

RECONSIDERING THEORIES, FRAMEWORKS AND MODELS FOR SECURING CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM CO-EXISTENCE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Oholiabs D. Tuduks, PhD & Fatima Abubakar, PhD

Abstract

An empirical research conducted and published by *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* in 2020, explored and hermeneutically analysed the results on the state of Christian-Muslim relationship in Northern Nigeria. The empirical hermeneutical design was structured in four units of evaluation: first, the investigation of the challenges among Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria; second, the description of the extent and effects of the challenges; third, the evaluation of the role of religious leaders in addressing the challenges; and fourthly, suggestion for addressing the challenges. This study reflects on the results by recommending and reconsidering some theories, frameworks, and models as potential platforms for promoting and securing Christian-Muslim co-existence in Northern Nigeria. A framework for Christian-Muslim inter-religious relationship propounded by Oholiabs D. Tuduks published in 2021 with *International Academy of Practical Theology* was used. The framework was built on three groups: 'religious group', 'intra-religious group', and 'inter-religious group' reckoned to be acutely crucial for Christian-Muslim functional relationship in their co-existence. The models of Kritzinger (2018) of 'face-to-face', 'back-to-back', and 'shoulder-to-shoulder' and that of Dajani (2007) of 'wasatia', and the metaphor of quantum entanglement were explored in motivating the framework. A radical application of 'calling a spade a spade' in dialogue in religious, intra-religious, and inter-religious relationships stood out as recommendations for promoting and securing Christian-Muslim co-existence towards functional inter-religious relationship.

Keywords: Christian-Muslim, Wasatia, inter-religious, co-existence, dialogue, and entanglement

Introduction

The complexity of the challenge of Nigerian unity is multi-layered. In the past and recent times, crises motivated through religious, political, or ethnic influences have succeeded in situating the citizens in an inter-religious state of dysfunctional relationship. In Nigeria, religion is potent with the capacity of

influencing other area of lives. As such, secular institutions look like religious. Research indicates that when crises start as political or ethnic for example soon turns into a religious dispute. A report on the inter-religious tensions and crises in Nigeria by the international joint delegation of the World Council of Churches and the Royal Ahl al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought reveals that “In Nigeria, three things are intertwined; religion, politics and ethnicity and the three are beclouded with corruption, poverty and insecurity. It is therefore difficult to solve one without considering all other underpinning factors” (The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, 9). Thus, in every crises regardless of the cause, there is always tendency of turning out to be religious thereby creating an inter-religious dysfunctional and traumatic state. It is through this fluid relationship that Christian-Muslim co-existence is often challenged. As a contextual area of interest in Northern Nigeria, Christian-Muslim co-existence has always been our passion to which we commit our scholarship in making pragmatic contributions.

The research used the secondary data of an empirical research conducted in Northern Nigeria published by Stellenbosch Theological Journal in 2020. The empirical research was designed with four units of evaluation: (1) Investigation of the challenges among Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria, (2) Description of the extent and effects of the challenges, (3) Evaluation of the role of religious leaders in addressing the challenges, and (4) Suggestion for means of intervention towards addressing the challenges. The interview questions were drawn from the four units of evaluation. For the sake of this research, concentration will be given to the first unit of evaluation that ask question about the challenges of Christian-Muslim co-existence in Northern Nigeria. Themes that emerged from the responses includes: inter-religious ignorance; religious hatred; religious intolerance; religious exclusion; manipulation of religion; struggle for dominance; religious claim of geographical location; religious fanaticism and extremism; discrimination among Christians and Muslims; Christians and Muslims living with fear and suspicion of each other and pretentious Christian-Muslim relationship (Tuduks, 399).

On how to address the challenge of Christian-Muslim co-existence , contributions have been made in the area of inter-religious dialogue by several researchers such as Bartholomew (2010); Ugbor (2015); Andrabi (2020) and Vila, at el. (2020). However, some researchers such as Kritzinger (2018); Dajani (2007) and Augsburg (2014) considered some theories, frameworks and models from

different contexts to which this study reconsidered and argued their feasibility among Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria.

The Theory of Entanglement

Quantum entanglement has technically nothing to do with religion. It is discussed in the discipline of sciences with specific reference to physics. The concept which describes relationship between different particles was found relevant for interdisciplinary engagement in inter-religious relationship. A physicist, Ross McKenzie noted the increasing interest in the relationship between science and theology, indicating that before some few decades ago the two disciplines were generally perceived as being ‘at war’ and ‘contradictory’ (242). He exemplified the interdisciplinary research engagement with popular publications appearing with titles like “The Mind of God, The God Particle, and The Physics of Immortality”. Other examples include the atheistic scientists such as Richard Dawkins who publish materials with use of religious imagery and engages in the discussion concerning God and creation. Furthermore, in public science educational institution such as secondary schools for example in Nigeria, religious courses are taught to all students who are undergoing training in the field of sciences. Even in the universities, the growing interest is manifesting in what is reflected in the undergraduate courses (McKenzie, 242). It could be ascertained that the experiences of, for example the dedicated and committed Christians and Muslims who are scientists by discipline may involve the feelings of the interaction between religion and science. According to McKenzie, the interdisciplinary engagement is not only limited to religion and science (mostly physics and biology) but includes, for example, philosophy and history as well (McKenzie, 251). It is this interesting relationship that motivates our interdisciplinary discussion with quantum entanglement in relation to inter-religious transformative relationship for Christian/Muslim co-existence.

Interdisciplinary researches have been conducted in the fields of science specifically on quantum entanglement with theology. For example, in considering the metaphor of Quantum entanglement in the works¹⁰ of Konigsburg (2017);

¹⁰ Joyce Ann Konigsburg. “Relational Interreligious Dialogue: Interdisciplinary Arguments from Creator/Creature Theology and Quantum Entanglement”. Dissertation research submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts, Duquesne University (Spring 1-1-2017); R. Daren Erisman. *Quantum Entanglement as a Metaphor for the Unity of God: An Analysis Informed by Pannenberg’s Use of the Metaphor of Field for the Spirit of God*. STSP 5900 Advanced Seminar in

Erisman (nd.); and Simmons (1999), with implications for inter-religious dialogue, the Unity of God in Trinity; and a 'Kenotic Trinity' were stressed respectively. The concept of quantum entanglement is credited to Einstein, Podolsky, Rosen, and Schrodinger, with the theory¹¹ explaining the way in which the independent particles correlate to predictably interact with each other regardless of how far apart they are (Rouse, 1). The fascinating thing about the theory in relation to Christian-Muslim coexistence is the interdependency of the distinct particles where their differences are not in any way barriers to relationship but are able to function together in producing common energy. The interdependency state of being is the being-in-relation to each other, and the entangled particles remain interconnected within the wave functions until an external influence, such as measurement, causes de-coherence and disentangles them (Konigsburg, 117). Thus, the non-separability indicates the authenticity of the being as being-in-relation (Karakostas, 256). In other words, the being together does not affect their individual distinctions, like Polkinghorne (79) would describe the state analogically as 'togetherness-in-separation'.

Separation is often abused as exclusion. But in a real sense it is not. Exclusion is quite negative with horrific effects. According to Volf (30, 75), exclusion is a destructive evil whose result is eventually a creation of a world without the other, with the ultimate result of crisis and violence. He explains the classic forms of exclusion as elimination, assimilation, domination and abandonment. Thus, separation implies differentiation which is distinct from exclusion. In arguing the differences, Volf (65) uses Plantinga's theory of "separating" and "binding together" taken from the story of creation in the first chapter of the book of Genesis. He commends the Plantinga's theory which argues that the creation described in Genesis exists as a complex pattern of "separate and bound-together" entities. Therefore, Volf (66) asserts that "differentiation" describes the creative activity of "separating-and-binding", which results in patterns of interdependence. He further argues that the account of creation as "separating-and-binding" rather than just as "separating" suggests that

Theology & Science Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California. (nd.). And E L. Simmons. *Toward a Kenotic Pneumatology: Quantum Field Theory and the Theology of God. CTNS Bulletin*, 1999. 19(2):12.

¹¹ According to Erisman (nd:2), the theory has been confirmed first in the experiments conducted by Alain Aspect and followed by others repeatedly, that particles separated by over ten kilometres, yet, still retains non-separability.

“identity” involves connection, difference, heterogeneity. Thus, when people are living separate they are not necessarily under exclusion. However, in the context of “separating-and-binding” exclusion may happen where people are meant to live together but are found not or where they are meant to be separate, a pressure is threatening for assimilation. In other words, the model of “separation-and-binding” implies that putting asunder what God has joined together and joining what He has put asunder is exclusion (Volf, 66).

Quantum entanglement provides a framework of scientific concepts, processes, and language that aids communication and mutual understanding in inter-religious relationship (Konigsburg, 102). Christian-Muslim inter-religious relationship in the context of quantum entanglement addresses exclusion, discrimination and the destructive effect of violent crisis. It encourages contributory participation in fighting common enemy and building a peaceful pluralistic society. As Konigsburg (136) argued, the relational role of quantum entanglement reveals a model of interconnectedness for overcoming adversarial conditions in inter-religious relationship at one hand, at the other hand it represents a paradigm of unity with the consciousness of particularity. The use of quantum entanglement theory in Christian-Muslim inter-religious cooperation would strengthen and secure the coexistence of the religious groups. As such, the transformative model for cooperation and functional relationship among religious groups would thus be referred to as ‘inter-religious entanglement’. Inter-religious entanglement will promote the co-existence of Christians and Muslims who live with the conscious of their uniqueness, and the conviction that their co-existence produces energy for achieving common goal. In such a state of relationship, the religious groups need to secure and guard against any form of fundamentalism or extremism that may arise in opposition to the mutual co-existence. This can be done by promoting discussion from both inter- and intra-religious group on areas of religious convergence and being tolerant with the areas of divergence as the beauty of diversity in a pluralistic society.

The model of ‘Wasatia¹²’ as discussed in work of Tuduks (2021) “Decoloniality and Inter-religious Transformation among Christians and Muslims

¹²The Word ‘Wasatia’ was conceptualized by Mohammed Dajani in the context of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and became the founder of ‘Wasatia Movement’. The Term comes from Arabic ‘wasat’ which means ‘middle of the road’ or ‘centre of the circle’ which denote a balance of extremes for example between high and low, rich and poor, empty and full, courage and cowardice (Dajani, 1)..

in Northern Nigeria: A Practical Theological Approach” was argued as being capable of securing Christian-Muslim relationship. Wasatia regulates and control relationship thus embodying moderation, centrism, justice, balance, and fairness (Dajani, 1). For the English equivalent of ‘Wasatia’ Dajani use the term ‘moderation’ that reveals its meaning in the Qur'an as justice and goodness. He stresses on the avoidance of extremes and rejection of any form of radicalism; indicating that ‘Wasatia’ is an imbedded concept in Islam that has been neglected and argues the return of its popularity again. In reconsidering the model, we strongly argue for a radical application of ‘calling a spade a spade’ in inter-religious relationship against the scheme of religious solidarity in the context of perpetration. It’s becoming hard to condemn a perpetration committed by a member of one’s religious group in the country. Most often the efforts of perpetrators are celebrated in the name of religious solidarity rather than been condemned. It is important for a wrong to be condemned regardless of who or which group the person is coming from. A wrong doer can come from any religious group. Da’awahInstitute of Nigeria (DIN, 25) affirms this assertion by recounting that the Qur’an (3:113; 3:75; 2:8-9) and Sunnah make it clear that not all non-Muslims are bad people, just as not all Muslims are good people. Christians and Muslims in their religious groups should endeavor to confront any uncomfortable communication against each other by condemning the wrong. The condemnation will follow the process of dialogue from the intra-religious perspective. However, it is imperative that the concept of dialogue be reconsidered for successful application.

Reconsidering Dialogue

Dialogue has been argued by many scholars¹³ as a tool capable of addressing the challenges of inter-religious relationship in Nigeria. However, the concern is on who the participants of the dialogue are, and the principle behind their engagement in the practice of dialogue whether the usage is an end to itself or a process. Indeed, in the context of Christian-Muslim co-existence in Nigeria dialogue is crucial with or without crisis. The unfortunate thing is that dialogue is most often discussed in the event or aftermath of crisis. Dialogue is useful for prevention and cure. However, as the common proverb says “prevention is better

¹³ For example, Ayoub (2007), Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (2010), Gwamna (2010), Neufeldt, (2011), Bakker (2014), Ugbor (2015), Tuduks (2017), Vila et al. (2020), Andrabi (2020).

than cure¹⁴” the use of dialogue in the absence of crisis has the capacity to prevent its occurrence. Thus, the research argues that the practice of inter-religious dialogue is more feasible and effective when considered as a preventive measure than curative.

To further explain how the dialogue as prevention works and the lesson utilized, Tuduks (119) in his work present a framework designed to facilitate functional inter-religious relationship between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. The framework reveals three important groups among the two religious adherents. The first one is the ‘religious group’ for example, Christians who are members of one religious denomination only or Muslims who are members of one religious sect only. The second is the ‘inter-religious group’ where Christians and Muslims (or more religious groups) meet to interact together. The third one is the ‘intra-religious group’ where a particular religious group, for example Christians who are divided by doctrinal or denominational differences come together to interact.

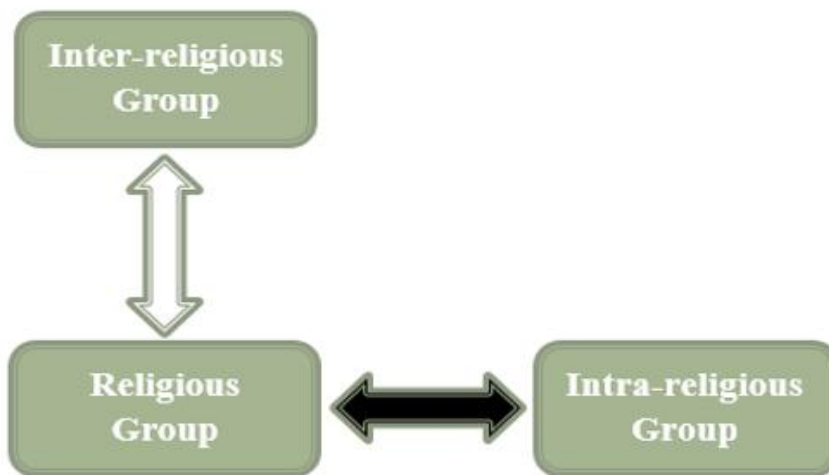


Diagram 1: Framework of Christian-Muslim functional relationship

The framework describes the significance and the operations among the three groups in the context of dialogue and co-existence. A ‘religious group’ ought to exist with the awareness and tolerance of the other so that when the two meets

¹⁴This is in contrast to a practice among our Christian faith adherents where during church wedding service, Bible gift is presented with a message that it should be used when faced by any form of challenge. In other words, the Bible should be used as medication when sick or ill not as prevention! Theologically, the Bible (and of course the Quran) is both preventive and curative.

in dialogue lessons learned are brought home and disseminated among the adherents faithfully¹⁵. Similarly, the 'religious group' has a role to play when met with members of other sects or denominations (in intra-religious group) to reconsider the lessons of the inter-religious dialogue. On the one hand, while inter-religious concerns are to be supported and encouraged in an intra-religious setting, on the other hand, an unsound theology that is anti-inter-religious dialogue should be debunked and the proponent engaged theologically.

The framework is supported by the Kritzinger's model of inter-religious cooperation for transformation. The model suggests three ways of understanding and practicing inter-religious cooperation through "face-to-face relationship", "shoulder-to-shoulder relationship" and "back-to-back relationship" (Kritzinger, 9). Face-to-face relationship is explained in the context of dialogue that allows for deeper understanding of each other's religious knowledge. Shoulder-to-shoulder relationship is discussed in two dimensions. While in the event of a religious celebration, other group(s) can join in solidarity but in a way that is not theologically awkward. On the other hand, the religious groups can work together in fighting against the common enemies confronting them socially, economically, politically, and religiously in their communities. About back-to-back relationship, Kritzinger reveals that it is displayed when the religious adherents are not together. For example, Christians are in the church and the Muslims in the Mosque. However, while being away from each other, they still holdfast the trust that they developed together. The Kritzinger's model is conscious of the challenges surrounding face-to-face and back-to-back relationships of the tendency of being hypocritical at the face-to-face relationship and being real at back-to-back relationship. Thus the rhetorical questions, what does religious groups discuss about one another in the back-to-back relationship? Are the things discussed at the face-to-face relationship disseminated faithfully at the back-to-back relationship?

The inter-religious consciousness of Jesus Christ and Prophet Mohammad (SAW) were discussed and argued as model for Christians and Muslims today (Tuduks, 117). From the Christian perspective, when the Jews were perceiving members of other religious groups particularly the Samaritans with stigmatization, Jesus condemns the mind-set. The way Jesus condemned the attitudes of the Jews in stigmatizing the Samaritans will never be different today if the Christians do the same to the Muslims for whatever reason. Similarly, Prophet Mohammad

¹⁵ The word 'faithfully' is used to refer to the state of honesty and sincerity of an adherent.

(SAW) was conscious of the Jews and Christians of his time. He addressed them with their religious names or together including the Islam as *ahl al-kitab* which means people of the book as distinct religious groups Abrahamicly (Qur'an, 3:64). However, with the religious abuse of one another's name, if Prophet Mohammad (SAW) and Jesus Christ were physically present today, we are sure they will not be comfortable the way some Christians and Muslims address each other. For example, some Muslim clerics and adherents address Christians as 'Arna' a Hausa word that means pagans with its singular form as 'arne'. The term 'arne' (singular) in addressing a Christian is sometimes used interchangeably with 'Kafir' (Arabic) which means an infidel. The address of Christians as 'Arna' or 'Kafirai' (plural) is in contrast to the 'al-nasara' (addressed to Christians) which was not only used in the time of Prophet Mohammad (SAW) but is Qur'anic (5:82)¹⁶. The use of 'Arna' and or 'Kafirai' also contradicts the messages of the Prophet Mohammad (SAW). For example:

- An amity was revealed between Prophet Mohammad (SAW) and a Christian monk, Waraqa Ibn Nawfal who enjoyed interaction and counsel (Sodiq, 647).
- During the early period of persecution in Mecca, Prophet Mohammad (SAW) exercised confidence and trust where he sent out his followers to the security and protection of a Christian king in Abyssinia (Ethiopia), who welcomed and hosted them (Sodiq, 647). Certainly, the Prophet would never send his followers to the care of 'Arne' or 'Kafir'.
- A top Christian delegation from Najran visited Prophet Mohammad (SAW) in Medina and were hosted for three days engaging in dialogue. The remarkable results are superb and quite inspiring to Christian-Muslim relationship today (Muir, 458; Acar, 3): First, during the interaction session, when it was time for Christians to pray they were allowed to use the mosque. Second, the interaction ended with a strong treaty¹⁷ between the Christians and the Muslims and it was to be

¹⁶ "...and nearest among them in love to the believers will thou find those who say 'we are Christians'. Because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant". In a commentary on the statement "those who say, 'we are Christians'." Ali (268) asserts that they did not merely call themselves Christians, but they were truly and sincerely Christians, for they respect and appreciate the Muslim virtues.

¹⁷ The treaty was written by the Prophet, witnessed and signed, pledging security to the Christians for their religion, places of worship, and religious leaders (Muir, 458). The written pledge was

safeguarded, respected, and sustained to generations ahead. Thirdly, the dialogue ended in good understanding and they parted with respect for each other's theological beliefs.

Consequently, such period of cordiality was later affected by the crusades which included series of religious wars. According to Noll (139), the crusades movement began in 1095 when Pope Urban II (1088-1099) proclaimed to a sort of revival meeting in Clermont, France, that "God wills" the rescue of the Holy Land from Islam. Gada (2) states that the first crusade was the only successful war, among the nine crusades, by the Franks against the Muslims in the Levant that had resulted in the establishment of four Latin Christian Crusade states in the East. The crusades had a very negative impact on the relations of the two religions – Christianity and Islam sabotaging the inter-religious dialogue between the two groups (Wani, 43). However, it is important to go back to the initial, the inter-religious consciousness of the Prophet Mohammad (SAW) and Jesus Christ to be respected and upheld in practice by the adherents of the two religions. The practice of the interaction and dialogue will bring about learning and appreciation of the uniqueness of each religion and lessons learned should be extended to the intra-religious groups¹⁸ to motivate tolerance.

Conclusion

An empirical research was conducted in 2019 on the state of Christian-Muslim relationship in Northern Nigeria and the result was published by Stellenbosch Theological Journal in 2020. The empirical research was designed on

captioned 'The Covenant of the Prophet Mohammad (SAW) with the Christians of Najran'. The Prophet further noted that the Christians merit the covenant of love and protection from the Muslims, and warned against the violation of the treaty among his followers and obliging them to do the five things as stated in the covenant: 'respect it', 'defend it', 'conserve it', 'protect it', and 'live up to it'. In his warning, the Prophet reiterated that the treaty is biding upon the Muslims who will come after him, and the covenant is not exclusive to the Najran Christians as he said, "To Sayyid Ibn Harith ibn Ka'b, his co-religionists, and all those who profess the Christian religion, be they in East or West, in close regions or faraway regions, be they Arabs or foreigners, known or unknown". In concluding the treaty, the prophet also warned Christians never to keep enemies against the Muslims. See 'the Covenant of the Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of Najran [By the Prophet Muhammad]' Translated by John Andrew Morrow in 2013 available at <http://covenantsinitiative.com/>

¹⁸For details of the inter-religious consciousness of Jesus Christ and Prophet Mohammad (SAW) see the work of Tuduks, O.D 2021 "Decoloniality and Inter-religious Transformation among Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria: A Practical Theological Approach" Pg. 116-118.

four units of evaluation: (1) Investigation of the challenges, (2) Description of the extent and effects of the challenges, (3) Evaluation of the role of religious leaders in addressing the challenges, and (4) Suggestion for means of intervention towards addressing the challenges. This study reflects on the results and reconsiders the theories, frameworks, and models for addressing the challenges among the religious groups. A framework for Christian-Muslim inter-religious relationship propounded by OD Tuduks published with International Academy of Practical Theology was used. The framework was built on three groups: 'religious group', 'intra-religious group', and 'inter-religious group' reckoned to be acutely crucial for Christian-Muslim functional relationship in their co-existence. The models of Kritzinger of 'face-to-face', 'back-to-back', and 'shoulder-to-shoulder' and that of Dajani of 'wasatia', and the metaphor of quantum entanglement were explored in motivating the framework. A radical application of 'calling a spade a spade' in dialogue in religious, intra-religious, and inter-religious relationships stood out for recommendation towards more functional Christian-Muslim co-existence.

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