusations and counter accusations traded at the Inter-Religious Dialogue sessions is a sign of insincerity on the part of the dialogists. It is an act of insincerity to their



religion and to their nation. Their obligation to their religion and their nation should be seen as greater than petty matters over which they quarrel at the Inter- Religious Dialogue sessions. While peace is emphasized in Islam, love is a central issue in Christianity. But instead of both groups promoting peace and love, they exhibit hatred and violence as insincere representatives of their religions. They should know that when love and peace are promoted, the nation is developed and citizens have time to worship God.

### **5.0 Summary**

Professionalization of dialogue recommended in the new method is to expose the distractors who attend dialogue sessions to create confusion. When dialogue is undertaken exclusively by those who take preaching as a full time business on account of their training and calling, the quality of discussions will be high and the holy scriptures (The Qur'an and the Bible) will serve as the main reference points. Attention will be diverted from trivialities to real business.

### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

What makes you believe that the proposed method is better than the old one? Give reasons and illustrations.

### **7.0 Reference/Further Readings**

Cardinal Francis A. (1990) *Church in Dialogue: Working with other Believers*. Enugu. Ignatius Press San Francisco.

Bidmos, M.A. (2006) *Inter-Religious Dialogue: The Nigerian Experience*. Abuja and Lagos. Panaf Publishing Inc

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#### **-INTERNET SOURCES**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/pontifical\\_council\\_for\\_interreligious\\_dialogue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/pontifical_council_for_interreligious_dialogue)

[www.interfaith-encounter.org](http://www.interfaith-encounter.org)

[www.thefreelibrary.com](http://www.thefreelibrary.com)