

THE IMPACT OF RELIGION ON THE PROMOTION OF PEACE AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN YORUBA LAND

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ABSTRACT

An attempt to provide suitable answers to the question of the doubtful fundamental factors or genesis of rifts and schism in Yoruba kingdom particularly in the late 18th and early 19th centuries has engineered this piece of work. To this end, the paper evaluated the causal reasons why the, peacemakers' communities had failed in the past to address permanently, issues relating to violence, racial discrimination, exploitation, injustice and sundries in Yoruba land. Finally, this paper shall provide comprehensive answers to the questions of how religion and peace, economic and justice, mutual understanding and love are intertwined in the context of Yoruba communities. The paper is based on the principal understanding that religion, if well utilized has the potential to bring joy into the heart of the saddened, bridges the dichotomy between the rich and poor, understandings and care for human beings not only in Yoruba land but in Nigeria and in the entire world.

Keywords: Religion, peace and economic integration, Yorubaland, kingdom

INTRODUCTION

Religion is a powerful force in societies around the world and in the lives of people everywhere¹. However, its impact, whether international or local, is often associated with violent conflict. Recognizing this, the study provides solution to this critical problem of religion as it examines and identifies the position of religion either for peace or conflict. In addition, there is also the problem of determining the positions of the different peacemaking communities in their attitudes towards peace settling and violent conflicts as can be shown in the context of Yoruba history. This problem shall be studied in relation to the role played by religiously motivated men and women, corporate organizations and religious communities for peace making.

This study shall focus majorly on events that occurred in the last twenty years and shall not go beyond the confines of the situation in Yoruba land, in view of the fact that there are crises in other parts of the country (Nigeria) today, particularly in the Northern and Delta regions. The study will employ historical and sociological approaches. The historical approach will enable readers to understand the historical background of the crisis in Yoruba land. In the same way, the sociological approach will shed light on the effects of crisis on the peoples' economy, standard of living, governance and sundries. The study therefore will consult published materials such as books, articles in learned journals, relevant magazines on Yoruba land so as to make this paper up to date.

THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is one of the West Africa's largest countries, extending from the gulf of Guinea in the south toward the Sahara Desert in the north, and from Cameroon and Lake Chad in the east to Benin in the West. The population, from the available record in the archive shows that in 2006 census, it was over 140 millions and with about 250 ethnic groups². Among these, the Hausa and Fulani are concentrated in the north of the country, whereas Igbo dominate the southeast and Yoruba the southwest. Nigeria is not only a plural-ethnic society; it is also made up of diverse religions. The dominant religious groupings in Nigeria are: African Traditional Religion (A.T.R.), Christianity and Islam³. However, most figures suggest that the Muslims adherents exceed the number of Christians, and a significant minority adhere to traditional African religion. In the light of the above, I will like to discuss briefly about these three aforementioned religions as recognized in the Nigerian constitution, namely African Traditional Religion, Christianity, and Islam

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

The African Traditional Religion has long been in existence prior to colonial times. The religion emboldened the people's customs and traditions. Bolaji Idowu sees African Religion as the total culture and religious beliefs and practices of Africa⁴. In a nutshell, A.T.R. expresses the religious beliefs, customs, norms, behaviour, ethics and pattern of administration of people in their various communities and societies at large. African Traditional Religion is inclusive in its worldview because it incorporates other religious elements or gods. A.T.R. is polytheistic. Furthermore, the Yoruba believe that Olorun (God) is the creator of heaven and earth. That, Olorun (God) is the chief judge, omnipresent, all knowing, and immaculate and source of human existence. That Olorun has some gods who serve as intermediary between Him and people on earth. These lesser gods are called divinities. Such divinities include Obatala, Orunmila, Osun, Esu, Sango, Ogun etc. Each divinity has its role to play.

CHRISTIANITY

However, the Christian religion of Jesus Christ which started as a movement in the first and second centuries in the history of the early church, spread to Nigeria in the first half of the fifteenth century. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, it has penetrated into the interior parts of Yoruba land, through the joint efforts of overseas missionary and their African converts⁵. The Christians also believe in the existence of God as the creator of heaven and earth and Jesus Christ as the son of God and Messiah of the creatures of God. Unlike Traditional Religion, Christianity is highly exclusive because its worldview is monotheistic. This is one of the reasons why Christianity and A.T.R. are always at loggerhead. Today, Christianity has spread nearly all parts of Southwestern Nigeria. Christianity is anchored on two major teachings. The first is to love God and your neighbours. The second is based on salvation of souls.

ISLAM

Islam, like the African Traditional Religion has a long history in Nigeria and could be traced to the ninth century through the influence of the Arab traders. Today, the religion is deeply rooted in Yoruba land particularly in cities and remote areas. Islam is widely accepted today in Abeokuta, Ijebu, Ikirun, Oyo, Ogbomosho, Ikire, Ikoyi etc because it embraces some African cultures and traditions on marriages, communal lives based on sharing and, the use of hamlets for protection. However, Islam is completely different from ATR because of its exclusiveness. The Muslims only believe in God (Allah), as the creator of heaven and earth, and the only hope of human beings. They do not see Jesus Christ as the son of God and the Messiah of mankind. The Muslims perceive Jesus only as a great prophet like any other prophets sent by God. This is another area of disagreement and controversy between Christians and Muslims even till now.

YORUBALAND

Yoruba land constitutes one of the biggest ethnic groups in Nigeria. Traditionally, the Yoruba regarded Ile-Ife as their origin and cradle of civilization. Thus, all Yoruba towns and peoples have direct and indirect linkage with Ile-Ife. In addition, the position of Yoruba land is in the central portion of a wider zone extending roughly from the Volta basin in the West to the Niger valley in the east. The Yoruba groups have some peculiar characteristics. First, they have a distinct language known as Yoruba but expressed in different local dialects⁶. Secondly, the Yoruba people also have a standardized political structure and organization which is hierarchical. The traditional system is based on monarchy. At the apex is the king (Oba), and beneath are the Chiefs, priests, warriors to mention a few. The Oba is the most powerful after Olodumare (God). A fully-blown Oba is a quasi-divine personage, and one of his essential functions is to mediate with the deities (orisa) to ensure his people's well-being⁷. In the Yoruba context, the land belongs to the king only. Justice is also determined by him.

The Oba is extremely powerful in Yorubaland. Perhaps, this is the reason why the colonial masters used the system of indirect rule (order from the king through them to the citizens) to administer in early 19th and 20th centuries in Yorubaland. That is why in some towns where, the Obas failed to cooperate with the British, there was always crisis. Next after Oba are the Chiefs (Ijoye). They carried out the instructions of the Oba and also see to the welfare of the entire people within their communities. The Chiefs consist of the following people: Iwarefa, Otunba, Iyalode, Basorun etc. The cult priests and Warriors such as Awo ilu, Onifa, Ogboni, Olode, Apena, Balogun, and Onilu etc also see to spiritually lives, security and peace of the people in the communities. However, it must be pointed out that with the intervention of colonial administration, there have been a lot of changes in the political structure and organization of the Yoruba. Though the Oba is still accorded with respect of a

leader but not as next to God again and more so, that his order or instruction against the constitution in Nigeria could now be queried by the court of justice. Also, the chieftaincy positions in the Yoruba system of administration have not faded off till today. However, they operate only on a periphery level.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF VIOLENCE IN YORUBALAND

In an attempt to have a full understanding of the contemporary history of crisis in Yorubaland, it is imperative to discuss the historical background to conflict and violence in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is very important to highlight that the first quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed series of chaos and disorder in Yoruba land following the decline of the old Oyo kingdom. Consequently, series of war broke out and tens of thousands of people were enslaved. The question is, what factors were responsible for the conflict violence during these said periods. The collapse of Oyo Empire in about the 1820s led to the emergence of powerful leaders in Yoruba land which later resulted to power tussles. For example, Afonja of Ilorin seceded from Oyo empire and consolidated an independent territory for himself with the full support of the Muslims in the Northern parts of Nigeria. Ibadan, on the other hand attempted to expand its territory and thereby had clashes with Ijaye and which resulted to Ibadan-Ijaye and Abeokuta war between 1859-1962. Consequently, this trend of development had negative effects on the social life of the people.

First, life became unsafe, as many innocent souls were killed and and some captured as slaves. Eventually, there was a mass migration from one region to another for safety reasons. However, the Muslim communities that were supposed to serve as peacemakers took one sided party with Afonja of Ilorin, and, supplied him with arms and ammunition to fight his fellow brothers. The reason perhaps why Muslims took side with Afonja is because he embraced Islam with his family and subordinates. Today; Ilorin is a stronghold of Islam in Yoruba land. Furthermore, the inter-tribal war in Yoruba land also had further implications on the people living in the communities. The rich and slave traders became richer and the poor and less privileged became more oppressed as they were victim of slavery through war. Consequently, local markets were affected, life became unsafe as all activities became standstill and many people were killed. Peel remarked about the situation in Yoruba land that "The uprising started at Okemesi and spread quickly in Ekiti and Igbomina: Ibadan ajele messengers, merchants, and sympathizers were killed or expelled"⁸. By 1893, the Yoruba land had started to witness colonialism through the power of the British.

The British colonialism in some places where indirect rule system failed as a result of restrictant from the Yoruba leaders and kings, enforced power through the means of law and conquering. Thus, Ijebu was invaded and its leaders arrested in the last quarter of the 19th century. In the same manner, Ogedengbe of Ijesa was detained by force at Ilesha in 1893⁹. Here, it is discovered that the British whites who were to serve as peacemakers now joined the wagon of conflict crisis. The White wanted to

penetrate into the interior parts of Yoruba land, control the land by subjecting the power of the ruling kings and had dominion of their economy. The reason behind the imperialism is that the British wanted to acquire territories where they could get raw materials for their finished products. They could only achieve this mission through colonization. However, some indigenous leaders restricted the imperial power of the British and the end result was war.

VIOLENCE AND ECONOMIC DISINTEGRATION IN CONTEMPORARY YORUBALAND

Violence from the political perspective: Post-independence tensions. Following World War II and a growing Nigerian nationalism, preparation for Nigerian independence began in the 1950. Thus, political parties were formed among the ethnic divisions in the country: the Northern people's Congress (NPC) representing Hausa and Fulani Northerners, the Action Group (AG) represented the Yoruba of the Western region and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) represented the Igbo and minorities of the eastern region. However, the formation of the parties was not uniformly structured—the Northern parts were bigger than others. At the same time, the competition between the southern Igbo and Yoruba for opportunities opening up to educate Nigerians in the new post colonial state led to bitter confrontations¹⁰.

In addition, the 1962 and 1963 state censuses generated a lot of crisis. The figures were manipulated for election riggings. Thus, a leadership challenge in the Yoruba's Action Group led to intense political turmoil in the Western Region. With the Yoruba in disarray, the Northern People's Congress and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons came to see each others as rivals for power. Consequently, regional elections in the Western Regions (Yoruba land) were openly rigged, resulting in a further explosion of rioting that lasted from October 1965 to January 1966 and killed an estimated two thousand people¹¹. This marked the beginning of civil war in Nigeria. Many political leaders were killed, and, kidnapped. Many houses were burnt and properties looted until the military took over the government.

Contemporary events (Since 1983): The second phase of political crises in Yoruba land started in 1983. The election was manipulated and rigged. In Ondo State of the Yorubaland, the governmental vote was rigged in favor of National party of Nigeria (NPN) and United Party of Nigeria (UPN) reacted violently. Houses were burnt, industries destroyed, warehouses and vehicles burnt, human beings were wet with petrol and burnt alive. In Akure, and Owo, many big merchants and investors, because of the crisis, diverted their investment to cities where there is peace and where businesses could be suitable for profit. This was a big setback in Yorubaland. Some of the properties destroyed are still on ground till today.

Furthermore, in 1993, Moshood Abiola, a renowned businessman from Abeokuta in Yoruba land contested for presidential election and won. However, the election was cancelled as a result of power supremacy. The Yoruba in Lagos revolted. They went about the street burning houses, destroying opponents' properties. However, the crisis became aggravated when Abiola forcefully declared himself as

the president of Nigeria. The federal government declared a state of emergency. Abiola was arrested and detained in prison. Here, it was assumed that during this trial period he got converted to Christianity. Though, most Muslims contested this view because of his (Abiola's) previous involvement in Islam. However, he was allegedly poisoned and died in prison shortly after his conversion. Many people related his death to the conversion. However; the Muslims denied this allegation and buried him with Muslim rites.

Violence from the religious perspective: Right from 1970s, tension on religious issues between Muslim and Christians has been very high, particularly on the discussion that Nigeria should become a Muslim nation. However, the situation became worst in the mid 1980s as a result of the conflict that came up in the University of Ibadan when Islamic scholars and students advocated that Nigeria, at all, cost should become an Islamic nation so as to ensure morality, decency, and obedience to their rulers. The Christians reacted by displaying placards and posters by writing- No Way For Nigeria As Islamic Nation. The Muslims also responded by burning the status of Mary erected at the Chapel of resurrection in University of Ibadan. This eventually led to violence which was not only within campuses but extended to the Yoruba communities in Ibadan. Muslims and Christians killed themselves and the Federal government declared a state of emergency.

Furthermore, the Muslim Christian crisis took a new turn in later years as Muslims discovered that their children in schools were marginalised; because the ownership and control of schools were solely with the Christian missionaries and with the support of the Government, The Muslims particularly in Ede, Ikire, Ogbomosho withdrew their children compulsorily from the mission schools to establish a Muslim schools for them. In Ibadan, Lagos and Abeokuta, Muslim agitated that the religious study curriculum should not only be patterned in the Christian ways. That, the Western education should now incorporate Arabic and Islamic religious knowledge. However, this issue generated a lot of hot debate. Consequently, the atmosphere became tensed particularly among Muslim and Christian teachers in primary, secondary and higher institutions of learning¹²

From all indications, conflict between Muslims and Christians in Yoruba land aggravated immediately after the Federal government itself evidenced a bias for Islam by secretly joining the Organization of the Islamic Conference in January 1986. The implication is that the Federal government had failed to serve as a peacemaker between the Muslims and Christians. However, the Christian reaction through protest and violent means frightened the military government. Thus, the government responded by constituting a body known as National Advisory Council on Religion to see to the crisis between Muslims and Christians¹³.

Violence from the economic perspective: The first in this regard is the allocation of resources. Some people in Yoruba land wage war against one another because of inequity in the distribution and allocation of resources. Take for instance, the war between Ile- Ife and Modakeke which started in the 80s and the conflict is still on ground till today. Modakeke people believe that they have been marginalized because

of their small size and population. In the light of this, they have been agitating for the creation of more local government areas to benefit more from Federal government allocation. Also, Efon Alaaye in Ekiti -State struggled with Aramoko for the creation of local government for its constituency.

Second to the above is the habitual increase in the prices of petroleum products. Nigeria is a country blessed with mineral resources particularly petroleum. However, the resources have not been well utilized and for the benefit of its citizens. Thus, from 1988, the Federal government has been steadily increasing the prices of the petrol from 50kobo until it got to 100 naira per liter in 2006. Many states reacted particularly in Akure, the capital of Ondo State and Ondo Township. Students in higher institutions of learning boycotted lectures and went into the street protested against government action. Some touts went as far as burning government petrol stations and destroying some private stations who sold at exorbitant prices. Government finally reached a consensus and the price was reduced to 70 Naira per liter. Despite this reduction, tension is still high in some cities in Yorubaland.

PEACE RESTORATION AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN YORUBALAND

The Role of Yoruba Christian Communities: It is essential to point out in this passage the efforts made by the early missionaries in promoting peace particularly in the south western part of Yoruba land in the second half of the 19th century. Rio Henry Townsend, a missionary sent by Christian Missionary Society (C.M.S.) to work at Abeokuta remarked in his speech about peace restoration between the Christians and the traditionalists in 1856 that:

...there should be no more molestation of Christians...and no one should call the religion abukon (disgrace). If they say this, people are reproaching chiefs such as Sokenu, Basorun, Saggua and himself...¹⁴

It is also to be noted that the approach of the early missionaries for peace resolution did not yield positive results because of the situation in Yorubaland during this time. The Missionaries were eager to promote Christianity through conversion; and the A.T.R. adherents were afraid that conversion to Christianity would weaken the social cohesion and spirituality of the people. Thus, the traditionalists would never allow any religion to jeopardize the existing religion. In a nutshell, the nineteenth century in the Yoruba history was characterized by a tensed atmosphere which hindered the spread of the gospel, and, also made the different attempts for peace restoration by the Missionaries fruitless. Gollmer, a missionary at Ijaye observed:

The feeling which exists between the different tribes of the Yoruba nation is a drawback to the extension of Mission work... However, we trust ere long the gospel will heal this wound and reciprocity will be cherished among all, cementing the many Yoruba tribes into great Christian nation...¹⁵

In the recent years, the Christian communities play vital role in promoting peace in Yoruba land. Perhaps, this is an answer to the prayer request of Gollmer in the 19th century as mentioned above. In lieu of this, it is not out of place to discuss

the Christian role in Modakeke-Ile Ife crisis from 1980-2008. In 1980, the Christian Association of Nigeria, then Oyo branch conveyed a peace meeting to find a lasting solution to the crisis between the two warring neighboring towns. They met at the palace of Ooni of Ile-Ife and each group tabled its area of concern. Two things were discovered, that, for peace to be finally restored, the Federal Government must step into the matter of Local Government issue and that the Ife people must be prepared to let go Modakeke to pursue its goal of independence from Ile-Ife.

However, based on the aforementioned factors, the Christian communities could not find permanent solution to the crisis. It lingered on until 1997, when the Christian Association of Nigeria now Osun State branch called another peace meeting with the message theme, Lord send thou peace¹⁶. The centered of the message was more on the love of God for humanity and peace within Yorubaland. The idea of this preaching was the conviction of the Christian leaders that once the message of God's love was planted in the hearts of the people, it would be natural for them to see the importance of peace.

The Christian leaders also sent a message through Ooni of Ile Ife to the federal government to find a lasting solution to the problem between the two neighboring states. This appeal yielded positive result because the Federal government now created a parallel local government for the Modakeke and a mini military barrack station in between the two towns. The federal government also built a new road that now separates the two towns. This was a relief to transporters and travelers who in the past endangered their lives passing through these towns during the crisis period. In addition, the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria also organized crusades and revivals to promote peace and harmony between the two towns. In 2002, Reinhard Bonnke was invited from Germany for a crusade at Ile-Ife to put an end to bloodshed, killings, chaos and disorder that prevailed in the town, Modakeke and the neighboring communities. The outcome of this revival was astonishing. The youths of the two towns agreed to put an end to the war. There was a peace meeting and which ended with handshakes and kisses from both sides in 2004. Today, from all indications, the issue of conflict and violence has drastically reduced yet the memory of the war is still fresh particularly among the Ife and Modakeke youths.

The role of Yoruba African Traditional Communities: Right from the early 1980, the federal government in Nigeria has reduced funding the Universities in Nigeria. The income of University staff has been extremely poor in comparison with oil sectors or other government establishments. At the Obafemi Awolowo University in 1986, there were series of letters to the federal government on the review of salary and proper funding of the institution, but all had no positive response. In 1999, the academic staff of the Universities in Nigeria embarked on a prolonged strike for five months before government intervention. Government stepped in because the ruling kings, chiefs and individuals close to the corridor of power appealed to the Federal government on the matter. This was the situation until 2001 when the Academic and non academic staff declared an indefinite strike. The students reacted displaying placards; and destroying properties etc. The secret societies in the universities took

advantage by killing some students and harassing some lecturers as well¹⁷. The violent spread all over the country, the Federal government declared a state of emergency and the universities involved were closed down for almost a year. The Yoruba traditional rulers and chiefs, in collaboration with other traditional rulers in Nigeria held a meeting in Abuja to discuss the way forward in Nigerian Universities. Delegates from the federal and state levels were fully attended in the meeting. The meeting ended well. The academic University staffs were compelled to resume work and the conditions of service were looked into. The Federal government released funds to the Universities and; students' bursary and scholarship were increased 100 percent across board.

Apart from this, the Yoruba traditional peacemakers recently rubbed minds on how to interfere on the current Muslim and Christian crisis in Jos, Nigeria, which had claimed the lives of hundreds of people in Plateau State. They have also appealed to the Federal government to position a mini Police or Army barrack near the spot where crisis often occurs. The chairman, Council of Elders in Ekiti State, Nigeria in response to problem had sent letter of condolence to some families concerned and also appealed to the Federal government to maintain peace and protect the lives of its citizenry¹⁸. Today, the role of the traditional communities in restoring peace in Yoruba land can not be over emphasized; apart from engaging in dialogues for peace, at times they also involve some spirituality as alternative means to maintain peace. For instance, when there are bad omens or occurrences, the traditionalists appealed to their gods through sacrifices to ensure peace and harmony within the communities.

The role of Yoruba Muslim communities: The Muslim communities particularly the imams played significant role in peace restoration in Nigeria. This could be seen through their actions and preaching in pacifying their youths against violence and conflict. Toma A. Ragnjiya in his article on the Christian-Muslim relation in Nigeria remarks:

"Unity in diversity and practical religious pluralism demands tolerance. This tolerance can be seen in Muhammad's message and in his behaviors towards the people of the book"¹⁹.

Today, Muslim bodies in Yoruba land in collaboration with other Islamic organizations in non-Yoruba states have embarked on inter-faith dialogue among them and inter-religious dialogue between them and Christians to ensure peace, love and unity within the Yoruba and other communities. Indeed, the Yoruba Muslims have continued preaching against violence and conflict in Nigeria at different in the Mosque and on the media. They also make use of placards, posters, billboard etc protesting against killing, sexual harassment, social and injustice, deprivation of fundamental human rights, etc. These efforts of the Muslims communities have helped in no small measure to promote peace thereby educating the youths on the negative effects of shedding innocent blood, looting of properties, burning houses and sundry unwholesome activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Peace, according to the Chamber 20th Century Dictionary stands for freedom from disturbance or from war. Peace also means completeness, soundness and well-being²⁰. It also means material possession (Psalm.122). It also stands for justice. J. Y. Yonders sees peace as rightness, wholeness of justice, liberation and salvation²¹. The vision of Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 promises that people will no longer learn war because the oracle of Yahweh will go out from Jerusalem²². This crucial point of discussion of peace is related to religion. In the Christendom, the term peace on earth is fulfilled in the work of Jesus Christ (Luke 2:14).Also, in Islam, peace is the central message of Mohammed in the Koran²³. Every Muslim believer must work towards maintaining peace and love with his neighbour. Peace from the religious perspectives brings good health, even during old age (Genesis 15:15) whereas crisis leads to poor health. Quietness is related to good health. This quietness pleases God, according to I Timothy 2:2-3²⁴.

In that wise, if quietness which is a symbol of peace pleases God, then it is imperative for Christians and Muslims to practice their religion without conflict, and also for societies to be at peace. From our daily experience, it has been realized that religion is a necessary element in human life. Religion is a persistent and an unavoidable phenomenon in all human affairs. There is no doubt religion plays a vital role in the economic integration and socio-political and cultural structure of Yorubaland. With the level of fear of God generated in religion, the rich could share their wealth (redistribution of wealth) so as to assist the poor to establish a small scale projects and industries. The ethical implication of this is care for the poor and communal living based on sharing. This is the current issue of discussion in the World Council of Churches today- peace, redistribution of wealth and eco-justice. Today, the Yoruba Muslims have been advocating peace and redistribution of wealth to close the gap between the rich and poor. According to Maulana Muhamad "Muslims should not oppress other men, whether by money or by words"²⁵.

In the Yoruba context, applying this principle of redistribution of wealth will make the people comfortable. Take for instance, Ondo State is known for the production of bitumen-and if well utilized by Godly people, would create more job opportunities for its citizens and more so, the profit from this business can be put to other businesses. In the same manner, Ekiti State is known for producing cocoa in large quantity. This can equally sustain its citizens if leaders are God-fearing and honest with the proceeds from the business. Also, taxes imposed on corporate and manufacturing companies can be used directly to take proper care of the poor, disabled and the unemployed.

It has been discovered in the course of this research that the methods and structures of wealth creation are the responsible factors for poverty and inequality in Yoruba land .Now, the question is, how can this trend be reversed? The idea is that the government of Nigeria (state and federal levels) should adopt the policy of redistribution of resources such as effective taxation of wealth and movement of capital, land reform, technology transfer, subsidies on basic commodities and

socialized health and education system²⁶. For peace and harmony to be ensued in Yorubaland, the moral and ethical standard of youths and elites must be retouched. The Church and Islamic leaders have a greater role to play in advocacy work of raising awareness against bloodshed and violence. They should also preach and organise campaigns around issues related to eco-justice, human rights, women liberation and poverty eradication. It is only through religious teaching that the ethical standards of the people can be reshaped.

In conclusion, as long as poverty persists, political ambitions prevail, religious differences are stressed, violent cultures are upheld and ethnic marginalization continues, we should expect more religious and political violence with economic disintegration in the near future in the Yoruba land. For peace to reign forever in Yorubaland there is a need for a reconciliation commission to investigate past wounds and to ensure confession, repentance, compensation and forgiveness. This commission should learn from the weaknesses and strength of past commissions to put in place structures that bring about reconciliation and transformation of conflicts²⁷. The Federal government on its part should cultivate the idea of showing love; and care to its citizens who suffer and are in need. This could be achieved through creating job opportunities for the unemployed, proper funding of the local government for redistribution of resources to the grass root of Yoruba land.

The adherents of Christianity, Islam and A.T.R. in southwestern Nigeria should cultivate the spirit of oneness and tolerance. Mutual understanding starts when adherents of each religion are ready for dialogue and, with respect and love to listen to the views, opinions, ideas, argument and proposals of one another. The leaders of the three religions: Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (A.T.R.) collaborate with Federal Government and lasting solutions to the fundamental problems facing Nigeria especially the Yorubaland. The fundamental reasons for poverty, misery and depression, illiteracy, starvation and unemployment in Africa should be tabled and possible solutions are provided.

NOTES

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- ¹⁵Peel, J.D.Y; Religious Encounter and the making of the Yoruba. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. P130
- ¹⁶An interview on telephone, conducted with the former chairman, Christian Association of Nigeria, Osun-branch (1992-1997), Pastor Joshua Adewaare Alokun on 18/11/2008., Age-86 years.
- ¹⁷The secret societies are the cults constituted by some youths in the Universities or Higher Institutions of learning. Historically, the societies were formed to fight for students' rights and see to students' welfare. But later changed to molesting lecturers and students who are not in agreement with their actions and movies. On this ground, the traditionalists play vital role by campaigning against cultism and violence in campuses of Higher Institutions of learning in Yorubaland. Today cultism students are automatically dismissed from Universities and also charged to court for judgment.
- ¹⁸A condolence letter forwarded by the Chairman Council of Elders Ekiti State, to the National Advisory Council on Religion in Nigeria, 15/12/2008.
- ¹⁹Toma, Ragnijiya: "Christian Faithfulness and the common Good: Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria." In: Donald, Miller/Scott, Holland/Lon, Fendall (eds): Seeking Peace in Africa, Stories from African Peacemaker. Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2007:150-159.
- ²⁰Kirkpatrick, E.M; Chambers 20th Century Dictionary, Edinburgh: Richard Clay Ltd, 198, p936. See also John, Yonder;"Peace, Penance and Reconciliation". In: Nicholas, Lossy/Jose, Miguez Bonino etc (eds): Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement (2nd edition), Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002:893-895.
- ²¹Kirkpatrick, E.M; Chambers 20th Century Dictionary, Edinburgh: Richard Clay Ltd, 198, p936
- ²²John, Yonder;"Peace, Penance and Reconciliation". In: Nicholas, Lossy/Jose, Miguez Bonino etc (eds): Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement (2nd edition), Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002:893-895.
- ²³In Islam, the word peace is constantly used as greetings and extension of Gods fellowship of love to His people. Such words of peace include "Salam Alikum"- Peace to you OR "Assalamu Alaykum wa rahmatulahi ta'ala wa barakatuh unmatam wahidatan" stands, for peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah, the most High and his blessings.
- ²⁴I Timothy 2: 2-3 reads "for Kings, and for that entire are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the right of God our saviour.
- ²⁵Maulana, Muhammad Ali; The Religion of Islam: A Comprehensive Discussion of the Sources, Principles and Practices of Islam. India: Ripon Printing Press, 1936.
- ²⁶Rogate, Mshana; Poverty, Wealth and Ecology: the impact of Economic Globalization Background to the Study Process, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2008, p10
- ²⁷This is the core message of ex-president of Nigeria in his opening address on the opening ceremony of Islam in Africa conference in Abuja