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RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

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NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

MODULE 1. AN OVERVIEW OF RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
UNIT 1:   THE MEANING OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS
**   DIALOGUE**
        CONTENTS

1.0   **INTRODUCTION**

Practitioners of religions are no longer long distanced from another. With reference to the Nigerian situation, Muslims, Christians and African Traditionalists have crossed geographical and cultural boundaries to meet and live among one another. Churches, Mosques and Shrines are found all over the country. Today, adherents of the three religions are next door neighbours who are often cordial friends. However, they have different interests that may sometimes lead to conflict. Therefore there is need for adherents of these religions to embrace dialogue in resolving their differences for peaceful co-existence and harmonious living.

2.0   **OBJECTIVES**
        At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
- state the meaning of religion
- identify the three religions in Nigeria.
- state the meaning of religious dialogue.
- list the reasons for religious dialogue.

3.0   **MAIN BODY**

3.1.0   **What is religion?**

It is very difficult to define religion because there is no generally accepted definition of religion among scholars. The study of religion also involves many religious

traditions and perspectives like sociological, historical, philosophical, theological, phenomenological and comparative approaches. The science of religion which uses empirical and scientific methods also make it difficult to have a generally acceptable definition of religion. However, we shall consider some definitions of religion by scholars to help us have a basic idea of what religion is.

3.1.1 Definitions

Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices related to the sacred things based on Emil Durkhem's division of the world into the sacred and the profane (Durkheim, 1961). The sacred are the items or things that are considered to be holy, while the profane are items that are not holy and are treated with disrespect. So, Durkheim's division of the world into the sacred and the profane is also refers to as the religious and secular.

Durkheim's definition of religion is from the functionalist perspective which examines religion in terms of society's needs. Therefore, the emphasis of Durkheim in his definition of religion is based on the study of the Australian Aborigines' religion which he called totemism. He also believes that religion reinforces the collective conscience and also strengthens the values and moral beliefs that form the basis of social life. This implies that if people have the right attitude and respect towards the sacred, they will applied the same attitude to social duties and obligations. So, they will worship the sacred as well as the society.

The ideas in Durkheim's definition of religion are still influential today, although they have been criticized by other scholars (Holman and Haralambos 2004:407):

i. Critics have argued that Durkheim studied only a small number of Aboriginal groups, which were somewhat untypical of other Aboriginal tribes. It may therefore be misleading to generalize about Aboriginal beliefs from this sample, never mind generalizing about religion as a whole.

ii. Most Sociologists believe that Durkheim has overstated his case. While agreeing that religion is important for promoting social solidarity and reinforcing social values, they would not support his view that religion is the worship of the society.

iii. Durkheim has also overstated the degree to which the collective conscience permeates and shapes the behaviour of individuals. Indeed religious beliefs sometimes can be at odds with and override societal values.

The fact that our moral sense might make us go against the majority, the society, or authority shows that we are not quite so dependent upon or creatures of society as Durkheim claims. The society as powerful as it is does not have the primacy that Durkheim believes it has. Ironically, it often seems to be the case that religious beliefs can have a much greater influence upon and hold over the individual than society does, since it is often out of religious convictions that individuals will fly in the face of society or attempt to withdraw from it as in the case of many sectarian movement (Hamilton, 1995).

According to Karl Marx (1963), "religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world and the soul of soulless condition. It is the opium of the people." In Marx opinion, religion acts as an opiate to dull the pain produced by oppression. It is both an expression of real suffering and a protest

against suffering, but it does little to solve the problem because it helps to make life more bearable and therefore diutes demand for change. As such, religion merely stupefies it adherents rather than bringing them true satisfaction and fulfilment.

From a Marxist perspective, religion can dull the pain of oppression in the following ways:

i. It promises a paradise of eternal bliss in life after death. For example, the Christian vision of heaven can make life on earth more bearable by giving people something to look forward to.

ii. Some religions make virtue of suffering produced by oppression. In particular, those who bear the deprivations of poverty with dignity and humility will be rewarded for their virtue. Religion thus makes poverty more tolerable by offering a reward for suffering and promising compensation for injustice in the afterlife.

iii. Religion can offer the hope of super natural intervention to solve problems on earth.

iv. Religion often justifies the social order and a person's position within it.

From Marxist viewpoint, religion does not simply cushion the effects of oppression; it is also an instrument of that oppression. It acts as a mechanism of social control, maintaining the existing system of exploitation and reinforcing class relationships. Put simply, it keeps people in their place by making unsatisfactory lives bearable and it also discourage people from attempting to change their situation.

Marxist definition of religion is criticised because religion does not always legitimate power; it is simply a justification of privilege and it can sometimes provide an impetus for change. Marx's view of religion as the "opium of the people" may have been too narrow, for religion can be involved in social conflict in other ways as well – including ways that challenge the status quo. This is so because communities or even societies that are hostile to one another often use religion as an ideological weapon, emphasizing differences in faith in order to justify conflict.

Sigmund Freud was a Psychologist and (1856-1939) defined religion as an illusion. By illusion Freud means a belief that people want very much to be true. Freud attempted to explain why religion persists in spite of the lack of evidence for its tenets. Freud asserted that religion is a largely unconscious neurotic response to repression. By repression, Freud meant that the civilised society demands that we cannot fulfil all our desires immediately, but that they have to be repressed. Rational arguments to a person holding a religious conviction will not change the neurotic response of that person. This in contrast with Tylor who saw religion as rational and conscious, though primitive and mistaken attempts to explain the natural world.

Freud's view on religion was embedded in his larger theory of psychoanalysis. Apart from theorising, Freud's theories were developed by studying patients who were left free to talk while lying on a sofa (a long comfortable seat with a back and arms).

Freud's psychoanalysis has been assessed as non-scientific. Though his attempt to the historical origins of religions have not been accepted, his generalised view that all religions originate from unfulfilled psychological needs are still seen as offering a credible explanation to some cases.

Edward Tylor was an anthropologist and (1832 – 1917) defined religion as "animism" which is the belief that spirits dwell within people and objects. He believed that religious thought originated in primitive people through their

experience of death and dreams. They experienced the loss of a member of their tribe of family and then experienced that the person came back again through dreams or remembrance. So the idea arose that the spirit (anima) or soul of the person had left the mortal body and now existed in another form. As people began to worship the more powerful of these spirits religion was born. Tylor however did not fix any rigid structure of this evolution, but offered the postulate that a belief in animism may have led to more generalised deities and finally the worship of a single god.

Tylor's definition of religion has been criticised as one sided for focusing on mere intellectual aspect of religions, while neglecting social aspect of religion among others. More so, Tylor's view that societies' views and practices grow more evolved over time in a uniform way has been criticised as unverifiable and contradicted by data available from anthropological studies.

For Mbiti J. (1975:11), "religion can be seen in five parts and no part by itself constitutes the entire meaning of religion. All parts must be seen as working together to give us a complete picture. These parts include beliefs in the existence of the supernatural being, practices, ceremonies and festivals, religious objects and places, values and morals and religious officials and leaders."

Idowu E.B (1973:75) says, religion results from man's spontaneous awareness of, and spontaneous reaction to, his immediate awareness of a Living Power, "Wholly Other" and infinitely greater than himself; a Power of mystery because unseen, yet a present and urgent reality, seeking to bring men into communion with Himself. This awareness includes that of something   reaching out from the depths of man's being for close communion with, and vital relationship to, this Power as a source of real life.

Gbenda J. (2006:2) "defines religion as man's experience, awareness, attitude, recognition, conception and understanding of the existence of the supernatural or multiplicity of spiritual beings and his relationship or interaction with them".

From these sampled definitions of religion, we could see that it is not easy to come up with a single definition of religion that would be acceptable by scholars as earlier mentioned. However from these definitions, we can define religion as beliefs and practices based on divine revelation from the Supernatural Being (God) regarding a relationship that makes man's condition safer and better in his community or environment.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE 1

3.2.0   **MAJOR RELIGIONS IN NIGERIA**

There are three major religions in Nigeria which include African Religion, Christianity and Islam.

3.2.1 **AFRICAN RELIGION**

African religion is an indigenous system of beliefs and practices evolved from the culture and world views of the African people. According to Mwakabana (1997:21), "African Religion is diverse in its local manifestations, but has common basic elements which testify to its unity regionally and at the continental level''. Idowu

(1973:139) also confirmed that African Religion have five component elements that are common. These are belief in God, belief in the divinities, belief in spirits, belief in ancestors and the practice ma gic and medicine. Mbiti (1975:11) also accept that African religious beliefs are concerned with topics such as God, spirits, human life, magic, the hereafter and so on.

So, we shall consider the founder, scripture, place of worship and structure of African religion based on the common component elements.

Founder
Some of the world religions like Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism etc. have founders who started them, but this is not the case with African Religion. It has originated slowly through many centuries, as Africans responded to the situation of their life and experience. Religious ideas and practices arose and took shape in the process of man's search for solutions to problems confronting him in order to make human life safer and better. According to John S. Mbiti (1981:151), "Just as there were no founders of African Religion, they have been no reformers, preachers or missionaries to change it, improve it or take it overseas to other continents." Changes that have affected African religion are simply the historical changes that have affected the people concerned in a given community.

The Scripture of African Religion.
African Religion has no scripture or holy books like other world religions. The teachings of African Religion are written in the histor y, the hearts and experiences of the people. Since African Religion has no documented scriptures, the teachings and practices are passed on from generation to generation through oral tradition and customs.

Place of worship for African Religion.
Adherents of African religion conduct their worship anywhere as the situation or occasion d emands, but special occasions and ceremonies are held in the shrine which is a sacred place of worship for African Religion. Mbiti (1981:15) says, "Some shrines belong to a family, such as those connected with departed members of the family or their graves. Others belong to the community and these are often in graves, rocks, caves, hills, mountains, under trees and similar places." Africans respect such places and in some societies no bird or animal may be killed if it is hiding in such places. Apart from the shrines, Africans also conduct their worship anywhere in the compound since it is not so formalised.

A. **The Structure of African Traditional Religion.**

1. **Belief in God.**

All Africans believe in God and they take this belief for granted. It is at the centre of African Religion and dominates all its other beliefs. But exactly how this belief is originated, we do not know. We only know that it is a very ancient belief in African religious life. This belief may be as a result of Africans' reflection on the

universe, the forces of nature and their limited powers and knowledge about their environment (Mbiti 1975:45).

God is real to the Africans and that is why each people or tribe has a local name for God. Invariably there are other names besides the principal name. God's principal name may be the generic name for deity in general; in which case, there is a qualifying suffix or qualifying word to distinguish between the Supreme Deity and the divinities; and then the generic name plus the suffix or qualifying word belong uniquely to God. For example, the Igbo name Chukwu illustrates the name of Diety which adds a suffix to the generic name deity in general; it is made up of Chi; and ukwu, Chi meaning Source – Being or Spirit, and u kwu meaning great, immense or un-dimensional; while the Efik name Abasi Ibom illustrate (Abasi = God; while Ibom = above) God who is in above (Idowu 1973:149). There are also cases where emphatically, the name for the Supreme Deity is uniquely his, and no part of it is shared by any other being. For example, the Yoruba name, Olodumare and Tiv name, Aondo are illustrations of names which are unique for God or Deity.

Since all Africans belief in the existence of God, every tribe in Africa have a name for God and names which described him. Many of the names have meanings, showing us what people think about him. The personal names for God are ancient and here are some examples of names for God.

Country	Some African Names for God
Angola	Kaluga, Nzambi, Suku.
Ghana	Bore-Bore, Dzemawon, Mawu.
Kenya	Akuj, Asis, Mulungu, Mungu.
Nigeria	Olodumare, Aondo, Chukwu.
Sierra Leone	Leve, Meketa, Ngewo, Yatta.

African ideas about God can be grouped into four general categories. These are what God does, human pictures of God, the nature of God and people's relationship with God (Mbiti, 1975:49).

i.   **What God Does?**
Africans believe that God does many things in the universe among which include:
a.   **God is the Creator of All Things.**
First and foremost God is said to be the creator of all things. This belief is common everywhere in Africa. For that reason there are many names which describe him as creator, creator of all things, Moulder, Begetter, Bearer, Maker, Potter, Fashioner, Carpenter, Originator and Constructor. Africans also have different myths concerning God's creation.

b. **God sustains his creation.**
God also sustains or keeps and uphold the things he has created. This means that he looks after the un iverse, cares for it and keeps it together, so that it does no t fall apart or disintegrate. As a result of this belief, people speak of God as the Keeper, Upholder, Protector, Preserver, Guardian, Caretaker, Pastor and Saviour. For that

reason they feel that the world and the universe have no end and will never end, because God keeps them and s

individual are born and die, human life has no ending since God is its Protector and Preserver.

c.   **God provides for what he has created**.

God provides for what he has created. This activity of God is commonly called Providence. It shows the goodness of God towards the whole universe. He provides life, sunshine, rain, water, good h ealth, the fertility of people and animals and plants, food and protection. For that reason, Africans call him the Giver of things, Water Giver, Healer, Helper, Guard, and Source. They believe that God only gives good things. All African peoples pray, therefore, asking God to give them what they need and come their rescue, because they believe that God provides.

d.   **God rules over the universe**

God rules over the universe. In this aspect he has names like King, Governor, Ruler, Chief, Master, Lord, Judge and Distributor. In their prayers people acknowledge God to be the ruler and Governor of the universe. The idea of God as King is commonly found among African people who have or had traditional ru lers. For them God rules the universe just a chief or king ruled their country. To speak of God as the ruler of the universe means that there is no spot which is not under his control, nothing can successfully rebel against him or run away from him. Africans also believe that God rules in justice and he is referred to as the Judge. Africans say that he judges justly, rescues the oppressed and punishes the wrongdoer.

ii. **Human images of God**

Since God is considered to do the things we mentioned in the previous section, and since many of these activities are similar to those carried out by human beings, it is helpful to the imagination for people to picture God as if he has human characteristics. Such mental images are aids to African understanding of God.

Almost everything that people say about God is in the end a human picture or image, since they have to use human language and language is made up of images and concepts. The names which describe God as Maker, Potter, Architect, Giver, Protector, King, Pastor, Judge and so on carry human images which are transferred to God in order to clarify certain ideas about him. In addition there are other images, which we can mention here briefly (Mbiti, 1975:53)

(a)   **God as Father, Mother or Parent**

A number of African people look upon God as father and themselves as his children. This image gives the idea of a family. It shows a chose relationship between people and God. It implies that God has not only 'begotten' or made the people, but is also their protector, provider and keeper. In few African so cieties, God is also regarded as the mother of people. The idea is found in the societies whose social organisation is centred on the home and position o f the mother. The point in both images is that God is the parent and the people are his children.

(b) **God as friend**

In some places, God is called Friend. This is an image which shows great confidence in God. People feel at home with him, believing that he is trustworthy, faithful, close to them and ready to help them just as a true human friend would do. Because he is their Friend, they can speak to him or with him as freely as they wish. They know that he is always there for them.

(c) **Images of bodily parts of God**

Another human image has to do with bodily parts attributed to God. People say God sees, hears, smells, taste. Others say that he has ears, eyes, or wings. The sky, sun and moon are taken to be the eyes of God, that is, they symbolise God's ability to see. This description of God in human form is referred to as anthropomorphism.

(d) **Images of activities of God**

There are other human activities said in different parts of Africa to be carried out by God. They includ e eating, sleeping, playing, walking, rejoicing, getting angry, speaking, thinking and remembering. All these are metaphorical ways of explainin g how God is thought of in human terms, even though people do not mean to say that he literally does all those things or that he is a human being. By using such words Africans are able to feel closer to him than would otherwise be the case.

iii**.   The Nature of God**

Africans agreed that nobod y has seen God, so nobod y can describe him, yet, through their religious insight, they have formulated certain ideas about the nature of God. These ideas concern his real being, that which differentiates him from the things he has made (Mbiti, 1975:55).

(a)   **Good is good.**

In many parts of Africa, God is described as being good. He is not only the Maker of all things, but he is good towards all people and all things. People reach this conclusion from observing what he gives them, and how readily he may be approached. Different groups in Africa have diverse ways of expressing the goodness of God. He never gets tired of doing well, for he is the fountain of goodness.

(b)   **God is merciful**

 Africans also believe that God is merciful and kind. Therefore people call him, the God of pity, the Merciful One, the Kind One, and the God of mercy. Africans recognize that God is the source o f all mercy and kindness. Therefore, people expect others to show kindness and mercy towards one another, and these qualities are highly appreciated in African societies. They come ultimately from God, even if people may not always show them in their behaviour towards one another.

 (c) **God is holy**

God is thought to be holy and pure. He cannot and does not do anything wrong or evil. He has no fault or failure Because God is thought to be holy and without blemish, people everywhere are careful in making sacrifices to him. They conduct themselves properly, with reverence, fear, respect and honour towards him. Often the animals which are sacrificed are to be of only one colour; white, black, brown or red. This is a symbolic way of saying that since God is pure and holy, he should be given holy or clean animals. Those who lead others in the rituals and ceremonies directed to God have to be men or women of integrity who has not committed murder or theft or adultery or anything evil in the sight of their community.

(d)   **God is all powerful**
Africans believe that God is all-powerful and almighty. This belief comes out in many ways and expressions. People say that God can do all things, or that there is nothing which God cannot do. But it must be remembered that he can do what is good and what is consistent with his own nature. Since God crated all things and governs all things, he must therefore be mightier and more powerful than all that he has created.

(e)**God is all Knowing**
Another common belief about God among Africans is that he knows all things. There is nothing hidden from him. He is called the Wise One, whose wisdom; knowledge and understanding are without limit. A poetic expression among Africans such as God is the Big Eye and others that God has Long Ears. So, the wisdom and knowledge of God penetrate into and through everything and nothing can be hidden from him.

(f)   **God is Present Everywhere**
God is simultaneously present everywhere in the universe. This belief is expressed in various ways among Africans. The sky is taken as a metaphor for speaking about God's presence everywhere. Africans consider the sky as the presence of God and this is why no one runs away from his presence. It is also because of this belief that people pray everywhere and at anytime, when and where the need arises. Sometimes if a person harms someone else and hides, people say that no matter how long he may hide, God sees him and will deal with him accordingly.

(g)   **God Never Changes**
It is believed that God never changes. This belief is expressed by Africans in hymns and names they give to God which point to the fact that he never dies, only men do. This means that his time is beyond reckoning, he does not change. He is not subject to the natural processes of growth, old age, decay or death.

2.   **Belief in the Divinities**
The divinities stand next in relation to God in the hierarchy of powers. They are God's children which were not created, but brought into being, "with regard to the divine ordering of the universe". They are ministers of God with derived powers. Each of them is assigned to a portfolio. Their main function is to act as intermediaries between God and man (Quarcoopone 1987:41)

Divinities are an important feature of African Religion in Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and a few other countries. They and other sky spirits are mainly concerned with matters affecting large communities rather than single individuals. In some places people make sacrifice to the divinities, asking them to help or rely their requests to God. At the same time people may also ignore them and approach God himself (Mbiti 1975:71).

They are largely nature spirits though some are manifestations of divine attributes. They have as their temporary dwelling, objects in nature like rivers, lakes, lagoons, streams, trees, forests, grooves, mountains, hills, etc. God is worshipped through them on daily, weekly and annual basis. They are served by traditional priests and priestesses in temples, shrines and groves.

3. Belief in Spirit Beings

After God and the divinities come the spirit beings. According to African views, the universe is composed of visible and invisible parts. It is commonly believed that besides God and human beings, there are other beings that populate the universe. These are the spirits (Mbiti 1975:70).

We refer to spirits here as those apparitional entities which form separate category of beings from those described as divinities. We distinguish them also from the ancestors since we are dealing with those under a separate sub-heading. Divinities and ancestors come under the general nomenclature of spirits, no doubt. But divinities and ancestors form separate homogenous categories of their own. Divinities and ancestors could be described as 'domesticated spirits' – the ancestors have always been a part of the human family, and divinities are intimately a tutelary part of the personal or community establishments.

But spirits are thought of as powers which are almost abstract, as shades or vapours which take on human shape; they are immaterial and incorporeal beings. They are so constituted that they can assume various dimensions whenever they wish to be seen – they may be abnormally small or abnormally tall, fat or thin. It is believed that especially when they appear beside the natural object which is their residence, they may appear in the form or shape or dimensions of the object (Idowu 1973:173).

Spirits may be good or bad and they have categories by which they can be described. These are ghost spirits, born to die spirits, witch spirits and dwarf spirits. The ghost spirits are those who die accursed death or bad death, which is by hanging, drowning, or bad disease or infectious and incurable disease like leprosy or during pregnancy. Their spirits may wander about aimlessly and haunt places like trees, rivers, water, courses or hills. In certain cases these spirits are believed to enter into animals or birds or snakes in order to destroy or molest people. They are thus generally bad spirits.

Africans also believe in born to die spirits. These are spirits that specialize in the mischief of finding their way into unborn children in women's wombs to be born in order to die, hence the reference to them as born-to-die spirit. The Yoruba name for this spirit is *Abiku* and the Igbo name is *Ogbanje*. The traditional belief is that these spirits form a company and agree to die at certain named dates and times. But there are occasions when through substitutionary sacrifice, the spirit may be made to

break the pact with his spirits companions and remain as a human being on earth. Since they bring misfortune and sorrow to parents especially to those desperately in need of children, the born-to-die spirits are considered bad spirits (Quarcoopome, 1987:43).

The witch spirit is said to possess people mostly old men and women. Those possessed with witch spirits cause havoc to the body and mind through spiritual cannibalism. The operation is one of spirits upon spirits, that is, it is the ethereal bodies of the victims that are attacked, extracted and devoured. A few of them use the witch spirit for benevolence purposes but majority of them engage in anti-social activities, so they are notably bad spirits.

The dwarf spirits are believed to be very tiny and small people who remain invincible but reveal themselves to people of their choice. Sometimes, they help people in distress. Hunters claim that they have received help from dwarfs when lost in the forest. Some traditional medicine men also claim that they were taught the use of certain herbs for curative purposes by such spirits.

4. Belief in Ancestors

Africans believe in the existence of ancestors and also honour them. They are departed spirits who stand in peculiarly close relation to the family or tribe. The life of the living is derived from ancestors or living dead because they are still in existence and in a sense one with the family or tribe. So, their favour or disfavour has a sharply focused relation to it more urgently to be sought or avoided.

Ancestors are the heroes and heroines of the various tribes and they are believed to have acquired extra-human powers in the afterlife and with these powers they are able to intervene in the lives of the living members of the society. They act as intermediaries between God/divinities and men. They are the unseen guests at family and tribal meetings and perform the duties of guardians and policemen of public morality. They may punish those who disobey the norms of the society with diseases, crop failure and so on. At the same time they reward those who conform to the moral and social orders. Such people secure good health, good harvest, etc. Ancestors are venerated and also remembered periodically and at annual festivals when supplications are made to them to ensure procreation, peace and prosperity.

5. Belief in the Practice of Magic and Medicine

In order to cope with uncertainties, Africans practice magic and medicine. Magic by definition, is an attempt on the part of man to tap and control the supernatural resources o f the universe for his own benefit (Idowu 1973: 190). Magical objects like charms, talismans and amulets are used as projection against evil forces like witchcraft and sorcery and to achieve success in life. Some use magic to harm others, either to liquidate them as enemies to gain advantage over them.

Medicine is the art of restoring and preserving health. The purpose of medicine is to help the body to return to its normal state; it is curative, in that it helps the body to return to its normal state; it is preventive, in that it builds up resistance against infection by toning up its organs.

Traditional African Medicine is used for many purposes, one of which is to put things right and to counter the forces of mystical evil. They are therefore, friends of society who are engage in the positive use of mystical forces. These are chiefly the medicine men, herbalists, diviners, mediums, rain-makers, priests and even rulers (Mbiti, 1975:171).

3.2.2 ISLAM

Founder

Islam is a monotheistic religion and it was founded by Muhammad in Arabia. In Arabic, the word 'Islam' means submission to the will of Allah (God). Therefore, followers of Islam are known as Muslims which means to surrender or submit oneself in obedience to Allah. In other words, a Muslim is a person who submits to the will of Allah (Abdul A'la Maududi, 1940:2).

Muhammad preached this religion in Arabia between the years AD 610 and 632. He taught Arabs to believe in the one living God, and live as servants of God. After Muhammad's death, the Arab Muslims carried this religion into Asia and Africa. Today, there are Muslims in very many countries of the world. All Muslims honour Muhammad, whom they call "the Prophet" of Allah (God).

Scripture

The Holy Qur'an is the sacred book or scripture of Islam. Muhammad was given passages of the Qur'an on many different occasions through Angel Gabriel in the form of revelation to recite to his followers. By the end of his life all the passages of the Qur'an that had been revealed to him have been put together to form the sacred scripture for Islam (Hosseni Nasir, 1966:42).

The Qur'an comprises of one hundred and fourteen (114) chapters. Each chapter is called a Surah (Plura – Suwar). Each surah is divided into verses termed ayat (singular – aya). According to Koofi there are 6239 verses (ayat) in the Qur'an; the shami system makes it 6225; the makki system declares 6219; according to madni they number 6211. However, most Islamic scholars' state that the number of verses in the Qur'an is 6247 or 6360 if the opening verse of Bismillah for each surah is included (Masood S, 2000:4).

According to Nasir (1966:50-51), the Qur'an contains essentially three types of message for man.

1.   **It contains a doctrinal message.** This is a set of   doctrines which expound knowledge of the structure of reality and man's position in it. As such, it contains a set of moral and judicial injunctions which is the basis of the Muslims sacred law or Shariah and which concerns the life of man in every detail. It also contains metaphysics about the nature of God and eschatology about man's final end and the hereafter. It contains all teaching necessary for man to know who he is, where he is and where he should be going.

2.   **It is a book of history**. It recounts the story of people, tribes, kings, prophets, and saints over the ages of their trial and tribulations. This message is essentially one couched in historical terms, but addressed the human soul. It depicts in vivid terms the ups and downs, the trials and vicissitudes of the human soul in terms of accounts

of bygone people which were not only true about such and such a people and time, but concern the soul here and now.

3.   **The Qur'an contains power that protects and guides man.** This is why the physical presence of the Qur'an alone carries a great grace or barakah with it, when a Muslim is in difficulty he reads certain verses of the Qur'an which pacify and comfort him. And when he wants something or is in dire need again he turns to appropriate verses from the Qur'an. So, the Qur'an carries a divine power that enables Muslims to solve their problems or meet their needs as they carry it and recite it.

Beliefs (Basic)

Every religion is based or founded on some fundamental beliefs and Islam is not an exception. The basic beliefs or doctrines of Islam include belief in God, belief in angels, belief in prophets, belief in scriptures, the final judgment and divine decree.

1.   **Belief in God (The Shahada)**

The most fundamental and the most important teaching of Prophet Mohammad is faith in the unity of God. This is expressed in the primary *Kalima* of Islam as 'la ilaha illallah'. "There is no deity, but Allah." This beautiful phrase is the bedrock of Islam, its foundation and its essence. It is the expression of this belief which differentiates a true Muslim from a *Kafir* (unbeliever), a *mushrik* (one who associates with God in His divinity), or a *Dahriya* (atheist). The acceptance or denial of the phrase produces difference between man and man. Those who accept it become one single community and those who do not believe in it form the opposite group (Maududi, 1940:87).

The essence of Islam is its witness to the oneness of God (tawhid) or affirmation that there is no god apart from 'Allah' (God). This creed restores to man the dignity that certain religions have denied him by representing him as fallen or existentially wretched. In calling man to exercise these prerogatives given by God, Muslims preaching rehabilitates him and re-establishes him in his integrity, his innocence and his dignity (Jomier, 1991:40).

According to Faruqi (1979:19), "To assert the second half of the confession is to accept Muhammad's revelation as really coming from God. These revelations or sayings constitute the Holy Qur'an, the scripture of Islam." So, all Muslims believe in one God (Allah) who is supreme and eternal, infinite and mighty, merciful and compassionate, creator and provider. This belief in order to be effective requires complete trust and hope in God, submission to His will and reliance on His aid. This is why all Muslims confess (shahada) in their declaration of faith that, "There is no other deity except Allah and Muhammad is his prophet".

2.   **Belief in Angels**

The second doctrine is the belief in angels and their important work as messengers and helpers of God. Muslims belief that most of the angels are good creatures of God except one that is evil and that is Satan or *Iblis* and was cast or sacked out of heaven after he rebelled against God.

Muslims believe that angels have no share in God's divinity; they are under His command and are so obedient that they cannot deviate from His command even to the extent of the slightest fraction of an inch. God deploys them to administer His kingdom, and they carry out His orders exactly and accurately. They have no authority to do anything of their own accord; they cannot present to God any scheme conceived b y themselves, they are not authorized even to intercede with God for any man. To worship them and to solicit their help is degrading and debasing for man (Maududi, 1940:106).

According to Abdul (1971), there are many angels by God to carry out different duties and to help good men and women on earth. The greatest of them and the most famous is *Jibril* (Gabriel who carried God's messages to the prophets. Other important ones are:

(a)   *Mikail* who is said to be in charge of the supply of rain which gives life to mankind, animals and plants on earth.

(b)   *Israfil* who is said to be in charge of the trumpet which he would blow on the Last Day when every creature will rise and appear before God and give account of what he did while alive.

(c)   *Israil* – He is said to be in charge of the souls of all living creatures and takes away when the time comes.

(d)   *Iblis* or Satan. He is among the angels which disobey God and have therefore become accused.

Angels are attached to human beings to help and monitor them and will also preserve and present a comprehensive report of human beings to God on the Day of Judgment.

3.   **Belief in the Scriptures**

The third article of faith in Islam is the belief in the books of God (scriptures) sent down to mankind through His prophets from time to time. God had revealed some of His Books to other prophets before Muhammad and these were sent down in the same way as He sent down the Qur'an to Muhammad.

The number of these revealed books is said to be one hundred and four (104), but four of these are said to be more important than the others. These four are:

(a)   Al-Tawrah – (The Torah or the Pentateuch or five books of Moses) which is given to Moses

(b)   Al-Zabur – (The Psalms) given to David.

(c)   Al-Injil – (The Gospels) given to Jesus.

(d)   Al- Qur'an - (The Koran) given to Muhammad (Abdul, 1971:23).

The histor y concerning these books is t hat, the Books of Abraham are extinct and not traceable in the existing world literature. David's Zabur (Psalms), the Torah and the Injil exist with the Jews and the Christians, but people have changed and interpolated these books, and God's words have been mixed up with texts of their own making. This business of corruption and pollution of the books has been so large and so evident that even the Jews and the Christians admit that they do not posses their

translations, wherein for centures many alterations have been made and are still being made (Maududi, 1940:108).

Muslims believe that the only original text from the books of God (scriptures) in existence today is the Qur'an, but the other three (The al-Torah, al-Zabur and al-Injil) have lost. The ones in use today by Jews and Christians are only translations. Therefore, due to this reason and other secondary reasons, Muslims believe that Qur'an is the only divine Book in existence today and also acknowledge that the other books are divine, but have been corrupted and polluted by human beings.

4. **Belief in the Prophets.**

In order to teach man how to live this life, how to behave towards one another; to friends, enemies, parents and children, and how to give each man his right and dues, God sent a member of prophets. To every nation God had sent a messenger, in order to take them out of darkness to light, to teach them how to live a happy life. But, each prophet was opposed and ill-treated by those people of his own nation who had wealth and power, and who did not like to change their evil ways, and who did not like to give up their injustices and cruelties to the poor people.

According to Abdul (1971:21-22), "These prophets were abused, beaten and driven out or killed by their people. But these prophets went on doing their work and suffered everything patiently until they succeeded in getting a large number of followers around them". These prophets gave the message of God to their followers, taught them how to live and treat other people justly. They further asked them to obey God and fear His punishment for doing evil.

The Islamic tradition put the total number of all the prophets sent different times at 313. We have to positively believe in those of the prophets whose names have been mentioned in the Qur'an. Regarding the rest we are instructed to believe that all prophets sent by God for the guidance of mankind is true. Thus we believe in all the prophets raised on the countries of the world, but we are not in a position to be definite about a particular person outside the list of prophets named in the Qur'an whether or not he was a prophet, for we have not been told anything definite about him (Maududi, 1940:115-116).

The number of these prophets are 313, but 25 of them are more important than the others and these are distinctly mentioned in the Qur'an. (See. 6:84-87; 21:76-95; 69:105; 124:142, 161,177; 37:75,85, 112, 114, 123, 133, 139). The following are names mentioned in the Qur'an. Those in the brackets are the Bible version of those in the Qur'an. (Abdul, 1971:22)

1. Adamu   -   (Adam)
2. Nuha   -   (Noah)
3. Hud   -   (Heber)
4. Salih   -   (Saleh or Methuselah)
5. Lut   -   (Lot)
6. Idris   -   (Enoch)
7. Ibrabim   -   (Abraham)
8. Ismail   -   (Ishmael)

9.	Ishaq	-	(Isaac)
10.	Yusuf	-	(Joseph)
11.	Yaqub	-	(Jaco b)
12.	Shuayb	-	(Jethro)
13.	Musa	-	(Moses)
14.	Dawud	-	(David)
15.	Sulayman	-	(Solomon)
16.	Yunus	-	(Jonah)
17.	Ayyub	-	(Job)
18.	Ilyas	-	(Elijah)
19.	Alyasa	-	(Elijsha)
20.	Dhulkifi	-	(Isaiah or Ezekiel)
21.	Zakariyya	-	(Zacharias)
22.	Yahaya	-	(John the Baptist)
23.	Haruna	-	(Aaron)
24.	Isa	-	(Jesus)
25.	Muhammad	-	(x)

Muslims believe that Muhammad is the last prophet Allah have sent to this world, with the most perfect code (the Holy Qur'an) to come and guide mankind in worshipping Him. So, he who follows Muhammad follows all the prophets, for whatever was good and eternally workable in their teachings has been embodied in his teachings. Whoever resists and refuses to follow Muhammad's teachings and chooses to follow some other prophet, only deprives himself of that vast amount of useful and valuable instruction and guidance which is embodied in Muhammad's teachings, which never existed in the books of the earlier prophets and which was revealed only through the last of the prophets.

5.   Belief in Life after Death

Muslims believe in life after death or resurrection and the Day of Judgment. They believe that resurrection and the Day of Judgment are real. That the life of this world and all that is in it will come to an end on an appointed day. On that day all human beings who had lived in the world since its inception will be restored to life and will be presented to God for Judgment based on their deeds in this world.

God will then weigh everyone's good and bad deeds. Those whose good deeds are greater than their evil deeds will be pardoned of their evil deeds and rewarded with paradise, the abode of peace and happiness. Similarly, those whose bad deeds are greater than their good deeds will receive punishment in hell, the abode of torture and misery, where they will remain for as long as pleases and pardons them. The Qur'an says, "Whoever believes in Allah and the last Day and does good shall be rewarded by Allah (2:62). The belief in the last Day purifies the motives with which a deed is done; it makes a man work selflessly with the fear of God in his heart and as guidance in all his actions towards the attainment of nobler ends.

6.   Jihad (Holy War)

Though the defence of Islam is not one among the articles of faith or pillars of Islam, but its need and importance have been repeatedly emphasized in the Qur'an and the *Hadith* (Maududi, 19740:140). However, other writers on Islam consider it as the sixth pillar of faith. For the purpose of this work Jihad will neither be considered as an article of faith or one among the pillars of Islam, but it will be treated as one of the important practices in Islam as enshrined in the Qur'an (1:2):

On behalf of God fight whoever fights you but do not be the aggressor. Indeed, God does not like aggressors. Kill them when they advance on you and force them out if the places from which they force you …. Fight them until there is no persecution and religion belongs to God, and if they abandoned their ways, there is to be no hostility except against evil doers.

So, holy war is the duty of every Muslim and Islamic community to exert their energies for the spread of Islam. In this regarded every Muslim is a Missionary on behalf of the religion.

Jihad (holy war) is to exert physical and mental energy and wealth for the spread and defence of Islamic faith (Maududi; 1940:141). In the beginning, Muhammad declares holy warfare against pagans and infidels and many Islamic leaders throughout history have declared holy war against their adversaries. It is important to note that holy war is a religious duty for every Muslim.

Jihad is as much a primary duty of the Muslims concerns as are the daily prayers or fasting. One who shirks it is a sinner. His very claim to be a Muslim is doubtful. He is plainly a hypocrite who fails in the test of sincerity.

The Five Pillars of Islam

The five pillars of Islam are the duties every Muslim supposed to perform daily, some weekly, and others monthly or annually or at least once in one's life time. They include the following:

i. **Confession of Faith.**

All Muslims believe in One God (Allah) who is Supreme and Eternal, Infinite and Mighty, Merciful and Compassionate, Creator and Provider. This belief in order to be effective requires complete trust and hope in God, submission to His will and reliance on His aid. This is why all Muslims confessed (Shahada) in their declaration of faith that, "There is no other deity except Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.''

ii. **Prayer**

Prayer is the most conspicuous and constant practice among Muslims. The Islamic prayers are highly formalized and prayers are said only in Arabic language. Muslim prays five times a day. Prayers are either said in individual home or mosque which is a place of worship for Muslims. The official day of worship for the Muslims is Friday. As such, all Muslims meet in the mosque to pray together.

iii. **Fasting.**

Fasting is another pillar of Islam. All Muslims are required to fast in the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. Faithful Muslims are required to abstain from food, drink, and pleasure from sunrise to sunset each day of Ramadan.

However, aged and pregnant women are excused from fasting. At the end of the fasting period, Muslims celebrate to break their fast and obedience to Allah who mandated its observance in the Qur'an.

iv. **Alms Giving.**

Financial giving and religious taxation is another pillar of Islam. All Muslims faithful are required to designate a certain percentage of their income, properties, herds, agricultural produce, and other possessions to give to the less-privileged and Muslim community in praise and obedience to Allah. This financial obligation is called `*zakat'*.

v. **Pilgrimage to Mecca.**

One of the Islamic practices most noticeable to the world is the annual pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The Qur'an requires Muslim faithful to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during one's life time. However, one may be excused if the financial means to do it are not available and if one's health prevents it. The pilgrimage takes about two weeks to perform. At the conclusion each participant kills a sheep to sacrifice to Allah. The holy pilgrimage to Mecca signifies that everyone is equal in terms of spirituality and religious practice.

3.2.3 **CHRISTIANITY**.

Christianity arose out of Judaism and is founded upon the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God, the saviour of mankind and Lord of the world. At the centre of Christianity is Jesus Christ who is the founder. Christians believe that He was born human, but he was also divine. They accept his teaching and follow it. They also believe that by His death He reconciles mankind to God and that by His resurrection He overcomes death and evil, and gives new life to those who trust in him (Brown, 1986:155).

After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Christian Church started with the apostles and others that accepted Jesus Christ as saviour (Acts.2). The Christian Church started as one entity in Jerusalem and spread very fast within a short time to other countries irrespective of persecution faced by the early Christians from the Jews. The Church however, split up into Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches due to administrative and doctrinal matters in 1554 AD. So, the Christian Church is made up the Roman Catholic group and Protestant group which comprise of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Orthodox, Reformed and Pentecostal Churches. (Avis, 2002: xii, 79).

The Sacred Book of Christianity.

The Sacred Book of Christianity is the Bible. The Bible is the revealed word of God written in the Old and New Testaments. Christians believe that God sent His own revelation to the prophets, Jesus Christ and the apostles and with the help of the Holy Spirit they were able to write down this revelation put together as the Bible. The Old Testament contains thirty-nine books and the New Testament contains twenty-seven books which make up a total of sixty-six books.

The Place and Day of Worship.

The place of worship for Christans is called Church and the official day of worship for Christian is Sunday. Christins meet in the church to fellowship, pray, study the Bible, and praise God etc. Although the official day of worship for Christians is Sunday, but they still meet on other days of the week for other Church activities.

Worship services in Christian churches are not the same, but there are some features common to most churches. Singing is shared by both the congregation and the choir. Prayers are offered by both the congregation and the ministers. The focal point in the worship services is the sermon preached by the minister from the Bible. (Braswell 1994:105)

The Basic Teachings of Christianity.

The teachings of Christianity are based on the life and times of Jesus Christ who founded the Christian religion. These teachings are summaries as follow.

i.   **Belief in Trinity**

The word trinity is not directly found in the Bible, though th e idea represented by the word is taught in many places. The word trinity means "tri-unity" or "three-in-oneness." It is used to summarise the teaching of Scripture that God is three persons yet one God (Grudem, 1994:226).

The doctrine of trinity is found both in the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the doctrine of trinity is not so explicit, but several passages suggest or even imply that God exists as more than one person. For instance, according to Genesis 1:26, God said, "Let us make man in our im age, after our likeness." More so in Genesis 3:22, God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil". In Genesis 11:7 God said, "Come let us go down, and there confuse their language". In Isaiah 6:8 God said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" It is important to note that the use of singular and plural pronouns about God suggest many distinct persons in unity.

In the New Testament at Jesus' baptism, the three members of Trinity performed distinct activities. God the Son is being baptised and is then spoken to from heaven by God the Father; and God the Holy Spirit is descending from heaven to rest upon and empower Jesus for his ministry (Matthew 3:16-17). At the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, he tells the disciples that they should go, "and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). So, these two passages and others like 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 4:4-6, 1 Peter 1:2, Jude 20-21 and 1 John 5:7 clearly teach that God is made up three distinct members; Father, Son and Holy Spirit united in one Godhead.

Therefore, Christians believe that these three personal beings are unit ed in the one being and life of the Godhead. They know that in worshipping one they worship all three (Brown, 1986:12). So, Trinity means that God from eternity composed of three personalities, each in constant and having relationship with the other two, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Christians also believed that God the Father created the world and he is also sustaining it, God the Son – Jesus Christ came and saved the world from sin and God Holy Spirit is guiding and strengthening Christians in doing the will of God.

ii.   **Belief in Jesus Christ**

Jesus Christ is a member of Trinity who was fully God and fully man in one person. Jesus' humanity was important to his assignment in this world because it shows that salvation ultimately must come from God as promised that the "seed" of the woman would ultimately destroy the serpent (Genesis 3:15). So, God brought it about by his own power, not through mere human effort. God in his wisdom decided to use humanity to send Jesus into this world to come and save humanity, but without inherited sin like other humans (Grudem, 1994:530).

The deity or divinity of Jesus Christ is as important as his humanity concerning his role as the saviour of the world. Although, the word does not explicitly occur in Scripture, the Church has used the term incarnation to refer to the fact that Jesus was God in human flesh. The incarnation was the act of God the Son whereby he took to himself a human nature. In Jesus' incarnation, the infinite became the finite, the eternal and supra-temporal entered time and became subject to its conditions, the immutable became mutable, the invisible became the visible, the Creator became the created and the sustainer of all became dependent. All is summed up in the proposition; God became man (Murray, 1977:132).

The word 'God' (Theos) is used of Christ in the Bible. Although, the word God is usually reserved in the New Testament for God the Father, nonetheless, there are several passages where it is also used to Jesus Christ. In all these passages the word "God" is used in the strong sense to refer to the one who is the Creator of heaven and earth, the ruler over all. These passages include John 1:1; 1:18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; and 2 Peter 1:1 (Grudem, 1994:543).

Therefore, Christians believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God incarnate who came into this world and was crucified for the sins of mankind. He died and was buried, but resurrected on the third day and his now in heaven. His death and resurrection have brought salvation to whoever accepts him as saviour by faith (John 3:16).

iii.   **Belief in the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is a member of the Trinity and his work is to manifest the active presence of God in the world. From the very beginning of creation we have an indication that the Holy Spirit's work is to complete and sustain what God the Father has planned and what God the Son has begun, for in Genesis 1:2, "the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters". And at Pentecost, with the beginning of the new creation in Christ, it is the Holy Spirit who comes to grant power to the Church (Acts 1:8; 2:4, 17-18).

So, the Holy Spirit actually blesses the children of God through empowerment, purification, revelation, testimony and unity. He is the one that gives life and power to God's children for work of service. He also purifies or cleans or sanctifies the people of God from their sins. The Holy Spirit again reveals the will of God the Father to Prophets, Apostles and other servants of God to pass it across to his people. He too testifies or gives evidence of God's presence among his people and is doing the work of uniting all believers as one body in Christ worldwide. It is

important to note that activities of the Holy Spirit do not just happen automatically among God's people. Rather, the Holy Spirit reflects the pleasure or displeasure of God with the faith and obedience- or unbelief and disobedience – of God's people (Grudem, 1994:635).

Christians believe in the Holy Spirit just as they do to God the Father and God the Son. They believe that the Holy Spirit is the one who guide and establish people in various ministries and vocations. In Acts 13:2 the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them". So, the Holy Spirit is currently working with individuals and the Church to complete the work God planned for this world. This was why Jesus said, "But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative - that is the Holy Spirit-he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I told you" (John 14:26).

iv. **Man in the image of God.**

The most distinctive feature of the biblical understanding of man is the teaching that man has been created in the image of God. According to Ursinus (1852:27), "God created man good, and after his own image, in righteousness and true holiness, that he might rightly know God, his Creator, heartily love him, and live with him in eternal happiness, to glorify him and praise him". What does man in the image of God mean? According to Grudem (1994 :442), "Man in the image of God means man is like God and represents God". When God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26), the meaning is that God plans to make a creature similar to himself.

In that way, man is like God is not specifically and explicitly stated in the creation account, although one may note that certain resemblances to God are applied there. For example, from Genesis 1:26 we may infer that dominion over animals and over all the earth is one aspect of the image of God. In exercising this dominion man is like God, since God has supreme and ultimate dominion over the earth. More so, there is no better way of seeing the image of God than to look at Jesus Christ. What we see and hear in Christ is what God intended for man. Then, if this is so, the love for God and love for man is the best way man resembles God.   (Hoekema, 1986:14).

So, Christians believe that man is made in the image and likeness of God, but he sin against God and was separated from Him. It is as a result of man's sin that Jesus came and restored the lost relationship between God and man through his death and resurrection.

v.   **The Sacrament.**

The word "sacrament" is not found in the Bible. It is derived from the Latin term *sacramentum,* which originally denoted a sum of money deposited by two parties in litigation. After the decision of the court the winner's mone y was returned, while th at of the loser was forfeited. This seems to have been called a *sacramentum,* because it was intended to be a sort of propitiatory offering to the gods. The transition to the Christian use of the term is probably to be sought: (a) in the military use of the term, in which it denoted the oath by which a soldier solemnly pledged obedience to his commander, since in baptism the Christian pledges obedience to his Lord; (b) in the specifically religious sense which it required when the Vulgate (Latin translation of

the Greek Bible or Septuagint) mployed it as a rendering of the Greek *musterion*. It was possible that this Greek tern was applied to the sacraments, because they have a faint resemblance to some of the mysteries of the Greek religions (Berkhof 1932:617).

Based on the above background the word sacrament has been adopted by the Church and it means, "A holy ordinance instituted by the Christ, in which by sensible signs the grace of God in Christ, and the benefits of the covenant of grace, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers, and these, in turn, give expression to their faith and allegiance to God" (Berkhof 1932:617). In the Old Testament there were two Sacraments, namely, Circumcision and Passover (Genesis 17:9-14, Exodus 12:1-14) and in the New Testament Jesus Christ also instituted two Sacraments. These are baptism and Holy Communion (Matthew 28:19, Luke 22:14-20).

It is worthy to note that, the Protestant Churches accept and practice the two sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. The (Roman) Catholic Church however has added five Sacraments to Baptism and Holy Communion and these are: Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme unction (Berkhof, 1932:620).

Baptism is an initiation ceremony portraying the experience one has of God's love and forgiveness. Water is used in baptism to symbolize the washing away of sins by the blood of Jesus Christ. Baptism in Christianity is actually meant for those who have professed their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. This is because baptism, which is a symbol of beginning the Christian life, should only be given to those who have in fact begun the Christian life (Grudem, 1994:971).

There are different modes of baptism which include immersion, sprinkling and pouring. Some Christian denominations like the Baptist only accept baptism by immersion, but the important thing about baptism is not the mode, provided it is administered by an Ordained Minister of the Christian Church for the purpose of purification in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It should be accepted because the Bible simply uses a generic word to denote an action designed to produce a certain effect, namely, cleansing or purification, but nowhere determines the specific mode in which the effect is to be produced (Berkhof, 1932:629).

The Lord's Supper is the ordinance or sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ that is observed repeatedly through out a Christian life time unlike Baptism which is observed once in a Christian's life time. Jesus himself instituted the Holy Communion or Eucharist and also part took of the first one with his disciples and urged them to keep doing it in his remembrance (Luke 22:19-20).

When Christians participate in the Lord's Supper, it symbolises the death of Christ because their actions give a picture of his death and when the bread is broken it symbolises the breaking of Christ's body, and when the cup is poured out it symbolises the pouring out of Christ's blood for us. Participation in the Lord's Supper also nourishes the spiritual lives of believers' just as physical food nourishes our physical bodies. The Holy Communion also brings unity among Christians as they share to gether from (the same) one bread (Grudem, 1994:990). This is wh y Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:17 says, "...Because there is one (the same) bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread".

So, baptised members of the Church who are not under Church discipline partake of the Eucharist as many times as agreed or arranged by a particular denomination since there are variations concerning how often the Lord Supper is celebrated among denominations. The Lord's Supper is administered only by the priests (Reverend Fathers) in the Catholic Church; while in most Protestant Churches Ordained Ministers (Reverend Pastors) administer it with the aid or assistance of Elders, Deacons and other Church leaders.

vi. **The Final (Last)Judgment**

The Bible affirms that there will be a great final judgement of believers and unbelievers. They will stand before the judgement seat of Christ in resurrected bodies and hear his proclamation of their eternal destiny. According to Berkhof (1932:728), "Another one of the important concomitants of the return of Christ is the last judgement, which will be of a general nature. The Lord is coming again for the very purpose of judging the living and the dead and consigning each individual to his eternal destiny".

The doctrine or teaching of a final judgement was from the very earliest times of the Christian era connect ed with that of resurrection of the dead. The Bible teaches that the living as well as the dead would be raised up, in order to be judged according to the deeds done in the body. This judgement is vividly portrayed in John's revelation:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead in it, death and hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. Then death and hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

The Bible also teaches that Jesus Christ will be the Judge at that judgement. In 2 Timothy 4:1 Paul says, "Jesus Christ who is to judge the living and the dead". Peter in Acts 10:42 say, ".....Jesus Christ is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead". So, the right to act as judge over the whole universe is something that the Father has given to the Son. Jesus in his judgement will evaluate individual records and bestow rewards on those found faithful while on earth, but will condemned those found unfaithful to him while on earth (Grudem, 1994:1142).

The final judgement is a very important issue in Christianity, since it is the one to decide one's destiny after here. So, Christians believe that God in His justice and righteousness will bring all human beings, both the living and the dead at the time of judgement before His throne to face the reality of the life they lived in this world and every one will be rewarded and punished accordingly. On that day those that have accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and have separated from their sins will be rewarded, but those that have rejected Him and are living sinful life will be

punished by casting them to hell fire. Therefore, there is need for people to repent of their sins and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

3.3.0 The Meaning and Purpose of Religious Dialogue.

3.3.1. Definition.

Religious dialogue is talk or discussion between two or more religious practitioners over religious issues in order to foster religious understanding among them. Religious dialogue also means openhearted address and responses among persons of different religions to foster acceptance, understanding and tolerance. It does not assume agreement, but it presupposes toleration of opposition. It honours the witness of others while making one's own contribution or observation.

According to Ali H.A Mukti (1973:19), "Dialogue is a process in which individuals and groups learn to wipe out fear and distrust of each other and to develop new relations based on mutual trust." Therefore, dialogue is a dynamic contact not only between one rational view and another, but between life and life. Dialogue is directed towards living together, acting together and building the world anew together.

Similarly, dialogue is also concerned with the exchange of ideas and opinions being an encounter that takes place on equal grounds with mutual confidence, frankness and without ulterior motives (Buana Peter Tanko, 1991:9). Dialogue is also a daring adventure engaged in by people desiring mutual enrichment from their different ways, fellowship in sharing common values and openness to whatever way the Lord might speak to them in the intimacy of their conscience (Maurice Borrmans, 1990:10).

Therefore, religious dialogue is the coming together of different religious practitioners to exchange information and factual knowledge that help them understand each other or one another to discover their differences and similarities so that they can build on their similarities for peaceful co-existence. Religious dialogue is actually a committed fellowship of different religious traditions which lead to a faithful pluralism and does not assume that all religions are the same or have the same goal.

3.3.2 The Purpose of Religious Dialogue
The emergence of a religiously pluralistic world with greatly increase possibilities of inter-faith and multi-faith encounters makes dialogue among people of different faiths extremely important. It would also serve as tool for developing a genuinely free and just society which fosters mutual tolerance and respect groups and individuals with different belief systems.

i   It Promotes Mutual Understanding.
Religious dialogue about faith and cultural differences facilitates mutual understanding. Human history has witnessed many conflicts which are often arisen from ignorance among people of different faith. Many of such conflicts might have been avoided if there had been a greater degree of mutual knowledge and

understanding. Dialogue helps in leading the religions involved to a greater degree of mutual knowledge and understanding of one another. For example, if the religious practitioners in Nigeria are involved in dialogue, they would have understood themselves better and avoided many of the conflicts that have led to wanton destruction of lives and properties.

ii   **It Creates More Understanding about God.**

Religious dialogue provides an opportunity for participants to advance in their knowledge of God and his plan of salvation for all humanity and the responsibility of the followers to the society. Participants in religious dialogue are compel to research for more knowledge about the religions in question and this would enable them discover more information about God and what it requires as His followers and what society expects of them.

iii   **It Leads to Cooperation in Relevant Areas.**

Religious dialogue results in some benefits to all parties involved. A fruitful dialogue among different faiths will form the basis for joint activities with much advantage to all concerned. For example, a successful dialogue among the three religious practitioners in Nigeria may lead to a joint project of helping the poor, the underprivileged, the orphans and the widows which is a common problem to all Nigerians. Religious dialogue actually opens the eyes of those involved to see beyond the parameters of their religions and seek for cooperation with people of other faiths for the development of the society.

iv   **Dialogue Helps in Nation Building.**

Religious dialogue helps in making the society better and helping adherents of the concerned religions to co-exist in peace. It also helps in stabilizing the economic and political situation of a country which can only take place in religious conflict free society. This is because the world is constantly changing and needs directional principles to guide it in the course of such change. When the political and economic structure of a state fails, religious practitioners must together seek God's will and call for His intervention. For example, the economic meltdown that has recently hit the global economy needs the support of all religious practitioners to call on God with one voice to intervene in the situation.

Religious dialogue actually helps the participants in it see how the spiritual resources of the religions can contribute to the solution of some of the common problems faced in the society. Such problems are not just for Muslim or Christian only, but for humanity generally. A given example is the problem of poor leadership in Nigeria which is characterized by corrupt practices and other related offences.

v   **The Demand of the Present Situation.**

At present, there is the increasing mobility of people and mixing of populations, particularly students, traders, migrant workers etc. More so, the efforts of world leaders have given birth to political and economic globalization which to some extent has affected many nations or states positively. So, if followers of various religions will accept to dialogue together and find a common ground to operate and cooperate with one another, it would ensure stability and peace in our society.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
1. What are the basic teachings of Christianity?
2. What is purpose of religious dialogue?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In order to understand the meaning of religious dialogue, it is necessary to know the meaning of religion and learn about the three religions practiced in Nigeria which are Christianity, Islam and African religion. Religious dialogue is very necessary for a country with multiple religions like Nigeria. This is because, it enables the adherents to understand their religions and know about God better for the purpose of peaceful co-existence. It also enhances co-operation on the relevant areas to meet their demands and make the society live better and stable.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit you have learnt the meaning of religion and the three religions being practiced in Nigeria. These are Christianity, Islam and African Religion. You have also learnt the meaning and reasons for religious dialogue. In the next unit you will be introduced to types of religious dialogue and criteria for those to participate in religious dialogue.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT
1. Discuss the basic teachings of Islam.
2. Why is religious dialogue necessary for Nigeria?

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Unit 2: TYPES OF RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND THE CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPANTS.

Contents

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Religious dialogue is very necessary for a pluralistic society like Nigeria for the purpose of peaceful co-existence. Therefore it is important to identify the types of religious dialogue to help the adherents of these religions in Nigeria to know which is which and use them appropriately to achieve the desired result. More so, it is important to note that if the desired result of religious dialogue is to be achieved, the participants must meet certain criteria.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
-        Identify four types of religious dialogue.
-        List the criteria for participants in religious dialogue.

3.0   Main Body.

3.1   **Types of Religious Dialogue**

It is important for adherents of religions in Nigeria and their leaders to know types of dialogue and use them appropriately to achieve the intended result. Tanko (1991) identifies four types of religious dialogue which include: dialogue of life, dialogue of social engagement, dialogue of religious experience and dialogue of specialists.

3.1.1   **The Dialogue of Life**
This is the type of dialogue in which people strive to live in open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, problems and pre-occupations together. It is also a dialogue among ordinary believers, a harmonious and constructive sharing in the situations of daily contacts. This is truly a basic form of dialogue and one which lays the foundation for other more specialized encounter (Pope John Paul II, 1986:148).

In this type of dialogue, people of different religious persuasions live and work together to enrich one another through the faithful practice of the values inherent in their various religions, without the necessity of any formal meeting. A dialogue of this nature can take place especially in the school, hospital and any public place. This type of dialogue is also spontaneous and it creates an atmosphere of deeper understanding, mutual esteem and respect for one another, despite the person's religious convictions. It is worthwhile noting here that this form of dialogue is recommended for all religious practitioners.

In the dialogue of life, the adherents of various religions   should do their best to know about others and invent gestures that favour unity and collaboration. They should work side by side, eat together, support one another, express solidarity in their sufferings and joys etc. In this way, they will appreciate one another and, reduce to minimum the agony of being badly misunderstood. (Borrmans, 1981:18). In the dialogue of life therefore, everything that points to power and prestige should be discarded, while respect and mutual esteem should prevail.

3.1.2   **The Dialogue of Social Engagement (Action).**
This is the type of dialogue where adherents of Christianity collaborate with adherents of other religions for the integral development and liberation of their people. It is also a dialogue that deals with human promotion and the integral liberation of humankind. In this type of dialogue therefore, various believers can cooperate in the carrying out of development projects. For example, practitioners of different religions can embark on a project to help populations suffering from drought, famine or stark poverty and also provide for refugees to promote justice and peace among mankind (Arinze. F 1990:331).

This form and level of religious dialogue is very important in view of the Nigerian situation which is characterised by underdevelopment, injustice, violence and so on. Religious practitioners in Nigeria must be committed to dialogue to achieve mutual understanding, collaboration and strengthen moral values that will promote peace, liberty, social justice and alleviate poverty.

In order to achieve the desired goal of the dialogue of social engagement, Christians and adherents of other religions in Nigeria must make effort to translate the vision of their faith into practice in accordance with the ethical norms of their

religion. This is important because religion makes a special appeal to man's conscience which should be build on truth, justice, freedom and love. Followers of the different religions should engage works of justice, respect for human rights, development, and peace enhanced by common action as far as possible to remedy that unacceptable state of affairs of injustice within the society in which they find themselves.

3.1.3 The Dialogue of Religious Experience

Religious dialogue can also take the form of communication of religious experience. In the dialogue of religious experience persons rooted in their own religious traditions can share their experiences of prayer, contemplation, faith and duty, as well their expressions and ways of searching for the Absolute. This kind of dialogue enhances mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation for promoting and preserving the highest values and spiritual ideals of man. It naturally leads every participant to state the reasons for his own faith to other participants. The differences between the faiths do not prevent this type of dialogue, rather they are referred back in humility and confidence to God who is the Father of humanity (1 John 3:20). In this way Christian has the opportunity of exposing to other religious practitioners the possibility of experimenting in an existential way the value of the Gospel (Dhavamony.M, 1975:251).

This communication of religious experience can be carried out without compromising one's faith. However, it requires sincerity and honesty. It does not and should not admit any form of having a common religion that will be generally acceptable (syncretism) to adherents of different religions. Although dialogue of religious experience sometimes goes beyond the level of words in attempt to meet the spiritual insight of others, the participants may reach out beyond the concepts on which it is carried and expressed to the religious experience itself.

It is therefore worth noting, that dialogue of religious experience is for Christians and followers of other religions who are grounded in their faith who can make effort to enter into the spiritual insights and religious experience of one another. Religious dialogue can only be successful if the followers of the various religions enter dialogue with sincerity.

3.1.4 The Dialogue of Specialists (Theologians).

In this type of dialogue, specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritage and to appropriate one another's spiritual values. This type of dialogue is mostly carried out by religions with a written tradition like Christianity and Islam.

This dialogue is based on the theologies of the different religions and can be called "dialogue at theological level.'' It involves exchange of ideas and information on beliefs and practices of the people of different faiths. It is a dialogue of specialists or experts in their theology. This form of dialogue is aimed at deepening and enriching the various religious heritages of the participants in the dialogue.

In this type of encounter, the participants seek mutual understanding through sincere discussions. They begin to appreciate one another's spiritual values, cultural

heritage and promote communion and fellowship among themselves. Christians through this kind of dialogue can even work for evangelical transformation of cultures.

In religious dialogue, the emphasis is on the people (participants) who are bearing the image of God. So, religious dialogue is not a congress of philosophical ideas or simply a theological symposium. These are only tools to facilitate the mutual understanding of the parties' involved in the dialogue. It should be noted that dialogue is a religious encounter in faith, hope and love. So, one may face challenge of conversion.

Having looked at the types of religious dialogue, you will be introduced to the prerequisite for participating in religious dialogue.

3.2.0 PREREQUISITE FOR PARTICIPATING IN RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE.

Giving the seriousness of Religious Dialogue and the emerging implications, the calibre of people to be involved in dialogue must meet certain criteria. This is specifically applicable to dialogue of religious experience and dialogue of specialists. Therefore, Bidmos M.A (2006:113) identifies certain criteria for prospective dialoguers.

3.2.1 Professional and Academic Qualification

The nature of discussion in formal dialogue sessions demands that the dialoguers are sufficiently informed in theology, philosophy of religion, modern languages of theology especially the ones that have currency in a particular locality. Also needed is a specialized knowledge of religion related matters to allow for a free flow of discussion among the dialoguers. Every participant should also be adequately conversant with the comparative study of religion, with special reference to Islam, Christianity and African Religion. The participants must also be aware and arrive at the common consensus among practitioners of African Religion, Islam and Christianity as well as points of divergence. The participants should be capable of making easy reference to Oral Traditions such as *Ifa* Corpus and proverbs, the Bible and the Qur'an.

3.2.2 Maturity

Religious dialogue cannot be conducted like a primary or secondary school debate or a political campaign in which the ultimate goal of the speaker is to outdo his opponent at all cost with a view to carrying the day. A person who is given to youthful exuberance or he who quickly loses his temper should not participate in religious dialogue. A participant should be patient enough to appreciate the opposite view; he should posses a large heart and the capacity to subdue sentiment in situations where an impatient person would lose focus. He must be mature enough to make a careful selection of language and avoid abusive language. Religious dialogue is the business of the experienced, mature, elderly, physically considerate, mentally

alert and intellectually sound persons. The prospective dialoguers must possess the capacity for mature contributions, through reasoning and the ability to react to situations appropriately. Against this background, age becomes a factor. It is, therefore, obvious that a minor will not be suitable for religious dialogue even though it may not be easy to set an age limit.

3.2.3 **Sincerity**

Sincerity in this context is to a participant himself, to his religion, to the other religions and to the society at large. It should be reiterated at this point, that the aim of religious dialogue is to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony for various religious communities living in the same society. This objective should serve as a guiding principle, which every participant should not only recognize, but also strive to attain. Sincerity comes in when a situation demands some compromise that does not necessarily adversely affect the religious tenet of the participant. In taking a decision on such issues, participants from the other side will require explanation or interpretation of certain tenets from an insider. In such a circumstance, the adherent should be honest enough to give the correct interpretation and not to change his mind in case his correct interpretation is in favour of the compromise demanded of him.

Insincerity to one's faith arises when a participant attempts to change his mind by making some – how- deviant interpretation of the tenets of the faith. It will amount also to insincerity in case an attempt is made to convert fellow participants. There is no harm, of course, if conversion takes place voluntarily: but let it not be pursued intentionally. Religious dialogue is not a forum for the deliberate propagation of one's religion. The principle of live and let live should be paramount in the minds of the participants.

3.2.4   **Experience**

Experience in this context is of two fold. First, it connotes competence and in-depth knowledge derived from the constant practice of one's faith. A dialoguer should draw ideas from his personal experience and gains acquired through acts of devotion and compliance by the tenets of his faith. This is a matter of taste. For example, if Christianity recommends one wife, one husband for members; a Christian dialoguer is expected to have had a taste of the gains of these tenets. He should be able to describe what an adherent stands to gain from a given tenet or what is lost by rejection of the tenet. In the same vein, a prospective dialoguer must be familiar with the culture of a group discussion. An introvert cannot cope with the demands of religious dialogue. A Muslim or Christian or African religion dialoguer must be rich in experience acquired from previous involvements in dialogue related matters. Unless experience in its two connotations is in place, the success of religious dialogue will be in jeopardy.

3.2.5 **Mutual Respect**

Besides not being a forum for seeking converts, religious dialogue should not be seen as an opportunity to insult adherents of other faiths or hurt their feelings. Anything that implies an attack on another group should be avoided. For instance, discussions should not be extended to such areas that form the foundation of the various religions. A Christian participating in the dialogue will not accept subjecting the doctrine of the Holy Trinity to criticism as a participating Muslim will not accept the thinking that his sins have been washed away by the death of one saint or prophet. Also, the sacredness of the Bible is not debatable as far as Christianity is concerned. Likewise followers of African religion will not accept their religion to be described as primitive and fetish.

The purpose of dialogue is not to attack the faith and practices of other religions, but it is to promote peaceful co-existence. So, dialoguers should do their best to respect the faith of others.

4.0   CONCLUSION

It is very helpful for adherents of religions especially dialoguers to know the types of dialogue to enable them use it appropriately to create a good relationship between them and people of other faiths. The criteria for dialoguers considered are also useful in facilitating a fruitful dialogue especially dialogue of experience and dialogue of specialists.

5.0   SUMMARY

You have learnt about four forms of religious dialogue in this unit. These are dialogue of life, the dialogue of social engagement, the dialogue of religious experience and the dialogue of specialists. You have also learnt the criteria necessary for dialoguers if the desired result is to be achieved. These include; professional and academic qualification, maturity, sincerity, experience, and mutual respect. In the next unit you will learn about the place and times of dialogue.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the necessary qualities for prospective dialoguers.

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UNIT 3: THE PLACE AND PLATEFORM FOR DIALOGUE

Contents
1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Body
3.1   The place of Dialogue
3.1.1 The family
3.1.2 School
3.3.3 Office

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Dialogue is not restricted to formal encounters between Christians and Muslims. This is because dialogue includes all aspect of life and can be found in every place where Christians and Muslims live and work together, love, suffer, and d ie. Therefore, in as much as more attention is paid to formal dialogue where professionals are required to participate, but ordinary members of religions still participate in dialogue in different places and levels like the family, school and offices. The organized dialogue meant for professionals is also done under different platforms such as conferences, seminars, workshops, public debates, periodicals and curriculum design.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

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

a.   Identify the places where dialogue takes place.
b.   State the platforms through which dialogue is conducted.

3,0   Main Content

Christians and Muslims find themselves nearly everywhere living togeth er in a world that moves painfully towards unity. Whether deliberatel y or not, they are collaborating for human progress and working together for the well being of all, side by side with many people, believers and unbelievers alike. Therefore, according to Maurice Borrmans (1990:29), dialogue goes on between Christians and Muslims as they live and work together at the level of family, school and other workplaces.

3.1.1   The Family,

First of all, dialogue takes place through family relationship, where Christians and Muslims belong to the same family, either by blood ties or by virtue of an interfaith marriage. Family ties bring people of different faiths together as they forget their differences and relate on common points especially Christians and Muslims. For instance there are some families in Niger ia that the husband is a Muslim and the wife is a Christian and the vice versa.

3.1.2   Schools

When Muslim and Christians study together at whatever level of education, they have an opportunity to undertake a basic practical dialogue to help them co-relate peacefully. Despite their religious differences, Muslims and Christians in school share the same classrooms and hostels and interact by studying together, participating in games together and also hold students union meetings together.

3.1.3 Work Places

Muslims and Christians meet together side by side at their daily toils, sharing the same modern technology. Who can ever say how deep will be the dialogue of two companies at work, or of a nurse with her patient, or even of a government official with staff attached to his or her office. In many places, the struggle against underdevelopment brings Muslim and Christians together for commonly held economic and political principles. For example, in Nigeria it is difficult to differentiate between Muslims and Christians when it comes to matters that concern the welfare workers union. Similarly it is difficult to distinguish between Muslims and Christians and African Traditionalists during electioneering campaign.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE
Citing relevant examples, discuss the place of dialogue.

3.2.0 Platform for Dialogue

Platform in this context are occasions where Christians, Muslims and African Traditionalists come together to dialogue about their faith. It is also a channel whereby the dialoguers of Christianity, African Religion and Islam passed information concerning their activities to the public.

3.2.1 Meetings

Formal meetings are one of the platforms whereby Muslim and Christians come together to dialogue about their faith. These meetings are held at local, state, national and international levels. For instance, in Nigeria, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) meets from time to time with the National Council for Islamic Affairs (NCIA) to dialogue about the faith of their religions in order to co-relate and co-exist peacefully.

3.2.2 Conferences

Conference is another form of formal meeting where delegates from the Islamic, Christian and African religion come together and present well researched papers on a choosing topic of interest in order to foster unity among the two religions. At the end of a conference, the papers presented are collected and edited by a group of editors and put together in a journal circulated for public consumption. Inter-religious conferences are also held at the international, national, state and local levels respectively.

For example, at the international level, Muslims and Christian met in Broumana for a conference on 12-18 July, 1972 with the theme: Christian-Muslim Dialogue (Samartha S.J and Taylor B.J, 1973). In 1998, Muslims and Christians met again at Renison College in Canada for a conference with the theme: Muslim – Christian Dialogue: Promise and Problems (Darrol M. Bryant and Ali S.A ed (1998). Several conferences have also been held at the national level to resolve conflict between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. One of these conferences was held in Jos on 23-28 Sept. 2002 with the theme: Christian-Muslim Mutual Relations. These are just a few examples of the many international, national, state and local conferences that have brought adherents of different religions together to dialogue about their faith.

3.2.3 Seminars

Seminars are other occasions whereby adherents of different religions come together to discuss their religions on a given topic with the aim of finding solutions to problems confronting them. Seminars are indeed conferences of specialists who come together to rob minds through research in order to find solutions to existing problems that would bring about development to liberate their followers from injustice. Seminars are also held at the international, national, state and local levels.

3.2.4 Workshops

Workshop is another occasion that brings together participants of different religions to creatively work on a project that provide solution to an existing problem or initiate a project that will improve the relationship among the followers. In a workshop the participants are challenged to think properly and initiate projects that will enhance solving certain problems or make an improvement in their various communities. Workshops are also organized at the international, national, state and local levels.

3.2.5 Public Debates

Debates are formal discussion on a topic that is opened to argument from two sides; that is, the proposing and opposing sides. In a debate the debaters consider the two sides of the questions pointedly in order to convince the audience to accept their positions. So, scholars of different religions dialogue through public debates on topics that are opened to argument. The aim of inter-religious public debates is not to convert, but to teach from each side about their convictions on some issues like trinity, Sonship of Jesus Christ, Prophet-hood of Muhammad and so on. Public debates are also held at international, national, and local levels. They are sometimes air on the radio and television.

3.2.6 Periodicals

Periodicals are magazines that are published at less regular intervals. Some are published weekly, monthly, quarterly etc. Therefore, through periodicals Christians, Muslims and African Traditional religious practitioners through publication of articles that have to do with mutual relationship among the followers of religions in Nigeria can dialogue. This will help the readers to realize the essence of working together in unity irrespective of the differences in their religions. There are many international and local magazines published periodically which facilitate Christians, African Traditionalists and Muslims mutual dialogue.

3.2.7 Curriculum Design

Curriculum design in this context have to do with the individual subjects or course units that make up the content of a particular course of study which lead to award of academic certificate. According to Bidmos (2006:118) "in all tertiary institutions where a Religious study is offered as an academic discipline, cross – fertilization should be instituted." This is a situation where a student offering Christian studies as his major should take courses in Islamic and African Religious Studies. Those who major in Islamic studies should compulsorily offer some courses in Christian and African religious studies and those offering who major in African traditional religion should also offer some courses in Christian and Islamic studies. With such exposure,

narrow mindedness which breeds misinterpretation among youth could be avoided. Cross fertilization as a platform or religious dialogue will achieve much in preparing Christian, Islamic and African traditional religion scholars to tolerate one another.

4.0   CONCLUSION

In order to maintain a smooth relationship, Christians, Muslims and followers of African religion must be involved in constant dialogue both at the informal and formal levels. At the informal level, they must forget their differences and relate to one another in the family, at school and in the offices peacefully. At the formal level, religious and other non-governmental organizations with the responsibility of bringing religious scholars, debaters', participants and delegates together must constantly call for meetings and organize conferences, seminars, workshops and debates to foster mutual understanding. More so, the respective agencies charged with responsibility of designing curriculum for tertiary institutions in Nigeria should make it compulsory for students of religious studies to take some course units in other religions that are not their major.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unite you have learnt about the place and platform for religious dialogue. The places for religious dialogue include the family, school and work places. While the platform for religious dialogue includes meetings, conferences, seminars, workshop, public debates, periodicals and curriculum design. In the next unit you will be introduce to guidelines for religious dialogue.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
Discuss the platforms for religious dialogue.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS.

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UNIT 4: GUIDELINES FOR RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Content

1.0   **INTRODUCTION**
True dialogue takes place among people and communities and not systems of thought or religions. So, dialogue requires more than mere knowledge about other religions and their members, but also about people who are constantly in the process of spiritual growth. As the people and their communities interact in one way or the other, they can dialogue better about their faith.

2.0   **OBJECTIVES**
At the end of this unit, you should be able to state the guidelines that facilitate dialogue among Christians, Muslims and adherents of African Religion.

3.1 Accepting One Another

It is time to put an end to an unhappy past of opposition and misunderstanding by following the example of Abraham who was able to receive his guests at the oaks of Mamre and shared the best he had with them. Learn from them what would happen to his family and discuss with them the future of the human community. To welcome others in the spirit of Abraham, the "friend of God," is more than just a basic sign of politeness or a rite of traditional courtesy. It involves recognition of and respect for others as they are, even in their difference. Receiving others decisively into one's experience and taking their distinctive nature into account provide an opportunity for self-renewal and enrichment.

Accepting one another suggests that Christians, Muslims and followers of African Religion should recognize one another's profound difference, respect one another in the diversity of their religious traditions try in meeting and finding out more information about one another. This leads to a growth in mutual esteem and love. Every dialogue must begin in that way. In the name of truth and realism, we must take full account of the specific religious background of our dialogue partners including intellectual and emotional attachment. If the absolute good faith and good will of each party are affirmed at the outset, it does not matter if on one side or the other, some are a little too quick to accept that they have the truth or that they are right. We should never entertain suspicious that the others are trying stealthily to proselytize us or to impose their kind of dialogue upon us. On the contrary, we should entertain positive expectations for the dialogue and be careful to be fully ready for what it might entail. Finally, believers will come to recognize one another fully as persons capable of mutual understanding, and capable to clarify their respective positions, thus going beyond the misunderstanding and prejudices that have accumulated one another throughout history.

3.2 Mutual Understanding

Christians, Muslims and adherents of African religion are often ignorant of the true identify of one another even when they think that they posses some knowledge of the other religion. The first need is for objective information about one another concerning all levels of human and spiritual experience. This information should not, however, be solely that of a sociologist or of an Islamist or of a specialist in Christian studies or a scholar of African religion. It must come through mutual acceptance of one another for they discover not only of who they really are, but also of what they would like to become. Christians owe it to themselves to investigate the Islamic culture, theology and teachings, even as Muslims should learn from Christians the content of their culture, how their theology has developed and what disclosures their mystics have made. Adherents of African religion should also investigate the culture and theology of Islam and Christianity, even as both do so for African Religion. Thus informing one another, the interlocutors or participants can enter into one another's spiritual resources and gain insight into how they apply them to their personal spiritual journey.

Still, reciprocal information is never enough to make full mutual understanding possible. The interlocutors must rid themselves of all inferiority or

superiority complexes, and become ever more receptive of the way those from the other religion explain themselves and their tradition. Gradually, from every side, they should be able to put themselves in the place of the others. It would be ideal, if Muslims would finally be capable of presenting Christianity and African religion in such a way that adherents of Christianity and African religion would recognize themselves completely. And, If Christians could also give a picture of Islam and African religion in which followers of African religion and Muslims would recognize themselves perfectly.

3.3   Life alongside Each Other and Sharing

This is a call to recognize one another in their authenticity and to give reciprocal witness to their faithfulness. Believers need to adapt to one another, devise ways of favouring unity and work together wherever they feel mutually motivated by the same values. We cannot stress too much the enormous value of dialogue in circumstances where we eat together, work side by side, endure as in one body the same suffering and enjoy times of celebration with shared pleasure. Through this, daily joint experience of the most humble but significant aspects of life adherents of the various religions can help one another to deal with the great questions of the world, humanity and God.

So, it is perhaps in this way that believers can improve the quality of their life, articulating their hopes for their fellow humans and their aspiration for God in a relationship of mutuality. They must constantly be strong enough to call their own lives into question and to show genuine concern for others. A large part of this concern, to be manifested by all believers, is to make sure that the others are required less and less to suffer the humiliation of being poorly known, poorly understand and poorly received. When we recognise in our partners and in their community all of their excellence as well as their particular virtues, then our dialogue has a good chance of success.

3.4   To Venture and to Run Risk Together

Any way we look at it, dialogue is an adventure in which the participants are not sure how things will turn out. They are content structured merely to have confidence in one another, to begin talking and to take action together. They need certain range of freedom that will permit every party to experiment, taking into full account, of course, other parties and their communities. New relationships are thus formed, and whatever their depth or significance at the beginning they are bound to evolve, grow and bear fruit. Dialogue of this kind enhances free interplay of human initiatives, coloured with it a dynamism that even its most severe critics are obliged to recognize.

Whether they like it or not every party in dialogue is revealed to another. This may cause initial disillusion, and a sense of failure breaking off the interchange. Everyone should be aware of this as a risk to be taken. Dialogue cannot be perfect at its beginning. It is even good to experience times of suspicion and of frustration which will oblige the participants further to clarify to themselves the reason for their encounter and the motives of their cooperation. It is a very demanding experience to be called to account by those from another religion and to be esteemed by them in terms of what we aspire to be or of what they expect from us. This requires a severe

pursuit of truth and true love for people, along with a faith that has been tested and grounded in generous measure of spiritual wisdom.

4.0   CONCLUSION

Dialogue at best takes place among the people and the communities that are practicing religions. Therefore a religious dialogue that is aimed at creating a positive impact among the religions in Nigeria must consider guidelines that will bring the individuals and communities that are practicing these religions closer. This is because; it is the people practicing the religions that need to relate and co-exist with one another in a peaceful atmosphere not the ideas or thoughts.

5.0   SUMMARY

You have learnt about the guidelines for dialogue in this unit. These include accepting one another, mutual understanding, life alongside with one another and sharing and venturing to run the risk together.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What are the guidelines for religious dialogue?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 5: FACTORS THAT PROMOTE RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Content

1.0   **INTRODUCTION**

In the spirit of understanding and sharing, Religious practitioners are called upon to ponder the quest to find a common ground of relating with one another: For example, it is important for Christians to acknowledge and respect the personal faith and religious traditions of others and also seek for ways or factors that will promote dialogue among them and the people of other faith.

2.0   **OBJECTIVES.**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to identify the factors that promote dialogue among Christians and people of other faith.

4.0   FACTORS THAT PROMOTE RELIGIOUS DIALOGUES

3.1   Dialogue in God's Presence and in Dependence upon   Him.

Muslims, Christians and followers of African Religion have the conviction that human beings are not made as the product of chance, but that they are part of a marvellous plan of the living and eternal God, who created them all and cause them to live together to satisfy His purpose. Sharing this conviction, they feel constrained to commit themselves unreservedly in good faith to the venture of dialogue. Christians know, on their part, that they have been created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27) in order to become "partakers of the divine nature" (ll Peter 1:4) and "be called children of God" (1 John 3:1) by virtue of a wondrous identification with the Word incarnate, Jesus Christ. In turn, Muslims believe that they have been harmoniously fashioned by God and made responsible for a "mission" (*amana)* which "the heavens and the earth and the hills… shrank from bearing" (Qur'an 33:72). African Religion also believes that man is created by the Supreme Being (God) who brought the world into existence. Therefore, the destiny of man in this world is owed to Him (T.N.O Quracoopome, 100).

In view of this exalted vision seen from the three vantage points of faith dialogue of Muslims, Christians and African religion cannot avoid involvement with the creative design and providential action of the one, who probes their conscience, brings them together and teaches them what to say and do. In truth, God is present with every person "Nearer to him than his jugular vein" (Qur'an 50:16), so that in dialogue the participants can say with the Psalmist, "O Lord, thou have searched me and know me … thou discernest my thoughts from afar…. and art acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou dost beset me behind and before, and layest thy hand upon me" (Psalm 139:1-5). Followers of African religion also believe that God who knows every secret on earth and in heaven is aware of everything a man does and reward obedience, but punish disobedience.

So, at whatever level their exchanges may take place, Christians, adherents of African religion and Muslims acknowledge that they are witnesses for God, supremely concerned to serve Him, realizing that the closer they draw near to one another, the more aware they become of His presence with them. Even though they differ greatly in both the content and the expression o f their faith, they are also aware of their common concern to bear witness to the presence of God and to live in deeper awareness of that presence by faith and hope. Meeting, even for a limited time, "in the name of God" should give them both the conviction that in such encounter their dignity and reciprocal enrichment are set forth. Is not God Himself the source of all that is authentic and holy in the faithful witness of those who stand in continuit y with their fathers, brothers and sisters in the same faith?

When adherents are willing to accept one another as true "witnesses of God" and "servants of His word," they can better help one another to be submissive to His Spirit of guidance and inspiration. Dialogue between believers in faith can only be

the work of God's Spirit, even ithey have different contrasting views on the identity and action of that Spirit. Christians know, on their part, that the Holy Spirit advocate and counsellor of believers comes to "convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of and of judgment" (John 16:8), and to "guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). It is this openness to divine judgment that moves believers, when engaged in dialogue, to seek clarity, gentleness, confidence and prudence in all of their activities together. And the atmosphere of dialogue impels them respectively ever to "enlarge the place of the tent." in openness to those of the other faith, who strive to be true to its demands.

3.2   Conversion to God and Reconciliation with one Another

In loyalty, believers must be both consistent with their own faith and at one with the community which has conveyed that faith to them, nourishing them in its tradition of devotion. They must see concordance between the normative expression of religion and their personal experience. If believers of different religions are mutually striving toward greater faithfulness and enhance vital influence upon one another, then they will be fully aware both of the things which unite them and the things which divide them. Nothing would be more detrimental to true dialogue than a false effort at accommodation whereby Christians for example, would seek to make their faith acceptable to Muslims. Dialogue would lose its meaning if Christian participants reduced their faith to generalities and turn down the doctrine which diverge from statements in the Qur'an. In dialogue Muslims must encounter Christian's doctrine. Likewise adherents of African religion must never reduce their standard to be accommodated by Islam and Christianit y, and must equally encoun ter them on issues that divide them. In the same way, Christians must come to understand and appropriate Muslims in the wholeness of their way of worship and in the fullness of their belief system. This is a fundamental requirement of truth and loyalty in which the honour of God Himself is at stake.

The foregoing makes clear that believers engaged in dialogue are already in a position of greater faithfulness toward their common Lord and enjoy a deeper grasp of truth than was the case before their dialogue began. To be where they are in mutual encounter presupposes a difficult spiritual development, whereby they have given up prejudices, opened their hearts to others, and in general, abandoned previous ideas and attitudes which were hindrances to the full flowering of their faith.

Conversion of God, as described above, is the only thing that can give us true spiritual freedom. It is not a question of changing from one religion to another under the influence of various sociological and ideological factors. Believers must reject such persuasion unanimously as unworthy of the faith by which they live and the God whom they serve. On the contrary, true dialogue presupposes a "spiritual conversion" in which sin is recognized and God's forgiveness is sought for the wrong of failing to appropriate the religious experienced of others. By His pardon, God alone can purify our faith and transform our hearts. Out of that experience will come new awareness of the demands of justice and love, thus making possible a greater degree of mutual respect and friendship.

3.3   Holding one Another to he Highest Ideals of Witness

When Christians and Muslims ralize that first of all God is witness to their dialogue and that conversion to Him is its first requirement, they are able to develop their exchanges in a spirit of humility and truth. They proceed in an atmosphere of reconciliation, un concerned about winning a victory over one another or bringing the other over to one's own position, or, even less, engaging in a formal round of niceties or show of amiability. Dialogue is mutual challenge from the standpoint of faith and fraternal emulation in action, carried out "in the name of God." It show "enduring patience (avoiding) polemics and compromise….in alert openness toward others, constantly seeking to assimilate the deep values of faith, all in the atmosphere of clear witness''.

In dialogue, believers of the concerned religions are for one another "reminders" and "monitors." By the example of Muslims and followers of African religion; Christians are called back to the spiritual responsibilities of being children of God in Jesus Christ, of an all-embracing love which demands the dedication of self. The Islamic confession of faith, the communal witness of ritual prayer, almsgiving, fasting and pilgrimage are all seen as authentic religious values. The commitment of adherents of African traditional religion to their activities is another way of encouraging Christians in their commitment to God through Jesus Christ. Believers cannot be unmoved by the workings of faith in the personal and communal life of others. They see there a call by the Spirit of God to be better witnesses for God and more faithful servants of His Word (Maurice Borrmans, 1990:39). Are not the fruits of the Spirit called: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23)?

When Christians, adherents of African Religion and Muslims dialogue in such an atmosphere, they are able to grow toward the fullness which they believe to be the divine intent, constantly sound ing their conscience as to the quality of their callin g. A Christian will ask: Why am I a Christian? Why has Jesus Christ by His life, death and resurrection, given me eternal life, made me able to need to devise a common language for dialogue after having carefully studied the words and symbols which belong to their respective particularities. Through these necessary stages, as well as the stimulation of mutual example, God will prepare hearts and minds for dialogue at the highest level.

Such is the holy and spiritual emulation to which Christians, followers of African Religion and Muslims are called in dialogue. This explains while the Qur'an says that "had Allah willed He could have made you one community. By that, He may try you by that which He hath given you (He hath made you as ye are). So view one with another in good works. Unto Allah ye will all return" (Qur'an 5:48). For adherents of African Religion, communal life is emphasised and this is manifested in one's cordial relationship with his neighbours. As for the Christians, they can take inspiration from these words of Saint Paul: "Brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Philippians 4:8). They remember that modesty is obliged upon them: "I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which

God has assigned him" (Romars 12:3). So Muslims, Christians and followers of African religion should seek to κcel one another in good deeds of faith such as the promotion of life, justice and peace, the defence of human rights, in all of which they acknowledge the greatness of God, giving Him the honour which is His due.

3.4   **Undertake the Impossible, but Accept the Provisional**

It is also a fact that dialogue is a risky venture, especially if the partners meant to go beyond its initial stages of acceptance and listening to one another. However, the hope which believers have in the power of God to bring humans together in unity inspires them to undertake anything that has His final goal in view, even if it is impossible according to conventional wisdom and prudence.

It is also true that the meeting of a Muslim, a Christian and a follower of African religion to the degree of human and religious intensity which has been described above carries with it a certain sense of contradiction. All the three religions: African Religion, Islam and Christianity are considered to be universal in their overall plan of salvation. Christians believe that every person on earth is called to know God the Father through the mysterious and marvellous configuration of the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ. Muslims have the conviction that every person on earth is a Muslim. Does one or the other party lack in honesty or sincerity if they try to carry on dialogue to the demanding degree described above, while all the time they have such convictions in their hearts about the universality of their message? Of course not, especially if they believe that God Most High is sovereign even over the diversity of their respective communities, and that He will someday, in His good time, let them know why "they differed". Until that time, each group must confess that, if they did not desire for the others that which they deem most precious, then they would be falling short of the full acceptance and sharing which were set forth in the preceding discussion of religious dialogue. The most precious thing to believers is precisely their own faith and the degree of access which it grants to the more or less inaccessible plenitude of God.

Should Muslims be forbidden the desire to see their Christian friends become Muslims, or, similarly, do Christians not have the right to wish that their Muslim friends become Christians? They should not be denied such as a desire, for otherwise there would be an undue limitation to their desire for sharing with others. Muslims will know that a famous hadith says, "No one is truly a believer who does not love for others that which he loves for himself.'' Christians have heard from Jesus himself as a commandment that is ancient, but also ever new; "You shall love your neighbour as yourself…" (Matthew 22:39), ''Love one another even as I have loved you....'' (John 13:34). So there is no reason why Christians and Muslims should not wish that they should meet someday in the same faith, and in identical worship, whenever God wills it, and however He wills it. Such desires are legitimate even if practically speaking, they effectively exclude each other. This is what is meant by undertaking the impossible. And yet it should be ventured, in the name of God: to practice mutual acceptance to the limit and then acknowledge that full concurrence is as yet unachievable. Such is the inherent contradiction in dialogue when it is seriously pursued.

It is important to mention here a subtle danger that threatens the practice of dialogue. This is the suspicion, well founded or not, that one's partners in the

exchanges have ulterior motives of persuasion for conversion. Some people even criticize dialogue as being a new method, even a skilful manoeuvre, to bring the partner over to the ideology or to the faith of the one who has taken the initiative. It must be repeated again that true dialogue presupposes that the participants have no intention of changing the other's religion or even of installing doubts regarding the faith of the others. Such intention would be a betrayal of authentic dialogue, which is intended to progress under the eye of God and by the action of His Spirit. Rather the partners should seek to help one another toward an ever-deepening personal conversion to God and a fuller obedience to Him.

Realizing that dialogue depends first of all on the will and wisdom of God, and that He is faithful of His promises, believers build their enterprise on hope, making do with the provisional state of things, even if it is unsatisfactory. In that way they witness, that their dialogue transcends them and that their hope lends an element of surprise to their exchanges. Somewhat like travellers, they do not know exactly where God is leading them to, but they recognize that He wants them to go along together, even if they are different. He alone knows about the outcome of the dialogue, and in His wisdom He reminds believers that their situation is always provisional, depending on the immediate circumstances of the encounter. Courage is demanded of all believers to accept an impossible duty, whose accomplishment depends upon the one for whom nothing is impossible.

Those who are courageous enough to take part in dialogue will want to ponder what lies beyond such activity. That is, what will happen to those who follow the leading of God in mutual encounter. Since they belong to different religions having universal scope, they must recognize the importance of the missionary imperative in each tradition. Each community has the duty to offer its treasure of faith, obedience and love to others, inviting them to share the gifts received from God. Of course such intent presupposes and requires complete respect for the choice made by any person of a particular religious tradition, even if such choice involves a change of religion in order to better respond to what the conscience feels to be the call of God.

The Second Vatican Council issued a timely reminder to Christian of the modern understanding of "religious freedom," which "has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person. This dignity is known through the revealed Word of God and by reason itself" (Dignitatis humanae, No. 2), so that "no one is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will" (Dignitatis humanae, No. 10) coming as one result. Dialogue facilitates free personal choice of religious faith, evoked by the image of Abraham in his exemplary and humble submission to the mysterious decrees of God (Maurice Borrmans 1990:43).

There is another experience that transcends dialogue. It is shared by all believers who are willing to pay the price of true encounter, and consists of the joyful recognition that they are much closer to each other than they had thought. This sense of closeness increases as they progress together in service and in the confidence of faith. The will of a Holy God to unite all humanity cannot fail to bring all believers together more and more, as they daily witness the signs of holiness in the lives of one another. They come to realize that they love each other in God and they show forth the consequences of that love in the societies of which they are part. At this stage,

Christians for example, can say with Jesus Christ, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mark 3:35).

4.0 **CONCLUSION**
In attempt to co-relate and exist peacefully with adherents of other religions Christians should embrace factors that will promote the process of dialogue between them God and the people of other religions. It is worthy to note that, it is mandatory for Christians to do their best and enhance dialogue between them and people of other faith for the Bible emphasized the importance of our relationship with neighbours as a reflection of our relationship with God. (1 John 3:10; 4:20).

5.0 **SUMMARY**
You have learnt about the factors that promote religious dialogue in this unit. They are: dialogue in God's presence and in dependence upon Him, conversion to God and reconciliation with one another, holding one another to the highest ideals of witness and undertaken the impossible, but accept the provisional. Christians are also urged to enhance dialogue between them and people of other faith.

6.0 **Tutor Mark Assignment**
What are the factors promote dialogue between Christianity and   other religions?

7.0 **References / Further Reading**
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MODULE 2 -PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

UNIT 1:   RECOGNIZING COMMON VALUES IN RELIGIONS

CONTENTS:

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main body
3.1   Submission to the will of God
3.2   Meditation on a book
3.3   The solidarity of a community of believers.
3.4   Testimony to the transcendence of God
3.5   Obedience and faithfulness to the prescriptions of the law.
3.6   Sober rites of worship.

4.0   Conclusion.
5.0   Summary.
6.0   Tutor – marked assignment
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1.0   **INTRODUCTION.**
In this unit, you will be introduced to the values that are common in Islam, Christianity and African Religion as principles that facilitate dialogue among practitioners of the three religions. Although, these religions have their differences that can never be compromised, yet the y still have some common values that can serve as factors to facilitate the process of dialogue which would serve the purpose of mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence.

2.0 OBJECTIVES.

At the end of this unit, you should be able to explain the common values for dialogue among African Religion, Christianity and Islam.

3.0 MAIN BODY.

3.1 SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD

The Islamic ideal is to live in complete submission to God (Allah) both individually and collectively. Muslims manifest the spirit of original monotheism as it was revealed by God to Adam (Adamu), the first prophet and then to Abraham, "the friend of God", the first "submissive one" (Muslim) in history (Quran 3:67). And subsequently reflected through the ages by all true believers (Maurice B. 1990:45). Muslims believed that the original Abrahamic monotheism was distorted by Christians, and then restored to its original purity and simplicity by the Qur'an which Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, conveyed to all humanity.

In view of the Muslims, Islam is not a new religion. It simply re-establishes the true monotheism, restoring humankind to the place of faithfulness toward God, thus fulfilling the obligation of man to his creator. Muslims believe that, a believer's dignity is found in complete submission to the universal lordship of God which involves surrendering and obeying Him. According to Parshrall (202:16), "Muslim focuses more on submission than spirituality. Submitting to the revealed Words of Allah is to the Muslim, a more concrete and objective task than interaction with a more subjective "spirit force".

Certainly the spirit of submission to God does not mean Muslims should avoid their responsibilities. They accept their responsibilities as human beings and also affirm that everything comes from God and returns to him, and that human beings can in no way claim to be his partners or associates. Borrmans (1990:46) states that, "Both reforms and modernist within the Muslim community insist that "submission" constitutes the dignity, grandeur and responsibility of believers, while at the same time affirming that God is the source of it as well as its goal"

Christians can appreciate and respect this religious attitude of Muslims remembering that it also characterized Abraham and the great prophets of history especially Jesus who as God accepted the suffering and death on the cross. As Christians exemplify this attitude themselves in union with Jesus Christ, they will be able to understand the Muslims better and associates with them. According to Braswell (1994:187), "A Christian's view toward Muslims can appreciate several Islamic doctrinal statements. Their statements on the nature of God include oneness,

mercy, compassion, righteousness and justice can be reflected upon with measuring by Christians".

Adherents of African traditional religions also believe in the existence of a Super-natural Being (God) to whom they submit to his will just like Muslims and Christians. According to Gehman J. Richard (2002:321), "God is the one who provides food, sunshine, rain, children, health and protection. These are gifts from him. As supreme ruler over the earth, God is known as 'King' 'Lord' and 'Judge'. His will is absolute and he rules with power.

3.2   **Meditation on a Book (People of Medina)**

For Muslims, the Quran is the divine message transmitted directly to Muhammad in "clear Arabic speech" (Quran 16:103), in the course of his preaching in Mecca and Medina. The chapters or Suras are classified as Meccan or Medinan. But, in the book, they are arranged not in chronological order, but according to their decreasing length. The 114 Suras with their evocative titles contain 6,236 verses which make the Quran a book about the size of the New Testament. To the Muslims, the Holy book constitutes the final, definitive and perfect revelation of previous books (Torah or Pentateuch, Psalms and Gospels or Injil) which were only the first and uncompleted versions of a text containing the very words of God taken from the externally existence "well-guarded tablet".

Parshall (2002:53) asks, How much would be known about Christianity and Jesus Christ if the Bible does not exist? How much would be known about Islam and Prophet Muhammad if the Quran does not exist? These sacred writings are absolutely essential to the historic verification of the world's two largest religions.

The Qur'an constitutes the primary nourishment for the faith of Muslims, as they learn it by heart in childhood and have it constantly brought to mind through the many channels of Arab-Islamic culture. The Christian's scripture is the Holy Bible and is made up of Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament has thirty-nine books and the New Testament has twenty-seven books bringing the total to sixty-six. Christianity began with a background in Judaism and culminated in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Christians believed that God inspired men through the Holy Spirit to write the Bible and they did (2 Timothy 3:16).

Two million Hebrews, Aramaic and Greek words are found in the Bible. More than forty of them over a period of sixteen hundred years placed themselves at God's disposal to compile the Holy Bible. These writers were supernaturally inspired to produce their allotted portions of the scripture. The resulting unity of these sixty-six books is nothing of a miracle (Phil Parshall, 2002:72).

Much information from the Bible is included in the Qur'an. Some twenty-eight prophets of the Bible are mentioned, and Muhammad, Abraham, and especially Jesus are singled out for special commemoration. Abraham is the friend of Allah and the very first Muslim. Jesus is born of a virgin and he is a miracle worker and a great teacher. Other terms used to describe Jesus are servant of Allah, spirit of Allah, and word of Allah (George W. Braswell 1994:115).

African traditional religion is non-scriptural, but there are some sources of these religions that help the adherents to predicate and follow like Christians and Muslims. According to Emefie Ikenga Metuh (1985 : vii), "African religions are non-scriptural religions. There are no documentary sources handed by tradition as

authentic sources of their religious beliefs. The societies in which these religions are found are preliterate societies. The resources available to a researcher are contained in the oral traditions and the religious practices of the people"

African Religion is part and parcel o f the whole fabric of African cultural life. Therefore, religious phenomena are thus closely interwoven with social, psycholo gical and moral dimensions. In the absence of writing, oral traditions are developed elaborately and used as vehicles for preserving and transmitting valued knowledge of religious, philosophical and moral truths from one generation to another. There are also non-oral sources of information about African Religion which include art forms, archaeological artifacts, cult objects, religious symbols, rites, rituals and so on.

Therefore since all the three religions in Nigeria have sources of information, documented and undocumented to meditate and follow on how they can best relate to God, they can co-relate and co-exist peacefully irrespective of the differences from their respective sources of information. In the first place the differences among the Bible, the Qur'an and Oral tradition are only difficulty to the non-adherents of Christianity, Islam and African Religion. For the adherents, they accept the source of information about their religion as perfect without question.

3.3   **The Solidarity of a Community of Believers.**

Muslims are conscious of belonging to, "the best communit y that had been raised up for mankind" (Qur'an 3:110). They feel the vital necessity of remaining united in faith and in action. "Hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, and do not separate. And remember Allah's favour unto you" (Qur'an 3:103). And, in fact, one of the primary expressions of divine favour is that of maternal community (Umma) which forms, nourishes, permeates, surrounds, supports and exalts them. It is the house of Islam" (Dal-an– Salam) which is also the "house of justice and of peace" (Dal al-adl wa –l-salam), a unified society in which all members feel very close to each other, regardless of their differences in race, language or civilization (Maurice Borrmans 1990:58)

Therefore, it is by being members of the community of the Prophet (Ummat al-Nabi) that all Muslims understand themselves to be believers (Mu'minun) and submitted to God (Muslimun). Islam being both a blueprint for civilization and a religious experience, the community of believers take on a very human visage for believers, with historical dimensions through which they can project the full development of Islam which religion and state (din-wa-dawla) are joined together in perfect harmony.

Christians also believe in the unity or community of believers. This was why when the Church initially began all the members (Christians) were living together in a community and were even sharing their resources in common according to the need of the members (Acts 2).   Jesus Christ who is the founder of Christianity also emphasized the unity of his followers in John 17:21 where he said, "You shall be one just as I and the father are one".

According to Braswell (1994:108) "An issue for Christianity, then, is unity. It is that religion, which holds to the id eal of "One Lord, One Faith, and One Baptism". Unity may mean many things. It may involve the merging of churches into organic

union. It may also mean formal participation among churches of various denominations in making deciions about issues, which face the church and all humankind and in the pooling of church resources, both personnel and finances to meet those challenges. For example, the World Council of Churches (WCC). Christianity is a diverse religion with its distractive theologies, confessions, polities, ethnic groupings, and historical backgrounds. But a constant issue before it is its unity.

Adherents of African religion are also conscious of community life. Africans believes firmly that there is a living communion or bond of life, which makes for solidarity among members of the same family or clan. It is worthy to note that, Africans do not separate their culture from religion. Therefore the unity of the family, clan or district and tribe is as good as the unity of the adherents of African religion.

It is in this regard, that Mbiti (1971:67) remarks that, God is often worshiped through songs. In fact African peoples are very fond of singing. Many of the religious gath erings and ceremonies are accompanied by singing which not onl y help to pass on religious knowledge from one person or group to another. It also create and strengthens co-operate feeling and solidarity.

Adherents of African religions also practice their community solidarity in the way they perform their ceremonies and also relate to one another. In African culture and religion, the wish of the commun ity is the command of the individuals. This is to show that Africans both in their religion and culture value the solidarity of the community.

Therefore, Christianity, Islam and African religions which are practiced in Nigeria can relate and exist along with one another on the ground of solidarity of community of believers. Adherents of these religions should note that as they value unity within their religion. They should also apply the same principle in their relationship with other religions bearing in mind that all of them have common goal which is maintaining cordial relationship with the creator.

3.4:   **Testimony of the Transcendence of God.**
The clear affirmation of the transcendence of God is the hallmark of the Islamic religion. So, each believer is a witness (shahid) of the universal lordship of God, and possibly, if the necessity arises, making a martyr (Shahid) of the witness. Thus, Muslims follow the exampl e of the prophet who throughout history, insisted th at "He is Allah, the One!………. and there is none comparable unto him" (Qur'an 112:1-4).

With the conviction of the absolute transcendence of their Lord, Muslims receive from him the revelation of his oneness (Tawhid). On this account, they make Him the model of their lives, being both their defender and His servants. They know that God is at the same time both completely other than they are and very close to them, since on the one hand, "with him are the keys of the invisible. The utmost limit to which Mu slims can arrive in their knowledge abou t God is precisely their in ability to understand him. Their true knowledge is to perceive that they do not know him and they cannot in any way, know him, since to know God truly is impossible for anyone other than God himself (Maurice Borrmans 1990:60).

The fortunate thing for the Muslims is that God has spoken of himself in the Qur'an, and it is by reading it carefully that they are able to draw out of it, the Ninety-nine (99) 'beautiful names' of God, which are like a shining forth of the mystery of the one God. Almost all of the names of Allah as affirmed by Islam are in consonance with the attributes of the God of the Bible (Parshall, 2002:27).

Christians also believe in one God that transcend human comprehensions, but who has revealed himself through Jesus Christ. So, the God of Islam is not absolutely distinct from the God of the Bible. However, the crucial point is the clear biblical teaching that God is only to be known and experienced through his son, Jesus Christ. Over this issue, Islam and Christianity come into irreconcilable conflict.

In every African society, there is a distinct name for God in addition to other names to show that He is Supreme and transcendence. For example, the Yoruba name Olodumare' gives the idea of one who is supreme, great, incomparable and unsurpassable in majesty. The Igbo name 'Chukwu' denotes the idea of the supremacy of God over all things both in heaven and on earth. (Qurcoopome, 1987:33). Among the Tiv, He is called 'Aondo' which means he is the Supreme and Transcendence God.

Therefore, adherents of African religions believe that God is supreme and above all, he is the almighty and not of the status of the divinities. He is the creator and controller of the universe. He is the sovereign ruler of the universe, the king, omnipotent, transcendent, compassionate, judge, holy and immortal. According to Quarcoopom, 1987:40), "originally God was near to man but because of man's fault he moved high up. This does not mean He is not active in creation or in the affairs of men. He still maintains contact with the universe either directly through his personal intervention or indirectly through his personal intermediaries".

From the foregoing African Religion, Christianity and Islam have all testify to the transcendence of God. The irreconciliation difference among the three religions is how He has revealed Himself to man. African Religion teaches that man knows and relates with him through the divinities or lesser gods and intermediaries like priests, diviners, medicine men etc. For Muslims, God is only known through his attributes portrayed in the ninety-nine names of 'Allah'. While Christians accept that though God is transcendent, he has also revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ to mankind. It is only through Jesus Christ that Christians come to Him or approaches Him. Nevertheless, the testimony of the three religions about the transcendence of God is a strong reason to help them co-relate and exist peacefully irrespective of the differences on how he is known and approach.

3.5 **Obedience and Faithfulness to the Prescription of the Law.**

True Muslims know that faith without works is not acceptable to God. Muslims are reminded that, "it is not by their righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West, but righteous is he who believeth in Allah, the last Day, angels, the Scripture and the Prophets.

Thus, obedience to the commands of God and love for his law is found in the Quran, especially in its many legal verses highlighting the essential features of all codes, whether domestic, economic, political, contractual or penal. To them it is an art of worship in praise of God's will to study Qur'an constantly and to put its prescriptions into practice scrupulously. The zeal that many Muslims show for the

divine laws and the satisfaction that they find in them remind us of the attitude expressed in Psalm 119:1-8 of the Bible. Finally in terms of this same obedience that God, who is, "swift at reckoning" (Qur'an 2:202), will reward everyone on the Day of Judgment, when "Whoso doth good and atom's weight will see it then, and whoso doth it an atom's weight will see it then" (Qur'an 99:7,8).

The Bible also commands Christians to be obedience and faithful to the law of God. In Exodus 20:1-20, God gave his people the Ten Commandments to regulate their relationship with him and among themselves. Also, in Exodus 21, 22, and 23, God gives laws to His people concerning Hebrew servants, protection of propert y, social responsibility, justice and mercy. The book of Joshua 1:7, says, "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you, do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go".

Jesus Christ also said: do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letters, not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others, to do same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17-20). More so, in the prayer Jesus Christ taught the disciples, to say…, "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. "(Matthew 6:10).

So, it is also the earnest desire of Christians to be obedient and faithful to the prescription of the law as the Muslims do, which is a good common ground for dialogue. In Deuteronomy 13:4, the Bible says, "Follow the Lord and honour him, obey him and keep his commands; worship him and be faithful to him". Christians are also commanded in 1John 2:3 as follow: if we obey God's commands, then we are sure that we know him. Those who say that they know him, but do not obey his commands are liars and there is no truth in them. All those who obey his word are the people whose love for God has really been made perfect. This is how we can be sure that we are in union with God.

African Religion do not have a documented scripture or law as already mentioned, but holds obedience and faithfulness and moral values embedded in taboos and myths in high esteem. Its adherents strongly believe that moral values are given to man by God through the conscience. Therefore, man is expected to use his conscience to behave morally in a good way in order to avoid the wrath of God. Quarcoopome (1987:163) remarks that, "As an impartial judge God's judgment is sure and inescapable. Some of the di vinities represent the 'wrath' of God and for this also man comports himself socially and morally in order to be on the safer side"

Among the adherents of African religions, it is religion that sets the pattern of code of behaviour. This is because so much emphasis is placed on obedience and faithfulness with reference to the code of conduct as a result of the grave consequences that befall the individual or the community that breaks the code. It is in this respect that, Quarcoopome (1987:171,172) says, "Africans are conscious about taboos. Being aware of the grave consequences of breaking taboos, African society ensures that taboos are strictly observed. Where they were broken, propitiatory

sacrifices are performed to placate the divinities and ancestors offended so as to avoid the outbreak of an epidemic or other misfortunes".

Therefore, obedience and faithfulness to the prescription of the law is another common ground for Islam, Christianity and African Religion to dialogue. Although their laws are not coming from the same sources, but all of religious p ractitioners are conscious of the law and they always desire to be obedience and faithful in keeping them.

3.6   **Sober Rites Of Worship**

Muslims demonstrate through worship that they are servants of God who are responding to the primordial of the creator, who says, "I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship me" (Qur'an 51:56). In the hadith, it is pointed out that "Islam has been erected on five pillars: witness that there is no god, but God (Allah) and that Muhammad is the messenger of God, doing prayer; contributing to charity; observing the fast of the month of Ramadan; carrying out pilgrimage to the Holy house, when it is possible to do so". All these rites have as their first and last purpose to the glory and praise of the one God, for they constitute the "best forms of worship" and the "best form of service" to the one who alone is worthy of being the "first to be served". Everywhere, it is known that the Muslims community is made up of men and women who alike confess the faith, pray, fast, give to charity and do the pilgrimage (Borrmans 1981:61)

According to Parshall (200:93), "In Muslims worship, as in all worship, form cannot be divorced from content. Spirituality at its most dynamic point of contact between God and Man is experienced as the worship, with an intense level of submission and concentration, bows prostrate before Allah in the company of the faithful in the mosque". In worship Muslims, demonstrate their submission to God in prayer, fasting, confession of faith, giving of alms and going on pilgrimage to Mecca.

Christians also worship God to show their appreciation to him as the creator, and sustainer of the universe being the God who loves man and sent his only begotten son, Jesus Christ to come and save man from his sin. Worship in Christianity consist of singing and dancing with or without musical instruments, praying, reading from the Holy Bible, preaching, fasting and sacraments.

God in Deuteronomy 20:2-50 commands his children to worship him. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them." Paul also said, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God this is your spiritual art of worship (Romans 12:1)

Worship services in Christian churches are diverse but there are some common patterns. Singing is done by the congregation and the ministers. The congregation often participates in a responsive reading. A focal point in the worship service is the sermon delivered by the minister. The sacraments or ordinances are observed in worship services. When an individual becomes a member of the church, he or she is baptized by water in the context of community worship. The Eucharist or

the Lord's super is also observed by the entire congregation as the bread and the cup are shared from the common table (Braswell, 1994:105).

Practitioners of African religions also worship God in various ways as a response to their spiritual world of which they are sharply aware. This response generally takes on the form of worship which eternalized in different acts and sayings. These cuts may be formal or individual, through word or deed. They vary from one society to another (Mbiti, 1971:58).

Worship in African religions also includes sacrifices and offerings, prayers, invocations, blessings and salutations. Sacrifices and offerings constitute primary acts of worship among African peoples. Sacrifices and offerings in African Religion are directed to God through His intermediaries who include spirits and ancestors. Prayer is the commonest act of worship in African religions and it is usually precise and short. Majority of the prayers are addressed to God, and some to the living dead or other spiritual beings who serve as intermediaries.

Practitioners of African Religion manifest worship God through the names they give to their children. Such names either include an attribute of God or incorporate God's name directly to show appreciation to God. According to Mbiti (1971:66), "these names become lifelong testimonies of particular concepts of God which people want to express and when so used, the concepts are immortalized, made concrete and eternalized''.

Proverbs and songs are another way of worshiping God by adherents of African Religion. Proverbs are common ways of expressing religious ideas and feelings. It is in proverbs that we find the remains of the oldest forms of African religious and philosophical wisdom. Africans also worship God with songs. Many of the religious gatherings and ceremonies are accompanied by singing, which do not only help to pass on religious knowledge from one person or group to another, but also helps create and strengthen corporate feeling and solidarity. Some of the songs are used at ceremonies making the birth, naming, initiation, marriages and burial ceremonies.

In the same vein, adherents of African Religion worship God at anytime and anywhere because there are no rules obliging them to do otherwise. This is a matter of practice and customs, which varies from one people to another. (Mbiti, 1921:71, 72). Both on individual and community level, there is no limit about the number of times to worship God and as such many occasions like bed times, waking up in the morning, during illness and barrenness, searching for lost articles or animals and various understandings, may call for an act of worship. This may take the form of prayer, invocation, pouring of libation, placing food on the ground and making sacrifices and offerings. The act precipitates among other things, the feeling of fellowship and sharing, not only of the joys of life experiences, but more often its sorrows and perplexities.

All the practitioners of the three religions respond to God in worship to appreciate His relationship with them and also to request him to answer their prayers as they struggle with the problems of this life. The mode of worship in the three religions is not the same. But all their practitioners have something common which is by responding to their creator in worship.

SELF ASSIGNMENT EXERCISE

Explain how submission to the will of God constitutes a common ground in Christianity, Islam and African Religion.

4.0   **CONCLUSION.**

Dialogue of any kind is only made possible through appropriation of common values that are found among those that are engaging in it. So, in this unit, you have learnt the common values that could facilitate a successful religious dialogue in Nigeria among adherents of Islam, Christianity and African Religions.

5.0   **SUMMARY.**

This unit has discussed the common values that can successfully facilitate a religious dialogue in Nigeria for the purpose of co-relation and peaceful co-existence. These common values are submission to the will of God, meditation on the teachings of the religions, the solidarity of the community of believers, testimony to the transcendence of God, Obedience and faithfulness to the prescription of the law and sober rites of worship. In the next unit you will be introduce to forgetting the wrongs of the past against one another.

6.0   **Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)**

List five and discuss two factors that are common to Christianity, Islam and African Religion.

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UNIT 2 FORGETTING THE WRONGS OF THE PAST.

Content
1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Body
3.1   Disassociating religion from violence and injustice
3.2   Disassociation from accusations and ridiculous statement against others.
3.3   Disassociation from misrepresentation and misinterpretation of others' view.
3.4   Refraining from relegating others.
3.5   Disassociation from using the state or government against others.
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5.0   Summary.
6.0   Tutor marked Assignment
7.0   Reference/Further Reading
1.0   **INTRODUCTION.**
African Religion, Christianity and Islam are religions that have being in practice in Nigeria for centuries. At one time or the other clashed with one another due to a number of reasons. In order to achieve a successful religious dialogue in a pluralistic society like Nigeria, it's important to flash back at the history of interrelationship of these religions to identify the factors that led to the wrongs of the past against one another and throw them behind in order to move forward. In this unit, you will be introduced to the wrongs of the past that we need to forget in order to forge ahead with dialogue among the religions in Nigeria.

2.0   **OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to state and explain the wrongs of the past among the religions in Nigeria that we need to forget in order to move forward with dialogue.

3.0 **MAIN BODY**.

3.1 **Disassociating Religion from Violence and Injustice.**

The way Christianity and Islam had contacts with Africa Religion already in existence which was in Nigeria created a competitive and conflictual relationship among the three religions. Having been introduced at different times and historical epochs, they all fitted into the different world views born out of their historical experience of antagonism and hatred towards one another especially Islam and Christianity.

A flash back at the history of interreligious violence and injustice in Nigeria at least for the past four decades has religious connection in one way or the other. The religious question, though unresolved, never blew open in the colonial era. This was because the ideological holds of the competing religions remains a dominant and exclusive feature of the regions. This situation continued into the early part of the neo-colonial state as the struggle for power among the regional based political parties was accentuated by need to mobilize maximum support for effective dominance. However, the intervention of the military into the political scene ushered in a new dimension and direction into the political scene of this country. Among the major changes brought by presence of military into the political scene were the waves of religious conflict.

After this open manifestation of religious intolerance, the nation has never been the same with a catalogue of conflicts that are always attributed to religion even when other primary factors like politics, economic control, ethnic or tribal identity etc are responsible. These put together has made religion which supposed to be a stabilizing factor for the society to become very highly explosive in nature in Nigeria.

It may be a theological question whether God reveals or he reveals religion through his messenger, his prophet or his son Irrespective of the position one takes on this issue, one should be reasonable enough to know that God, like the father of any household, can never be satisfied with members of the family who quarrel, fight, undermine and sometimes kill one another in his name (General Ibrahim Babangida, The Guardian of August 14, 1992:3).

Therefore, in order to create a conducive atmosphere for religious dialogue in Nigeria, adherents of religion must work together to forgive themselves and also forget about the destruction of lives and properties that happened in the past in the name of religion in Nigeria. More so, leaders of the various religions in Nigeria should work together to redeem the name of religion from being associated with violence and injustice. They can do this by educating their followers from mixing up issues that are not related to religion with religious matters that can cause violence.

Adherents of religions in Nigeria must all work together to make religion take it rightful position in the country by providing peace and stability, but no longer as a keg of gun powder that always put the nation on fire as have been the case.

3.2 Disassociation from Accusations and Ridiculous Statements against Others.

Accusations and ridiculous statements made against other religions or their adherent is one of the factors among others that have on different occasions led to religious violence in Nigeria. In his investigation of the religious crisis that engulfs Kafanchan (Kaduna state) in 1987 Aisha (1987) notes as follows:

Rev. Abubakar Bako quoted from the Quar'an to show the genuiness of Jesus in the 3rd Surah in the 10th Surat, God was talking about 2 groups and that one was on the right path and that this means Jesus is the truthful prophet, while Muhammad is not a truthful prophet and he continued and continued saying bad things about prophet Mohammed and then recite Surah 43/46 while he was reciting this, I got up and told the others with me to let us leave the place because, I cannot stay or sit listening to what I believe is being ridiculed.

So, this was one the factors that led to religious crises in   Kafachan   in 1987 which led to destruction of lives and   properties.

The use of wrong nomenclature for other people's religion is also a way of fermenting trouble and ridiculing the religion and their adherents. For example, the use of terms like fetishism and paganisms by Christian missionaries to describe African Religion is a way of ridiculing the people and their religion. The word Fetishism is a term that has long been used as an unpleasant, abusive, rough description of West African Traditi onal Religion. The word originated from the early Portuguese traders and travellers in West Africa. They saw certain objectives, charms, amulets, mascots, talismans worn by the West African peoples. They also realized that such objectives were similar to the amulets, charms and talismans they knew in their country. They therefore, called those things *feitico* or charm from Latin word factitious- meaning "magically artful". More so, the term paganism which is from the Latin word *Paganus* meaning a village dweller or a countr yman has been used by Christian missionaries to describe the religion of the so-called primitive people of the world. It is a derogatory term used to distinguish between the religions of the "uncivilized" races of the world (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979:21, 81).

Therefore, for the sake of religious dialogue leaders and teachers of religions in Nigeria should refrain from accusing adherents of other religions. They should not make any statement that can lead to violence like the few instances cited. Leaders and followers of these religions must also forget about such instances that occurred in the past rather they should dialogue together to relate and co-exist.

3.3 Abstaining from Misrepresentation and Misinterpretation   of Others' Views.

Misrepresentation and Misinterpretation of how other's views faith is one of the factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria. For instance, misrepresentation and misinterpretation of Christian beliefs in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Trinity by Muslims often lead to violence.

Islam is distinctly uncomfortable with Jesus. On one hand, Muslims desire to follow the traditional dictates of Islam and honour Christ as one of the greatest

Prophets of all time. On the other hand, they alleged excesses of "Christ worship" as found in the Christendom have made Muslims more than a little hesitant to attribute more than a passing word of respect toward Jesus (Parshall, 2002:253). Geisler and Abdul, (2006:233) says, "To Muslims, Christ' deity and crucifixion present massive stumbling block". So, Islam simply presents Jesus as a mere human being, a Prophet of God, superseded by Muhammad who was the last and greatest of the Prophets".

Apart from the Sonship of Jesus, Muslims also misinterpret the Christian concept of trinity as people who worship three different Gods. The Muslims consider Christianity to be a polytheistic religion since Christians worship God, the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. This is just because they do not understand the right interpretation of this concept. But instead of seeking the right interpretation from Christians, they misinterpret it.

Muslims also accused Christians of distorting or corrupting the New Testament. According to Parshall (2002:55), "Muslims claim their Qur'an to be pure and unchanged. The Bible is charged with distortion and with being used for unethical purposes." Similarly, Christian Missionaries misinterpreted African Religion as primitive and ancestral worship.

The term primitive means "early, ancient, old-fashion or rudimentary". Taken in this sense, the term primitive is not applicable to African religion. Although African religious beliefs and practices are traditional and still have some old customs and practices, but have undergone and are still undergoing changes and transformation. So, it is not appropriate to speak of any religion today as primitive.

Some Western investigators and Christain missionaries also described African religions as ancestral worship. They think that all that the people regard as spiritual beings are no more that deified ancestors (Omosade and Adelumo 1979: 25). But this is a clear case of misrepresentation noting that ancestral worship is only a very small part of African Religion. African Religion has so many divinities who are the representative of the Supreme Being. On this note, misrepresentation and misinterpretation of others' views or faith should be avoided by adherents of religions in Nigeria for the sake of fruitful dialogue.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Discuss at least two of the wrongs that have been a hindrance to religious dialogue in Nigeria.

3.4   Avoiding the use of State or Government against Others
Government interference in religious matters to promote the interest of one religion against the others also leads to violence. With reference to the situation in Nigeria, government have been accused on so many occasions of fuelling religious crises by promoting the interest one religion against the others.

Noting this, Gofwen (2004:99) in his study of the religious crises that took place in Kafanchan in 1987, he remarks   that:
... It is our fervent belief that the administration of President Ibrahim Babangida is largely responsible for the current pervasive atmosphere of religious intolerance in the country which has recently manifested clearly and alarmingly in the religious

riots in Kaduna state. This is because since the inception of the administration, some specific wealthy Muslims, Islamic scholars and Emirs have been making explosive religious utterances and even calling for an Islamic state. In the fate of all these, what has the government done.

In Boer's (2004:88) analysis of government's role in religious matters, he opines, "A major problem Christians have with the federal government and various state governments is their partiality towards Islam". He also quoted Ishaya Audu who said, "The question of religion in Nigeria can only be solved "if the government ... decides to be totally neutral". Government should only be interested in religion in protecting the right of the individual to practise whatever religion he wants freely..... But regarding the issue of promoting one religion over another, government should be very careful and keep out of it. The government in all circumstance should show absolute impartiality".

Directly or indirectly, government is in the front-line of all the religious disturbances experienced in Nigeria. First and foremost, i t is humanly wrong and bad for the government to allow any single religion to be adopted as a state religion in a multi-religious society like Nigeria (Debki (2000:35). With respect to the religious crises that took place in Kaduna 2000, Debki (2000:35) also say, "The government is fully aware of the riots instigators, but would not speak to them or discipline them appropriately since they sponsored them either directly or indirectly, by coup or Nigerian democracy of manipulations''.

From the few instances cited, it is clear that the act of state or government taking side with one religion against the others would always lead to violence. Therefore, for the sake of dialogue practitioners of religion should forget about the past mistakes which led to crises in the country and avoid using the state against other religions in whatever circumstances.

3.5 **Refraining from Denigration of Religions**
One of the wrongs that have constituted a problem to religious dialogue is the tendency of denigrating other religions. According to Borrmans (1981:70). "It has also happened that Christians and Muslims have appropriated the values of life, justice, brotherhood and peace for their own community alone, relegating religious minorities to a ghetto status, or requiring them to subscribe to politico –religious allegiance".

With reference to the situation in the country, the government and the people of Nigeria recognise the existence of three religions in the country, namely African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam (Awolalu, 1991:116). But in practice, it is a different thing because Christianity and Islam have denigrated African Religion to a ghetto status. For example, African Religion does not enjoy government support like Islam and Christianity. This support is in terms of giving financial aids to those who are going on Holy pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Mecca and the construction of Church buildings and Mosques.

More so, all the ceremonies of Islam and Christianity are recognized by the government and usually public holidays are declared to celebrate them. However, no ceremony in African Religion is officially recognised and celebrated by the government like that of Christianity and Islam. In order to enhance a successfully

dialogue among the religions in Nigeria, none of these religions should be relegated again. For fairness and equity to practitioners the three religions, the government should also consider giving financial support to African Religion and celebrate her festivals as public holidays.

4.   **CONCLUSION**
To engage in a successful dialogue among the religious practitioners in Nigeria, it is important to re-examine the history of religious dialogue in Nigeria noting that the wrongs of the past were a hindrance to fruitful religious dialogue. In this unit, therefore, you h ave learnt the wrongs of the past that need to be forgotten in order to do a successful religious dialogue.

5.0 **SUMMARY**
This is unit has disclosed the mistakes of the past that need to be forgotten about interreligious d ialogue in order to foster a mutual relationship among practitioners of religions in Nigeria in the present time. These wrongs include the following.
-   Associating religion with violence and injustice.
-   Making accusations and ridiculous statements against other religions or faith.
-    Misrepresenting and misinterpreting other religions or faith.
-   Using the state or government against other faiths or religions
-   Looking down on other religions or faith.
    In the next unit you will be introduced to elimination of prejudice against one another.

6.0   **TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**
        In your opinion, how will you solve three of these problems that   have hindered a successful religious dialogue in Nigeria?

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UNIT 3: ELIMINATION OF PREJUDICE

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of religious dialogue is to see how religions can interact with one another using certain features they have in common, but will still maintain their individual differences that can never be compromised for any reason. Therefore, for adherents of different religions to come together for a dialogue that will produce a positive result, they must come with open mind devoid of misconception and preconception or wrong ideas against other people involving in the dialogue. In other words, all forms of biases against other religions for lack of knowledge must be removed to pave way for fruitful religious dialogue. In this unit, you will be introduced to some of these prejudices that need to be eliminated in other to achieve a successful religious dialogue in Nigeria.

2.0   OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this unit, you should be able to list and discuss the prejudices that need to be eliminated for a fruitful religious dialogue in Nigeria.

3.0   PREJUDICE DEFINED

Prejudice, by definition is act of having a form of biased opinion about an issue occasioned by insufficient knowledge. It also means forming or having your own understanding or impression about a particular issue or person. This is often caused by lack of knowledge on truth or reality of the person or thing. Some of these wrong assumptions held by one religious practitioner against the other or others are as follow:

3.1   **Legalism**

The term legalism means strict adherence to the law. It is about complete obedience to law. Among the religions in Nigeria, Islam is often accused of being legalistic. But, this may be a wrong assumption because there is no religion among the religions in the world without laws or moral code. And, the demand of the law is obedience to regulate relationship between man and God and between man and his neighbour.

According to Maurice Borrmans (1981:71) "all religions run the risk of falling into legalism, since their message includes a moral code which necessarily must be expressed pedagogically for the masses in form of commandments, including precepts and prohibitions. Islam, with the primary place it gives to law within its system, and with the detailed way in which prescriptions are given, might be said to provide well for the inner need of the religions consciousness for security." There is no religion without laws, Christianity and African religions also have their own moral codes in form of commandments and taboos which the adherents are required to obey to maintain a cordial relationship with God and their neighbours.

Therefore, it is unfair to accused Islam as being legalistic as if it is the only religion on earth with laws. Other religions also have their own laws and they place high value them; that is why they reward obedience to the law and punish disobedience to the law. No religion ever encourages adherents to disobey the law, but encourages them to obey it. Therefore, the urge in Islam to obey the law is not exceptional.

It is even in the spirit of obedience to the law that Islam has classified human acts into the "obligatory" (wajib); the "recommended" (mustahabb) and the "permitted" for bidden" (haram). Muslims are also required to determine their "intention" (niyya) in order to discern the nature of their deals and to carry them out humbly, in submission to God. Islamic "piety" (birr), if rightly understood, is intended to bring believers to that spirit, since "acts of obedience" (ta'at) are seen as the first requirements of worship. Hence, it would be completely unjust to claim that Islam is fundamentally legalistic and it teaches that believers will automatically receive salvation simply by obeying the law (Borrmans, 1981: 71, 72).

3.2 **Moral Laxity**

Christians regard the Muslims as those who are relaxed in their moral life when they are compared to the demands of the Gospels. They are also considered as those who are not living in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Bible.

However, Maurice Borrmans (1981:72) say, "Muslims believe that it is legitimate to give full satisfaction to all needs of their human nature, following particular guidelines for such fulfilment". There is also a strict system of ethics (akhlad) in Islam which is being more effectively observed. In its broad features, Islamic ethics is quite similar to the Ten Commandments given to Moses as recorded in Exodus 20:1-17.

Therefore, it would be wrong to say that there is no social morality for the Muslim family. Moral standards certainly exist, but they are different from those of the ideal Christian family. For example, the Qur'an, tradition (hadith) and most modern codes of law permit Muslim husband to have two, three or four wives simultaneously, provided that he is equally just toward all of them (Qur'an 4:3).

It is important to recognie that family life and conjugal morality are covered by Islamic regulations, and that these have evolved in recent years to grant more rights to women and children. In another aspect of family, Islam has taken a very liberal course by permitting all methods of family planning. But it agrees with Christian morality in forbidden sterilization, refusing to accept abortion in most cases and condemning all forms of adultery, fornication and homosexuality. Conjugal faithfulness, love for children and respect for parents are values that Muslim recognize, practice, uplift and honour in appropriate way (Maurice Borrmans, 1981:72).

It is unjust to measure the conduct of Muslims with the ethics of the Christian gospel and conclude that Muslims are morally relaxed. It is more appropriate to allow Islamic ethics based on the Qur'an and the tradition (Hadith) to judge Muslim conducts and determine whether they are morally relaxed or not. This principle is not restricted to Islam, but it also applies to other religions, it is unjust to use a different ethics or standard to measure ones conduct and pass judgment. It is best to read and understand a particular faith or conduct in the words and context of that faith to avoid prejudice.

3.3   **Fanaticism**

Fanaticism can be described as the action of someone or a group of people with extreme or excessive enthusiasm for something especially religion or religious matters. Muslims are often accused by Christians of fanaticism due to their excessive enthusiasm about religious matters. For instance, in 1994, one Mr Gideon Akaluka, an Igbo man in Kano State had his heard decapitated by Muslim youths over an allegation that a water pusher "mai-moya" went inside the house where the Igbo man was renting on his water pushing business and saw the man with part of a news paper written in Arabic. The water seller came out of the house shouting that the man was going to toilet with Quran. Without confirmation, all efforts by the security personnel to save the life of that man prove abortive. He was beheaded by Muslim youth in the street of Kano. (Debki, 2000:112).

On another occasion, in Sokoto North West Nigeria, another Christian was mercilessly beaten because of Muslim beggar who asked of alms accused him of insulting the prophet Mohammed. Mr. Azubuike was more fortunate than most; he was thought dead and abandoned (Ali 1999:86). There are many instances where Muslim over react to religious matters based on rumours without confirmation. In fact, most of the religious crises that have engulfed this country are due to over-reaction by Muslims to rumours about religious matters without confirmation.

However, Muslims are often annoyed when they hear themselves accused of fanaticism and of having used forced to make converts to their religion. They are quick to point out that Islam practices tolerance (Samaha) and affirms that "there is no compulsion in religion" (Qur'an 2:256). They even quote verses from the Qur'an that suggests a favourable attitude towards Christians. They also recall the distinct benefits granted to the people of the scripture by their "protected status" (ahimmis) in Islamic society of the classical period and in the Ottoman Empire (Borrmans 1990:74).

With reference to the Niǥerian situation, Christians and adherents of African religion need to learn what is Is amic view regarding the world and faith. Muslims are proud to belong to the "com munity of the prophet' and to the "House of Islam," entitles which, to them, are synonymous with peace, justice and brotherhood. In their zeal to see the "rights of God" prevail throughout the world. They ensure that the duties and, rights of human beings are respected everywhere.

Therefore, it is worthy to note that judging Islam from outside of its teachings, it is possible to accused the Muslims of fanaticism, but when we judge Islam from inside based on the teachings of the Qur'an, the tradition (hadith) and ethics, the prejudice of associating Muslims with fanaticism will be eliminated. For the sake of fruitful dialogue, it is advisable and best to judge every religion from inside, than from a subjective point of view.

SELF ASSEMENT EXERCISE
Identify at least three prejudices that need to be eliminated in order to achieve a fruitful religious dialogue in Nigeria and discuss one.

3.4   **Opposition to Changes**
Non-Muslim accused Muslims of opposing to change. According to Borrmans (1981:75), "In the course of the last few centuries Muslim societies have given the impression of being immovable in the scientific, sociological, and polit ical fields and many have thought that Islam itself was primarily responsible for this situation". For some observers, the Islamic faith and its philosophical implications make it possible for Muslims to accept new scientific inventions and to use modern technology.

However, it is important that for the sake of dialogue, dialoguers must learn to distinguish theory from practice; what has happened in the past that is not perfect from the reality that is perfect which transcends human accomplishment. In fact, there is no proof that Islam is incapable of change, contrary to the claims of many. During the middle ages Muslims built brilliant civilizations and were at the forefront of scientific research and technological advancement. In this twenty first century, Islamic nations like, Iran and Iraq are among the leading nations with ambitions of manufacturing nuclear weapons. (Ephraim Kadara, 2009:131). We can then, see nothing in Islamic faith alone that would opposed to scientific progress as observed by some non-Muslim.

It is worthy to note that Muslims in their attachment to the law revealed by God and to the elaborations of their knowledge or skill about law, they have always recognized that they can make certain changes which take in to account local customs and situations. This is possible without calling into question the fundamental values of religion, personality, intelligence, family and property. It is true that some innovative practices have been rejected in favour of conservatism, but others have been considered as good and integrated into the narrative behaviour of the community.

In real life situation, there is no organization or individual that is completely opposed to change or accept all changes. Change is the only force that is permanent that must come upon an organization or an individual with time. So, the accusation level against Islam as the only religion that is opposed to change is not true. Other

religions like Islam also have their areas of conservation and other areas that are liberal. A change that affects a liberal matter is easily accepted and assimilated, but a change that affects a conservative matter is very difficult to be accepted, and even if it is to be accepted, it must take time to go through in order to ensure that no grave negative effect on the religion is accepted.

Therefore, it should be noted that Islam is not completel y opposed change as claim by some observers. Islam accepts changes just like other religions, but it is careful of which change to accept and the one to reject. If Islam is completely opposed to change as claimed, it would have been impossible for it to spread from Mecca in Saudi Arabia to all the continents of the world. This claim that Islam is oppose to change is simply a prejudice that must be eliminated for the sake of dialogue.

3.5 Primitive Religion

African Religion is accused of being primitive by some observers when compared to their own religions. The term primitive means early, ancient and old-fashioned. Taken in this sense, the term primitive is not applicable to African religions today. This is because what can be regarded as the primitive even in terms of religion have disappeared from the world a long time ago. That was when the early man attempted to develop a way of relating to his creator.

According to Parrinder (1977:7), "The religion of West Africans often used to be referred to as primitive; but this is an inaccurate term. Primitive religion means either it appeared in its earliest forms among mankind, or else religion that has remained in the lowest stages even in modern times. Neither of these is true of West African religions.'' African beliefs are traditional, but they are not static. They are dynamic and have gone through so many changes over time just like other religions. It is, therefore, not appropriate to speak of the religion of any people today as primitive. African traditional religions are living and cannot be described as primitive.

It should then be noted that describing African religions as primitive is a prejudice that must be eliminated for the purpose of fruitful dialogue. African religions like Christianity and Islam started somewhere many centuries ago and have undergone so many changes, so to simply describe them as primitive by comparing them with other religions is completel y wrong. It is inappropriate to make an observation from outside only and draw and conclusion. With respect to the Nigerian situation, adherents, of Christianity and Islam must never under-rate adherents of African religions, they should give them their due recognition and respect and dialogue together for the purpose of peaceful co-existence.

3.6 Jesus, the Son of God

Islam claims Jesus is mere human being, a Prophet of God, superseded by Muhammad being the last and greatest of the prophets. Muslims insist that Jesus never claim to be the son of God, but he was only a prophet or a messenger of God. They further argue that God is not human and without a wife, so, how did He give birth to a son. According to Balic (1979:2), "In Islam, Jesus, like all other prophets, is reduced to human dimension. Therefore, in Islamic tradition, Jesus does not possess the space which Christianity gives Him. In the Qur'an, Jesus is simply a

subject of the history of prophet." Islamic scholars engage in an arbitrary and selective use of the biblical text to suit their purposes. However even the texts they pronounce "authentic" are twisted or misinterpreted to support their positions on controversial issues.

Norman and Abdul (2002:263) in their observation, "No concept in all of Christian terminology receives such violent reaction from Muslims as Jesus as the only begotten Son of God". This raises red flags immediately in the Islamic mind. Indeed, as we shall see, they understand it in a grossly anthropomorphic manner".

In John 1:18; 3:16, the Bible refers to Jesus Christ as the "only begotten" son of God. However, Muslim scholars often misconstrue in fleshly and carnal sense of someone. For them, 'to beget' implies physical act. This they believe is ridiculous, since God is Spirit with no body. To the Muslims to beget is an art of sex by animals, so they can never attribute it to God. 'To beget' also means to create. Therefore to the Muslims, God cannot create another God. This is the degree to which the Biblical concept of the Sonship of Jesus Christ (as one among the persons of trinity) is misunderstood by Muslims.

However, this extreme reaction of Muslims to Christ's Sonship is both unnecessary and unfounded. The phrase "only begotten" does not refer to physical generation, but to a special relationship with the Father. Like the biblical phrase "firstborn" (Colossians. 1:15), it means priority in rank, not in time. (Col. 1: 16-17). It could be translated as the New International version does, God's "One and Only'' Son. It does not imply creation by the father but unique relationship to Him. Just as an earthly Father and son have a special relationship, even so the eternal Father and his eternal son are uniquely related. It does not refer to any physical generation but to an eternal procession from the Father. Just as for Muslims the Word of God (Qur'an) is not identical to God, but eternally proceeds from Him, even so for Christians, Christ; God's "Word" eternally proceeds from him. Words like "generation" and "procession" are used by Christians of Christ in a filial and relational sense, not in a carnal and physical sense. (Geisler and Abdul 2002:264).

Misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Sonship of Jesus Christ by Muslims is indeed a prejudice that needs to be eliminated for the sake of dialogue. In order to achieve this, Muslims should allow Christians to read and interpret the Bible to support their claim that Jesus is the Son God. Muslims should not distort verses from the Bible to deny the deity of Christ, just as it is misdirected for Christians to twist verses from the Qur'an to teach the deity of Christ. Muslims should read and interpret the Qur'an, while Christians should read and interpret the Bible.

3.7 Misinterpretation of Christian Trinity

Muslims misinterpret the Christian doctrine of trinity and accused Christians of worshipping three gods. With this accusation Muslims regard Christianity as a polytheistic religion, as against monotheistic as claimed by Christian. In the word of Abd Al – Masih (nd: 16);

Every Muslim thinks from childhood that Christians believe in three Gods. He is constantly warned about committing this "sin of sins". The fact that there is a Father, Son and the Holy Spirit sounds like blasphemy to a Muslims and is synonymous to breaking the first commandment: "you shall not have any other gods before me." Anyone was confesses that there are one or two god like persons beside Allah

commits an unforgivable sin. This parallels the sin against the Holy Spirit (Sura 4:48 and 116).

The emphasis on the oneness of God is fundamental to Islam. An Islamic scholar quoted by Norman and Abdul (2002:268) said, "In fact, Islam, like other religions before it in their original clarity and purity, is nothing other than the declaration of the unity of God, and it message is a call to testify to this unity". The Muslims do not believe that the unity of Allah is the distinguishing characteristic of Islam and this is the purest form of monotheism, that is the worship of Allah who was neither begotten nor beget nor had any associates with him in his God- head.

Because of this uncompromising emphasis on God's absolute unity, the greatest of all sins in Islam is sin of assigning partners to God (Shirk). The Qur'an declares, "God forgiveth not joining other gods with Him; but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this: one who joins other gods with God, Hath strayed far, far away (from the right)" surah (4: 116). However this is a misunderstanding of the unity of God by the Muslims which is one of the prejudices that need to be eliminated for the sake of dialogue.

Both Islam and Christianity proclaim that God is one in essence. What is in dispute is whether there can be any plurality of persons in this unity of nature. This misunderstanding arises because Muslims do not understand Christian monotheism. Many Muslims misconstrue the Christian view of God as tri-theism rather than monotheism. However, this is wrong because Christian do not confess three gods; they believe only one God. This is evident from both the biblical base and theological expression of the doctrine. The Bible declares emphatically: "The Lord our God, the Lord is one!" (Deut. 6:4). Both Jesus Christ (Mark 12:29) and the apostle repeat this formula in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 8:4-6). And the early Christian creeds speak of Christ being one in "substance" or "essence" with God. The Athenasian creed, for example, reads: "We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the person; nor dividing the substance (Essence)". Therefore, Christianity is a monotheistic religion which emphasis one and only one God and not three gods (Geisler and Saleeb, 2002:269).

No doubt the Christian concept of Trinity is complex to understand but, it is the truth and the truth is not always simple. Muslims scholars make a big point of computing the mathematical impossibility of the trinity. After all, does not $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$? It certainly does if you add them, but this is the wrong way to understand the Trinity. The trinity of God is more like $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. In other words, we multiply, not add, the one God in three persons. That is, God is triune, not triplex. His one essence has multiple personalities. Thus, there is no more mathematical problem concerning the Trinity than there is in understanding 1 to the third power (1^3).

Therefore, the accusation level against Christians of worshipping three gods is simply prejudice that should be eliminated by all those who hold this view for the sake a fruitful dialogue. By the way, Trinity is a Christian concept, so Christians should know the best way of interpreting it because they conceive and formulated it. Trinity does not stand for triplex, but for triune or trinity.

4.0. **CONCLUSION.**

The aim of religious dialogue is to create a common ground for religions and their adherents to interact and discussion issues that are common among them irrespective of their differences that can never be compromised. However, prejudices or having negative opinions on some issues against one another does not create a good atmosphere for dialogue. Therefore, it is important that adherents of various religions who have form negative opinions on some issues against other religions should as a matter of urgency eliminate them to facilitate dialogue. Practitioners of all religions should discipline themselves and accept the opinion or position of those practicing the religion even on controversial issues.

5.0. SUMMARY

This unit have discussed prejudices that need to be eliminated in order to facilitate the process of dialogue among religions in Nigeria. In order to eliminate prejudices, it has been observed that adherents of various religions should learn to accept the opinion of those practicing the particular religion even on matters that are controversial. These prejudices include the following:

-            Legalism
-            Moral laxity
-            Fanaticism
-            Opposition to change
-            Primitive religion
-            Jesus the Son of God
-            The Christian concept of trinity.

6.0. TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

How will you convince adherents of African Religion to participate in a religious dialogue with Christian and Muslims, although their Religion is accused of being primitive?

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UNIT 4: THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE.

CONTENT

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Body
   3.1 The Holy Bible.
    3.2 The Glorious Qur'an
   3.3 Oral Tradition.
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0 References/Further Reading.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Sacred Scriptures of Christianity, "The Holy Bible" and Islam, "The Glorious Qur'an" and "Oral Tradition" contains God's law and other important teachings on various subjects. They regulate man's relationship with God, his neighbour and the society. The Holy Bible, the Glorious Qur'an and Oral Tradition supports dialogue with people of other religions for the purpose of evangelism and peaceful co-existence. Therefore, in this unit you will learn about the scriptural basis of religious dialogue.

2.0 **OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit you should be able to explain the scriptural bases of religious dialogue.

3.0 **THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

Dialogue is not a new thing to the Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion because their scriptures and Oral Tradition has laid foundation for it. The Holy Bible and the Glorious Qur'an and Oral Tradition have some passages and wise sayings that support religious dialogue which we shall consider in this unit.

3.1 The Biblical Basis for Religious Dialogue

Religious dialogue is as old as the Christian religion because it is deeply enshrined in the Bible. Both the Old and New Testaments contain passages that support dialogue which will be considered in this unit.

3.1.1 **The Old Testament on Religious Dialogue**

At the dawn of history as revealed in the Bible, God created the heavens and the earth with all that is in it including human beings. At creation, there was absolute unity about God's creation because the Bible said, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good (Genesis. 1:31a). God created humanity as a community of men and women, a vision of human unity based on obedient and joyful service to God (Paul Crow, 1982:30).

Before long Adam and Eve rebelled and broke their fellowship with God by claiming for themselves equality with God. They destroyed the childlike trust that kept men and women open to God's love and to one another. The lust for power caused them to lose their oneness with God. God's peace in Eden did not last long. By a tragic choice, Adam and Eve and the rest of humanity became separated from God. Harmony with God was shattered. A flaming sword kept the rebels away from the tree of life. (Genesis. 3:10). Harmony with others, for which we are created was broken (Genesis 3:12). Harmony with nature and within nature was also disrupted (Mensah, 1989:95).

However, God sought after man who was on the run and found him and had some discussions with him concerning his relationship with him noting the act of disobedience, pronouncing punishment and making promise of reconciliation (Genesis. 3:8-15). From beginning to the end of Old Testament, we have stories of alienation and reconciliation, brokenness and restored unity. At creation, as told in the book of Genesis, God wills for world peace, harmony and fruitfulness (Crow, 1982:30). From this example, we can see that God was the first to initiate dialogue for the sake of cordial relationship with man. It is important to note that God did not stop at initiation of this dialogue, but logically pursue it and finally reconciled man back to Himself in Jesus Christ.

God's dialogue with man took so many centuries and also passed through many generations before it was concluded in Jesus Christ. After God's promise, He

chooses Abraham and made him into a great nation, Israel to facilitate His dialogue with humanity. The treasures of God's shalom were to be broken open and lavished upon Abraham and his descendants. Yet all of God's investment in Abraham had to be turned over into Abraham's investment in others-never selfishly hoarded. The wonderfully destin y of the chosen people was that they were to model in the earth the highest values of God's kingdom; Loving God with all their hearts and loving the neighbours as themselves.   (Mensah, 1989:95–96). The covenant initiated by God between Himself and Abraham would surely succeed in recreation of the whole world because of the prophetic word in the covenant at Ur. "All people on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3).

After Abraham became a nation as intended by God, they were given the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) and other by laws to regulate their relationship with God and also facilitate their dialogue with him towards reconciliation. God continued to desire right relationship with his creation, so made provision for people to the redeemed from sin and rebellion against Him. The tent in the midst of the camp was a beautiful, restful tabernacle where God dwelt, a special place where he would meet with his people (Exodus 40:34-35). In order for them to be fit to stand in God's presence, they had to be cleansed of their sins. The laws instructing them in God's provision for their forgiveness climaxed in the day of atonement when a solemn o ffering was made for all the people and b lood was put on a goat which was taken out into the desert (Leviticus 16:1-34).

God's dialogue with humanity through the nation Israel took a long time and the Israelites were very unfaithful in keeping the terms of the agreement. But God was very patient with them. Mensah (1990:96) remarks that, "The people failed to obey God's instructions concerning the relationship with Him. They perverted justice, oppressed the poor and even prostituted themselves before foreign gods and goddesses. Instead of sharing God's blessings they became selfish hoarders". Despite repeated warnings of the prophets, the Israelites continued in their evil paths. God's anger was ignited against them and they suffer under their enemies and were taken to slavery or exile in Babylon.

Nevertheless, God did not give up about His relationship with the Israelites. Through prophet Isaiah God invited His people for a dialogue. "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. (Isaiah 1:18). God did not give up on his creation. Even in exile the covenant of peace was not forgotten. Through prophet Jeremiah, God discussed with the Israelite even when they were on exile. This is what the Lord says; "when seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfil my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD," plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah. 29:10–10).

From these Bible passages, it is very clear that God who instituted dialogue was in constant dialogue with His people Israel to reconcile their relationship with Him. The Old Testament story of the people of Israel illustrates the relentless effort of God at dialogue to maintain a cordial relationship with the Israelites. God's desire

to dialogue with His people is revealed in His love for Israel irrespective of their unfaithfulness to Him.

It is worthy to note that, in Old Testament (Exodus 20:1-3) the Israelites were warned not to worship other gods or follow the practices of those who worship such gods like adultery and offering sacrifice to these gods. But the Israelites were living among these nations and also interacting with them (Judges. 3:5). Therefore, it should be understood that the Israelites were forbidden from worshiping the gods these nations, and following other evil practices. But they were not for bidden from interacting with them as neighbours who must co-relate and exist in a peaceful atmosphere.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE.

With reference to some passages in the Old Testament explain how the Bible is a basis for religious dialogue.

3.1.2 Dialogue in the New Testament

God's dialogue with humanity which started in the Old Testament ended in the New Testament. There Jesus Christ' come in a society and environment which already had a religion - Judaism, but he never limited his mission or evangelism within the parameters of this religion. He interacted with Jews and non-Jews alike for the sake of his ministry as evident in some passages in the New Testament.

For example, in Luke 7:1-10, Jesus went to Capernaum and a Centurion sent some elders of the Jews to him to come and heal his servant who was sick. The Jewish elders came and pleaded with Jesus to honour the contrition's request, so he accepted and went with them, but before they got to the house, the Centurion sent some friends to stop Jesus from coming to his house because he considered himself worthy. He rather pleaded with Jesus to sent words, but this servant will be healed. So, Jesus sent a word and the servant was healed and he told the crowd with him th at he has never found such a great faith even in Israel.

Jesus again told a parable in Luke 10:30-37 of a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands o f robbers. They stripped h im of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest and a Levite who were Jews with him passed by and went awa y, but a Samaritan who was a non-Jew had pity on this man. He treated his wounds and also took him to an inn and paid the inn-keeper to take care of him. In the concluding words of this parable, Jesus said "which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? The answer to this question was obviously the Samaritan who had mercy on the man who was robbed (Luke 10:25-37).

From these passages, Jesus Christ wanted his audience who were mostly Jews to understand that their interaction should not be limited among themselves who belong to the same ethnic group and religion. He also wanted them to understand that their interaction with people of other ethnic groups and relationship will produce a positive result on their society. We can see that the initial assignment of Jesus in this world was among the Jews, yet he interacted or accepted and dialogue with the Centurion and served his servant and commended his faith. In the parable of the

Good Samaritan, supposing he also passed by and went away like the priest and the Levite because he was not a Jew and not even Judaiser that man would have died. So, these passages are a very good base for religious dialogue in the New Testament.

In another incidence, Jesus Christ went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon possession "At first Jesus did not say a word. So, his disciples came to him and urged him to send her away, for she keeps crying out after us. He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel". But, the woman came and knelt before him, and said Lord, help me. Jesus replied that is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs. But the woman said even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then Jesus said, woman –you have great faith, your request is granted. And her daughter was healed at that very hour (Mathew 15:21-28).

On another occasion, Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by name of Zacchaeus and he was a chief tax collector who was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today. So he came down at once and welcomes him greatly. When the people saw this they began to complain that Jesus has gone to be the guest of a sinner. But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount. Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too is a son of Abraham for the son of man came to seek and to save what was lost (Luke 19:1-10)".

From these passages (Mathew 15:21-28 and Luke 19: 1-10), Jesus was engaged in a discussion with a Jew who was considered a sinner and a non-Jew. In Jesus' conversations with the Canaanite woman that her daughter was possessed, he initially did not honour her request because he said he was sent to the lost sheep of Israel, but when the woman persisted that even dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Jesus granted her request and also commended her faith.

This passage (Mathew 15:21-28) is a very good basis for religious dialogue because Jesus' conversation with this woman and the subsequent healing of her daughter truly shows that Jesus Christ came not only for the Jews, but the whole world. Therefore, like our master and saviour, Jesus we will start our dialogue among ourselves and extend it to other religions existing alongside us. This may not be easily done, but if we persist like the Canaanite woman, our efforts will not be wasted. Christians must always remember that the fruits of dialogue are sometimes not notice immediately, but on a long run they may produce a very positive impact on adherents of the religions involved and enable them to co-exist and relate peacefully irrespective of differences. Based on this passage, we should also note that faith is very essential in making dialogue to work. This is because Jesus commended the faith of this Canaanite woman after her daughter was healed. So, Christians engaging in religious dialogue should not take for granted that it is a

political matter. Religions dialogue in deed need faith and commitment of the participants to make it work.

Jesus Christ encounter with Zacchaeus also have a good lesson to learn about religious dialogue. Although Zacchaeus was a Jew, he was considered a sinner because of his profession as a tax collector or custom officer. However, when Jesus had a dinner in his house and dialogue with him, Zacchaeus openly confessed his sins to Jesus and also promises to repay those he cheated. In essence supposing Jesus refused to dialogue with Zacchaeus he would have denied him the opportunity of saving his life and changing his situation for better.

Like our saviour Jesus Christ, let us not become tired of dialogue because adherents of other religions that are living alongside with us are too sinful and it is not working the way we expected it to work. We have to exercise patience and play our role and leave the rest for God. This is because if we are tired and stop it, we may not only be denying ourselves the opportunity of creating a conducive atmosphere to live in peace with adherents of other religions living alongside with us, but we may also be denying, someone or some people the opportunity of confessing their sins and turning to Jesus Christ as the saviour.

Jesus Christ again commissioned the disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything he had commanded them. He also promised to be with them to the very end of the age (Mathew 20:19-20). So, Jesus message to the disciples in this passage does not limit them to making converts through preaching or sharing of the Gospel, but it also gives them the opportunity of dialogue with people of other faith as a method of communicating the Gospel to them.

The compassionate, harmonious and positive interactions of people of faith with others should not be based on silence. People of faith should speak about their faith, and share the good news of Christ with others in the hope that they will turn to him too. But in sharing the good news, people of faith must be respectful, show interest in the others, be prepared to listen as well as to speak, and be gentle, not aggressive, hostile or insulting (Riddlell, 2004:24).

In Acts 10:34-35, after God spoke with Peter in a vision concerning the admission of non-Jews in the Church, he made a confessional statement when Cornelius sent for him to come and baptized him with his house hold. He said "I now realized how true it is that God does not show favouritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." Peter's confession here does not limit to the acceptance of the Gentiles into the church through witnessing and conversion. It also includes engaging people of other faith in dialogue for purpose of peaceful co-existence and a method of evangelism.

Paul in Acts 17:16-23 had an encounter with the people of Athens. He was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks as well as in the market place day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosopher began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, what is this babbler trying to say? Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the Good News about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took

him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is all about? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean."

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said! "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. Paul's method of dialogue of starting from unknown to known with the Athenians is a solid biblical support for religious dialogue and it is worth emulating. Paul as a Christian went into dialogue with Athenians who worship many gods, but he was able to convince some of them and won them over to Christianity. It is therefore not out of place for us to dialogue with people of other religions as a method or principle of witnessing Jesus Christ to them.

There are many passages both in the Old and New Testament that have supported religious dialogue, but Christians engaging in dialogue with people of other faith must be very careful not to distort or compromise the central message of Christianity that is based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They should also be warned not to allow themselves to be won over by other religions. So, religious dialogue at best is for matured Christians.

3.2.0 THE QUR'ANIC BASIS FOR RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE.

The Qur'an is the sacred scripture for Islam which was sent down to mankind through Prophet Muhammad. It has one hundred and fourteen (114) chapters or Sarah (suwar) and Six thousand, three hundred and sixty (6,360) verses (ayat) and has internal & external evidence that support religious dialogue. Some of these evidences will be considered as follow.

3.2.1 The Qur'an Recognized and Accepts the Testimony of the Jewish and Christian Scripture about Islam.

Muslims teach that Islam as a religion existed long before the arrival of Muhammad who was the last of all the prophets of humanity. From Adam to Jesus Christ, all the Prophets preached Islam; each according to his time. The Qur'an in 2:132 says, "And the same did Abraham enjoin on his sons, and did Jacob, saying, O, my sons God chosen the religion for you so die not unless you are Muslim". The testimony of the Qur'an from 2:132 supports the pre-existence of the Islamic religion before the arrival of Muhammad whom God used in bringing down the Qur'an through angel Gabriel. This implies that the Qur'an has acknowledged and accepted the testimonies of other scriptures about Islam before it was revealed. This is a good basis for dialogue for Islam and other religions since it sacred scripture have openly acknowledged and accepted the testimonies of other scriptures (Jewish and Christians) about its existence.

3.2.2 Islam is An All-inclusive Religion.

One of its striking characteristics is that, it requires its followers to believe not only in Muhammad, but also in all the other prophets that came before him, as messengers of one and same God (Abdul, 1971:16). The Qur'an in 3:83 reads, "say, we believe

in God and that which is revealed to us (the Qur'an) and that which is revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes; and that which is given to Moses and Jesus and the other prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them; and to Him (God) we do submit".

As far as religious dialogue is concerned, Islam seeks for peaceful co-existence and mutual tolerance between the people of different religions and cultures. Among the three Abrahamic religions, it is only Islam which has accorded recognition to Judaism and Christianity. Judaism does not recognize Jesus as the awaited Messiah or the Prophet; and Christianity does not recognize Muhammad as the true Prophet and messenger of God (Mutahhari, 2004:2). So, the recognition accorded to Judaism and Christianity by Islam based in the Qur'an is a very good point for tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

3.2.3 Some Prophets in the Bible and other Bible Characters are considered as Prophets in the Qur'an.

In Islamic worldview God sent many prophets and messengers to guide mankind; the number given in the Hadith is one hundred and twenty four thousand (124,000) Prophets. The first Prophet was Adam and the last Prophet was Muhammad. However, it is not all the 124,000 Prophets that were of the same rank and status (Mutahhari 200 4:2). Five of these Prophets are given the highest rank in the spiritual hierarchy; and they are Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad. Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an: "And when we made a covenant with the Prophets: with you, with Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa and Isa, son of Mariam" (33:7; 42:13).

A Muslim is required to believe in all the Prophets; otherwise he cannot be considered a "Muslim". If a person, for instance, says that I believe in Muhammad, Isa, Ibrahim and Nuhu, but not Musa as one of the Prophets of God, then he cannot be accepted as a Muslim; similarly, if a person believes in all the prophets but refuses to accept Isa as one of the Prophets and messengers of God, then he is not a Muslim. That is why Islam considers the Christian and the Jewish communities as "the people of the Book" or "the people of Scripture" (Ahlul Kitab).

Therefore, the consideration of some Biblical Prophets and other Bible characters as Prophets in the Qur'an and the Islamic obligation for all Muslim to accept all Prophets as messengers from God is a common ground for dialogue. This is because Judaism, Christianity and Islam recognise and accept that God used a group of human beings as messengers (Prophets) to bring his message to mankind which some of them are common to the three religions.

3.2.4 The Qur'an Recognised Plurality in God's Design.

The Glorious Qur'an in the following chapters and verses says: "O" people; we created you from single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (49:13) and "we sent you solely as a merc y for all creatures"(21:07). Plurality is inscribed in God's design; "To each among you have we prescribed a law and open way. If God has so willed, he would have made you simple people, but (His plan) is to test you in what He has given you; so excel each other in good deeds; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which you dispute" (5:18).

So, the Muslims are called upon in the Qur'an to seek justice through their dialogue activities with other reigons. The Qur'an says; "Give just measures and weight; do not deprive others of their due" (7:85) and "O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God as witnesses for fair dealing, and let not the hatred others turn you away from justice, be just: that is nearer to piety" (5:8).

These verses quoted from the Qur'an testifies that God inbuilt plurality in His design to make provision for acceptance and accommodation of others alongside His people. Therefore, this plurality in God's design is a strong point for religious dialogue since it is meant to accept and accommodate for peaceful co-existence.

3.2.5 **The Qur'an Emphasized Submission to the will of God as   Basis   for Salvation.**

The Qur'an say: "We believe in Allah, and what has been revealed to Ibrahim, Ismail, Ishaq, Yaqub and the Tribes; and what was given to Musa and Isa and to the Prophets from th eir Lord. We do not make any distinction between (the claim of) any of them, and to Him do we submit" (3:84). The main message of the Qur'an is submission of man to the will of God through the Prophets without distinction or discrimination.

Therefore, since other religions also emphasized faith in God through a medium. It becomes a common ground for Islam to dialogue with other religions based on their emphasis on faith or submission to the will of God especially amon g the Abrahamic religions. The Qur'an further say; And if they insist on you to associate with me (someone as an object of worship) of what you have no knowledge, then do not obey them, however i nteract with them in this world kindly... (31:15). Thus, a Muslim has to resist the un-Islamic influence of non- Muslims, but still be kind to them. In order words, although your paths in the hereafter will be separate, that does not prevent you from being kind, merciful, and just to non Muslims in this world (Rizvi, 2010; 13).

So, even those who dispute that the emphasis in the Qur'an on submission to the will of God must be through the revelation given to Muhammad citing from the Qur'an; "surely the religion with Allah is al-Islam And those who have been given the Book (i.e. the Christians and Jews) did not show opposition but after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves. And whoever disbelieves in the verses of Allah, then surely Allah is quick in reckoning" (3:19). Based on this argument Muslims ought to dialogue with practitioners of other religions for peaceful co-existence.

3.3.0 **THE BASIS FOR RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN AFRICAN   TRADITIONAL   RELIGION**

Unlike Christianity and Islam, African Traditional Religion has no scripture or Holy books. It is written in the history, the hearts and experiences of the people. Information and practices in African Traditional Religion are basically passed on from one generation to the other through oral tradition (Mbiti, 1975:17). Therefore, we shall consider some common practices among practitioners of African Religion that enhances peaceful co-existence as the basis for religious dialogue. These

include; beliefs, ceremonies and festivals, religious objects and places, values and morals and religious officials.

3.3.1 **Beliefs**

Beliefs are essential part of any religion. They show the way people think about the universe and their attitude toward life itself. African religious beliefs are concerned with topics such as God, spirits, human life, magic, the hereafter and so on (Mbiti, 1975:11).

Beliefs are common and important in every religion. Therefore, Christianity and Islam also have their belief systems just like African Religion. There are variations in their belief systems, but since all the three religions have a structured belief system, it is a common ground for religious dialogue.

3.3.2 **Religious Ceremonies and Festivals.**

Ceremonies and festivals are common and essential to all religions. Religious ceremonies show how people express their beliefs in practical terms. They include praying, making sacrifices and offerings, performing of rituals and observing various customs. Festivals are normally joyful occasions when people sing, dance, eat and celebrate a particular occasion or event (Mbiti, 1075:11).

Religious ceremonies and festivals are common to African Religion, Christianity and Islam. The ceremonies and festivals celebrated by these religions are not the same, but all of them have their ceremonies and festivals they celebrate to demonstrate their belief. For instance, practitioners of African Religion celebrate occasions like harvest time, birth of a child, the beginning of the rainy season etc. Christians celebrate occasions like Baptism, Christmas, Easter etc, while Muslims celebrate festivals like Eid-el-Maulud, Eid-el-Fitri, Eid-el-Kabir, Taa'sua, Ashurah, Maoulud-Nabiyy, Nisfu-Sha'aban etc.

Since Christianity and Islam also observe ceremonies and festivals like African Religion, it is a common ground for dialogue in African religion. This is because of the value attached to ceremonies and festivals by African Religion on one hand and Christianity and Islam on the other hand.

3.3.3 **Religious Objects and Places**

This part of religion covers things and places which people have set apart as being holy or sacred. They are not commonly used except for a particular religious purpose. There are many of such religious objects and places. Some are made by man, but others are taken in their natural form and set apart for religious purposes. Some belong to private individuals and families, while others belong to the whole community (Mbiti, 1975:12).

Religious objects and places are not only important to African Religion, but to both Christianity and Islam. Although, the religious objects and places of these religions are not the same, they all attached importance to it. Religious objects for African Religion include wood, calabashes, stones, pots, amulets, charms, masks, and places like shrines, mountains, forests etc. Religious

objects for Christianity include the cross, rosary and places like Church, altar,   For Islam, religious

Therefore, religious objects ad   places is a strong internal evidence for dialogue in African Religion.

3.3.4 **Values and Morals**

This is the part of religion which deals with ideals that safeguard or uphold the life of the people in their relationship with one another and the world around them. Values and morals cover topics like truth, justice, love, right and wrong, good and evil, beauty, decenc y, respect for people and property etc. They help people to live with one another, to settle their differences, to maintain peace and harmony, to make use of their belongings, to have a relationship with their environment (Mbiti, 1975:12).

Morals and values are highly regarded in African Religion as demonstration of one's religious life. Both Christianity and Islam also attach importance to values and morals even though the morals and values for these religions may not be the same. So, morals and values is another common ground for dialogue in African Religion.

3.3.5 **Religious Leaders or Officials**

African Religion has officials who lead the rest of the practitioners in worship. These are people who conduct religious m atters such ceremonies, sacrifices, formal prayers and divination. In many cases they are trained men and women. They know more about religious affairs than other people, and are respected by their communit y. The y are specialists and experts in religious matters; they are the human keepers of the religious heritage. They hold offices as priests, rainmakers, ritual elders, diviners, medicine men and even as king and rulers (Mbiti, 1975:12).

Islam and Christianity have officials as African Religion who leads them in religious matters. Religious leaders in Islam are Imam, In Christianity religious officials are Pope, Bishops, Reverend Pastors and Fathers, Evangelists, Elders, Deacons etc.

Religious officials in African Religion are not the same with ones in Islam and Christianity, but hence all the three religions have officials it becomes a common ground for them to dialogue together.

4.0   **CONCLUSION**

Religious dialogue is rooted in the Bible, the Qur'an and Oral Tradition as seen in this unit. Therefore, since the Scriptures and Oral Tradition has fully supported religious dialogue, Christians, Muslims and Practitioners of African Traditional Religion should no longer be afraid of engaging people of other faith in dialogue in order to enhanced peaceful co-existence. This also serves as a method of witnessing. Christians participating in dialogue must however be careful not to be won over to other religions and must never distort the central message of Christianity.

5.0   **SUMMARY**

You have learnt about the bass for dialogue as contained in the Christian and Moslem Scriptures and Oral Tradition. Some of the Biblical passages that support religious dialogue are Genesis 1:13a; 3:8, 10 – 15; 12: 3, Exodus 20:1-17; 40:34-35 Leviticus 16:1-34; Isaiah 1:18; Jeremiah 29:10 -11; Judges 3:5, Luke 7:1-10; 30-20, Acts 10:34 – 35; and 17:16-32. The Qur'anic passages that support dialogue are 2:132; 3:19,83-84; 5:8; 7:85; 20:7; 33:7; 31:15; 42:13 and 49:13. Oral Tradition also support dialogue based on common values in African Religion which include: beliefs, ceremonies and festivals, religious objects and places, morals and values and religious officials or leaders.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Discuss with references to at least three passages from the Bible, two passages from the Qur'an and one common value from Oral Traditional on how the Bible, the Qur'an and Oral Tradition are basis for religious dialogue.

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The Holy Bible.

The Glorious Qur'an.

UNIT 5. UNRESOLVED DIFFICULTIES

Content
1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives

3.0   Main body
3.1   Dietary Restriction
3.2   Mixed marriages
3.3   The duty of the Apostolate
3.4   The problem of secrecy and mystical powers with   African Religion.
4.0   Conclusion
   5.0 Summary
   6.0 Tutor marked Assignment (TMA)
   7.0 References/Further Reading.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

There are still some obstacles that remain even if Muslims, Christians and adherents of African Religion agree to forget the wrongs of the past and free themselves from prejudice by paying attention to the way forward. It would be illusory and vain to ignore these in an effort to practice dialogue. Christians, Muslims and practitioners of African religion know from experience that these obstacles have to do with customs, regulations and conditions. All these carry much weight and influence on meaningful dialogue. Dialoguers should be honest and open enough to discuss the issues freely and objectively so that none of the parties will be accused of ulterior motives or of using dialogue for its own ends.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to explain the unresolved difficulties concerning religious dialogue among the three religions in Nigeria.

3.0   THE OBSTACLES TO SUCCESSFUL DIALOGUE

3.1   Dietary Restriction

Living together presupposes eating and drinking together by adheren ts of African Religion, Christianity and Islam. The practitioners are faced with the problem of dietary restrictions. These can cause a hindrance even to the most straight forward and friendly relationship. It should be remembered that Muslims are forbidden to eat blood, swine-flesh, animals dedicated unto any other than Allah, and the strangled animals and the dead animals whose blood has not been drained (Quran 5:3). The Qur'an also forbids Muslim from taking any strong or alcoholic drink (Qur'an 5:90).

        Practitioners of African Religion also have some dietary restrictions depending on a particular religion or custom. Some are forbidden from eating certain food items and animals based on their roles as officials of the religions. For example, it is a taboo prescribed by their ancestors who forbid them from eating certain food items and animals such as dogs and palm wine. Pink kola is taboo to

Orisanla of the Yoruba. (Quaracopome 1987: 169). Among the Tiv people of Benue State in Nigeria, eating of dog meat is a taboo while traditionally women were also forbidden from eating eggs.

Christians should therefore be aware of the dietary requirements of the Muslims and adherents of African Religion, so that when they prepare meals and refreshments members of the three religions should feel at ease. Muslims and Practitioners of African Religion in faithfulness to the prescriptions of their religions should be free to act according to their conscience, and should also respect the choice of others.

3.2   Mixed Marriages

The frequent movement and intermingling of peoples across the globe at this time has resulted almost everywhere in mixed marriages. Many partners in these unions try to use their difference in religion as a means of drawing closer together in dialogue. Although some of the marriages among adherents of the three religions, Christianity, Islam and African Religion have succeeded, while a few have failed. Their consequences are usually difficult, even unhappy, for the partners and especially for the children. This is why the three religious communities have always tried rightfully to discourage such marriages by creating legal obstructions.

Among the three religions, African religion is more liberal about mixed marriage, but it is not free from problems that usually accompany a marriage of adherents of different religions. Whose religion is to be followed? The husband or the wife and whose religion should the children followed? In case they are still adherents of different religions. Christianity and Islam are sterner about the issue of mixed marriage. Adherents of these two religions are never willing to give their daughters in marriage to a man from another religion for whatever reason. They even prefer their men to marry within their religious community.

Therefore partners in dialogue need to learn carefully the various regulations which, when in conflict with one another will result in family crises. There is a tendency to judge too hastily that the respective religions are solely responsible for the difficult situations. Indeed the success of any marriage union among members of these three religions depends upon how carefully those involved are informed of the implications of their situation. If such marriages are favourably sustained, they are extraordinary environment for religions dialogue.

3.3   Problem of Apostasy

Both Christianity and Islam are missionary religions. In other words, members of Christianity and Islam are expected to be involved in sharing their faith with others. However, actual practices are sometimes in strange contrast with the ideal that is agreed upon in dialogue. Christians and Muslims must both expect to be accused of inappropriate proselytism. They should be ready to justify the methods, means and goals of their apostolate. They must discuss this question at still greater length in their times of formal dialogue. (Borrmans, 1990:85).

The mandate of witnessing is of course the duty of all believers who are sincere to their faith and their community (Mathew 28:19-20). This is an essential value recognized equally by both Islam and Christianity, a value that the two religions have sometimes sought to safeguard by the use of certain laws. Although

both recognize that there should never be any coercions in matters of religion, Christians must remember that Islamic law forbids Muslims to give up their religion for another (ridda), and it prescribes severe punishment for such transgression. It seems that at present Muslim societies find it rather difficult to accept the principle of religious liberty that grants to earth adult person the right to adopt the religion of his or her choice. This is one of the reasons for the serious mutual misunderstandings between Christians and Muslims.

3.4 Problem 0f Secrecy

Unlike Christianity and Islam, African religion has no revealed scripture t hat one can search through to get clearance on issues about the religion which are not clear especially to non-adherents. In the absence of documented scripture, information about the religion is transmitted from generation to generation through oral tradition. This however is open to high possibility of distortion. This issue is compounded by the association of African Religion with mystical powers and secrecy which cannot be accessed by non- adherents and researchers. Fuller (2001-80) remarks that, "African people believe in spiritual or unseen power, which may or may not be linked to specific divinities and spirits. Most people think that originally it comes from God, and it is just there, available for use by anyone who knows how to tap it".

The existence of secret societies is an important feature of African Religion. The secret societies connote cult groups, closed associations with closed membership. A person could belong to more than one secret society at a time and more often than not a person's social status is determined by the member of secret societies to which one is admitted and the position he holds in these societies (Quarcoopome, 1987:179). So, the problem of mystical powers and secrecy associated with African religion is an obstacle to the complete success story of dialogue among African Religion, Islam and Christianity.

Christians are however, urge to do their best to co-relate and live peacefully with adherents of other religions living alongside with them. Christians must always remember what the Bible says in Romans 12:18, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone". Christians are encouraged to take advantage of the issues that are common to them and other religions to create a cordial relationship, but they are equall y discouraged to leave the unresolved difficulties between them and other religions for peace to reign.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In an attempt to create a cordial relationship among religions in Nigeria through dialogue, a common ground has been found on which adherents of these religions can interact freely. However, there are still some difficulties that have not been resolved among these religions which may never be compromised. Therefore, Christians should be aware of these unresolved difficulties and do their best to avoid them and relate with Muslims and members of African religions on the factors that are common to all of them.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have learnt about unresolved difficulties in this unit. These include dietary restriction, mixed marriages, the duty of the apostolate and the problem of mystical

powers and secrecy associated with African religion. Christians are encouraged to build their relationship with adherents of African religion and Muslims using factors that are common to all of them. You are also advised to leave the difficulties that are not yet or may never be resolved behind and forge towards peaceful dialogue.

6.0   Tutor Marked Assignment
Discuss the unresolved difficulties among the religions in Nigeria.

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MODULE 3 RELEVANCE OF RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

UNIN 1 SERVICE TO HUMANKIND

Content

1.0   Introduction
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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Man as the apex and crown of God's creation should respect his dignity and license of ruling over the earth (Genesis 1:28). Man must always consider the task of fulfilling the will of His creator by rendering services to humanity as a divine mandate that must not be compromised. So, adherents of all religions must disci pline themselves to respect all human beings, defend their rights and render services them.

2.0   OBJECTIVES
At the end of this unit, you should be able to list services that need to be rendered to humanity by all believers.

3.1 The Origin of Human Dignity

In the Islamic worldview, human beings possess an exceptional quality within the created world. The Qur'an affirms that God "formed them (human beings) harmoniously" and breathed into them of his "formed (Qur'an 15:29, rendition by translator), making them his "victory (kha-lifa) in the earth," even though they would "do harm therein and … shed blood" (Qur'an 2:30). A "trust" (amana) was committed to them, a responsibility from which "the heavens and the earth and the hills" turned away (Qur'an 33:72) . So, it is said that humans h ave been "challenged" (mukhatab), made responsible (mukallaf) by God for all things. This is no doubt why in the Qur'an it is said that the angels bowed down before Adam. There is a prophetic hadith that says, "God created Adam in His image."

For its part, the Christian tradition has developed to a high degree the biblical teaching that "man was created 'to the image of God,' is capable of knowing and loving his Creator, and was appointed by Him as master of all earthly creatures that he might subdue them and use them to God's glory" (Maurice Borrmans, 90). Subsequentl y Jesus Christ revealed to men and women the extraordinary dignity that they have in being children adopted by the Father in the name and image of the one who is for all time the Perfect Son. The Christian man, conformed to the likeness of that Son who is the firstborn of many brothers, receives 'the first-fruits of the Spirit' (Romans 8:23) by which, he becomes capable of discharging the new law of love," since "Christ has risen…. He has lavished life upon us so that, as sons in the Son, we can cry out in the Spirit: Abba, Father!"

African Religion also has a very high view of man as the representative of the Supreme Being in the universe. It is even the respect for the dignit y of man that had led Africans to worship their departed ones as ancestors. Adherents of African religion believed that man is the most important being in God's creation and so becomes more powerful after his departure from this life and even determines wellbeing of the living and should be appeased to do the best for the living.

Because all human beings share in that high dignity, either in reality or in hope, they have the right to be respected, served and loved. Christians and Muslims and adherents of African religion are obliged, then, to render service to all people, both collectively and individuals, according to their particular needs, since "man…. Is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself".

3.2 Promotion of Human Dignity

First of all there is the *dignity of life,* demonstrated by the respect shown to motherhood and the rejection of abortion through a balanced view of the bodily desires with recognition of their spiritual significance. This involves taking meticulous care of the sick with absolute respect for the biological functions of their bodies. It also means making deliberate efforts to rehabilitate or treat the physically and mentally handicapped and show love to the dying.

Another aspect of human nobility is the *dignity of the spirit.* Man judges rightly that by his intellect, he surpasses the material universe, for he shares in the light of the divine mind. Thus, human beings are capable of grasping empirical truths, discovering spiritual realities and exercising wisdom. Respect for the dignity

of human intelligence calls for the provision of adequate means for universal education in order that everyone might have access to all forms of culture.

Likewise, human dignity is expressed in the *dignity of the conscience*, understood both psychologically and morally. That is why believers strive to ensure that as material and technical progress takes place it is accompanied by moral and spiritual development. Is the life of modern human beings serving more and more to enhance the dignity of human personality? Are the demands of the conscience becoming clearer, nobler and higher, or are we witnessing a moral regression under the influence of new technology and unbridled norms of morality that are ultimately grounded in the loving good will of God conscience, even if misguided, to be respected, then enlightened and brought to true freedom.

The mystery of the human conscience leads, then, to the *dignity of freedom.* Thus freedom means that human beings are not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to their own beliefs, whether privately or publicity, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits (Maurice Borrmans 1990: 92).

So, adherents of the three religions practiced in Nigeria can work together to promote human dignity since all of them are human beings. This is even while Christians and Muslims have developed particular programs of aid, showing their impartial good will to help those in needs. In this way all parties through serving others can advance their dialogue regarding the spiritual values which already unite them, and share together the sublime vision of human dignity that inspires them.

3.3   **The Most Deserving of Service**

It is by service to the most deprived that believers can best testify to their respect for human dignity. The faith that motivates their acts is most clearly seen in the zeal with which they seek to help and deliver the oppressed from their burdens, comfort and teach the orphans and the handicapped, and treat the lepers and mentally ill. The true extent of their love for humanity is proven by the degree to which they show kindness for the marginalized of society, affection for the elderly, and tenderness toward the dying. Even atheists (those who deny the existence of God) are not excluded from this human concern, for their dignity is fully recognized, even though their denial of God involves certain serious possibilities for undermining human dignity and for disturbing the peace of the world (Maurice Borrmans 1990:93).

Christians, Muslims and Practitioners of African Religion should cooperate with one another in showing basic respect and rendering helpful hands toward the masses of those in whose favour the Beatitudes speak: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for there is the kingdom of heaven" (Mathew 5:1-10). For their part, Muslims are ever mindful that the Qur'an requires that they put into practice their own ideals of justice and mercy: "And serve

Allah. Ascribe nothing as partner unto Him. (Show) kindness unto parents, and unto near kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and unto the neighbour who is not of kin, and the fellow-traveller and the wayfarer and (the slaves) whom your right hands possess" (4:360). All those, then, who go back to Abraham in their religions can together join with all who hold to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, calling attention to the fact that the people who should be given first priority in the defence of those rights are the ones who have been long deprived of them and whose cries of distress continually rise to God.

4.0   CONCLUSION

The essence of religion is to help man maintain a cordial relationship with God and his neighbour. Therefore, it is important for adherents of Christianity, Islam and African religion to fulfil this divine mandate of offering appropriate services to humanity as an aspect of fellowship with God. Since all adherents of all these religions are human beings, they should realised their place and position in God's creation and accord themselves the desired respect as the image bearers of God and dialogue about their faith together.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt about the services needed to   offer   to humanity as the crown of God's creation as a common ground for   dialogue among the religions in Nigeria. The origin of human   dignity   is   from   God. Therefore, it should be respected and promoted by all   believers. More so adherents of all religions should fight for justice and protect the rights of the marginalised.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

In your own opinion discuss any two services that are needed to   offer   to humanity that can serve as common ground for dialogue   among the religions in Nigeria.

7.0   REFERENCES / FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2. ORGANIZATION OF SOCIETY

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1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main body
    3.1.1 The dignity of marriage and the family
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1.0   **INTRODUCTION**

Practitioners of Christianity, Islam and African Religion are human beings who live in the society where the values that promote the human dignity are honoured. Every religion also encourages her members to be law abiding and contribute to the building of the society. Muslims are taught of an excellent city (al-mardina, al-fadila) to come and the hope to establish an earthly society where the law of God will prevail. Practitioners of African Religion strongly believe in communal life which place importance on individual contributions to the building of the society where the less privilege like orphans, widows, the aged etc. has a place. Christians also believe

that the shape of this present world will pass away, while God is preparing a new earth where justice will abide and whose blessedness will answer and surpass all human suffering and expectation. Therefore, adherents of the three religions can dialogue together in their effort to contribute to the building and organization of the society.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to state the factors that will enable all believers to contribute to the building and organization of the society and also dialogue together.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   The Dignity of Marriage and the Family

Religious Practitioners can help solve the difficult problems faced by families, while at the same time respect their religious traditions, taking into account the nature of the family in a particular culture, whether it is patriarchal or strictly conjugal. Some of the issues to be addressed are: freedom to choose one's marriage partner, financial independence for new families, adequate housing, the responsibility of the wife, the rights of children, responsible fatherhood and motherhood, conjugal harmony, presence of the elderly in the home, relations between the generations. Believers desirous of being of service to their societies should share together their experiences and their aspirations with regard to family life. Often Muslims are gratified to find that their Christians and adherents of African Religion have the same ideas as theirs for marriage and the family. All of them purpose to live example of "the authentic dignity of persons… joined to one another in equal affection" (Borrmans, 1990:94).

A further possible common action for believers is to promote the high dignity of human sexuality by denouncing cheap pleasure-seeking and vulgar forms of eroticism. This is possible by affirming full respect for human life in opposition to abortion and infanticide as "unspeakable crimes.'' There are in fact many opportunities where witness can be borne to believers about marriage and the family: sexual education for adolescents, preparation of engaged couples for marriage, maternity and child care centres, social services for those couples who become separated, family and educational groups, and many other occasions for promoting the values of love and life by the concerted action especially of those who are competent in biology, medicine, psychology and the social sciences. In this way, the dignity of marriage and family will become a common point for dialogue.

3.2   Economic and Social Justice

By virtue of their faith in the living God who is both "generous bestowal" and "just providence," believers should show by their deeds that "God intended the earth and all that it contains for the use of every human being and people. Thus, as all men follow justice and unite in charity believers can as well dialogue about their faith together on a reasonable basis. To do this it must ever be remembered that man is the source, the centre, and the purpose of all socio-economic life.

In their common concern o find solutions to economic and social conflicts, on the national or international levds, they must affirm that economic development is intended to be for the benefit of humanity, always under the control of human beings. As believers of different religions work together about their economy, they can equally dialogue together about their faith.

3.3 Political Harmony

The social virtues extolled alike by the different religions encourage believers to inculcate among their people spirit of civic responsibility which is concerned for the common good of all and for the full protection of human rights. Such a spirit is expressed by assuming concrete responsibilities, such as democratic participation in the management of public affairs, including maintaining the needful autonomy of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government and defending basic civil liberties.

Believers are called upon to give an example of devotion to the sense of duty and of service to the advancement of the common good. Thus, they can also show in practice how authority is to be harmonized with freedom, personal initiative with consideration for the bonds uniting the whole social body, and necessary unit y with beneficial diversity. In like manner, believers can dialogue about their faith and enjoy the benefits, but still maintain their differences.

3.4 Nation Building

In their concern for justice, equality and brotherhood, believers cannot limit their vision to the particular national group of which they are a part. The religious message that they proclaim requires them to seek peace at all times. The experience of history and the inspiration of God have taught them that peace is not simply the absence of war, nor is it merely a balance of terror and suspicion. Rather, peace is "an enterprise of justice" (Isaiah 32:17) which requires respect for the welfare of all p eople and th at "cannot be obtained… unless personal values are safeguarded and men freely and trustingly share with one another the riches on their inner spirits and their talents" (Maurice. B, 1990:97).

Therefore, all are called to work for peace and reconciliation wherever and whenever possible. They must never forget the inhumanity of all wars, especiall y that of "total war" and of terrorism. They must denounce all forms of ethnic or cultural genocide, as well as t he continual arms race, for "while extravagant sums are being spent on the furnishing of ever new weapons, an adequate remedy cannot be provided for the multiple miseries afflicting the whole modern world". In sum, they must help their fellow human beings to be liberated from their age-old bondage to war by finding ways to settle their differences in a truly human manner. Believers of different religions should strive to build their nation together; they equall y dialogue their faith together to maintain a peaceful atmosphere and cordial relationship. Since the spiritual and physical, both work together for the development of any nation.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Building and organization of society plays an important role in the life of adherents of Christianity, Islam and African religion and such have become a common ground

for dialogue among the religions. As members of these religions work together to promote the dignity of marriage and the family and interact in politics to bring about a positive change in economic and social justice of the society, they can equally dialogue about their faith together successfully.

5.0   SUMMARY

You have learnt about the building and organisation of the society as one among the areas of dialogue among Christians, Muslims and adherents of African religion. The factors that will enable them in the building the nation are the dignity of marriage and the family, political harmony, economic and social justice.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss any two factors that will aid Christians, Muslims and adherents of African Religion in the building of the society as a means of dialogue.

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Units 3:   HUMAN IMITATION OF DIVINE ACTION

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Human beings are made in the image of God after his likeness (Geneses, 1:27). This is even what has distinguished man from the rest of the creation. So, there is need for man to follow the good example of his creator God who initiated dialogue with the first man and successfully reconciled him back to Himself in Jesus Christ. God also expects us to maintain a cordial relationship with our neighbours.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to state how human beings (believers) can imitate God as a means of dialogue with people of other faith.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   Man is made in the image of God

At creation, God made all other things without pre-existing materials, but man was made with a difference. He was made in the image and likeness of God and was placed in charge of the entire creation on behalf of God. However, man soon rebel against God by disobeying instructions given to him (Gen.3:1-10).

Prior to the fall of man, he and God were friends. But, after the fall, man become afraid and started running away from Him. God however sought after man who sinned against him and found him and also (Gen. 3:11-20) made a promise to reconcile him back to Himself. To fulfil this promise, God choose Abraham and made a covenant with him which later fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

God's reconciling purpose is symbolized next in one people. In a new covenant with Abraham, God created a new nation (Gen. 12,15) Israel was to be the instrument of unity, with a mission to bring God's healing to all humanity, (Paul A. Crow, 1952:31) Islam too, standing within this board tradition affirms humankind's role as vice regent and regards human beings as trustees for the rest of the creation (Michael Nazir Ali, 1991: 151).

In following the footsteps of our creator Christians need to pursue dialogue with people of other faith at all cost. This is because God who Adam and Eve, rebelled against was the one that initiated a dialogue and sought after them and reconciled them back to Him. Like our creator, Christians need to be patient and also love the people of other faith in order to have a successfully dialogue. It took God a long time with love to reconcile humanity, so we must also be very patient to reap the fruits of dialogue. So, Christians are urge to engage in dialogue wherever they find themselves and lead for others to follow.

3.2 Jesus Christ as Perfect Example

The dialogue that was initiated by God, the Father in the Old Testament was finally completed in Jesus Christ who came into this world and was involved in dialogue with different people both Jews and non-Jews alike as discussed in details in module 2 unit 4. Upon completion of his ministry in this world, he mandated the disciples to continue to dialogue with others as a means of evangelism a peaceful relationship.

Christians are challenged by the high standard set for them by Jesus Christ, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and the good, and send rains on the just and on the unjust... you must therefore be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect (Matthew .5:44-45, 48). Islam and African religion also encourages their adherents to be kind and relate cordially with their neighbours as a mark of their relationship with God (creator) who will one day judge them based on their deeds in this world.

Like Jesus Christ, Christians should rise up to the challenge of loving even their enemies by engaging them in dialogue. Christians must remember that, when believers promote dialogue and work together to build a more harmonious and inclusive society, they do so because, to them, peace and unity within diversity are gifts of God, and because they believe in a merciful and compassionate God who forgives and unites, who never despairs of the people who are most resistant to His will (Maurice B. 1990: 99).

We must follow the example of Jesus Christ by building bridges of peace even with the Muslims who kill and maim our families and friends, even those who burn our churches and loot of our properties (Kadala, 2009:172). This is because the Greek word *agape* calls for deliberate unconditional, sacrificial all- inclusive, and non-violent universal love. Jesus wants us to practice unconditional love of God to show that we are his children and are different from the gentiles who used to love only their friends, but hate their enemies (Matthew.5:43-48).

4.0   CONCLUSION
We are made in the image and likeness of God. So, let us be like our Father in heaven by loving people even of other faith and engage them in dialogue as a means of evangelism and peaceful co-existence. Let us also learn to be patient, as we may not experience the desired peace with our neighbours immediately, but God is still in control. Let us play our part and allow his will to be done concerning our relationship with people of other faiths. He will never disappoint us.

5.0   SUMMARY
You have learnt in this unit about human imitation of divine action as a means of engaging in dialogue with adherents of other religions. We are to follow the examples of God the Father who sought after Adam and Eve and found them and initiated a dialogue into them and like Jesus Christ who came and completed the dialogue initiated by the Father. He also commanded us to do the same.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
Discuss how Christians in Nigeria can imitate Jesus Christ   as a   means of dialogue with people of other faith.

7.0   REFERENCE / FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4: PURPOSE OF CREATION AND IMPLICATION FOR RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

CONTENT
1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Body
        3.1   Fellowship with God and one another
        3.2 Leadership of the Earth.
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor Marked Assignment
7.0   References / Further Reading

1.0   INTRODUCTION

God created man with a definite reason and this was to fellowship with him, and to subdue the earth. It was man's disobedience that brought distortion about God's plan of making him, however Jesus came and redeemed man back to the lost glory. So, all believers must always remember God's original intention for them and work towards achieving it.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to explain the purpose   of creation and its implication for religious dialogue   religions in   Nigeria.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   Fellowship with God and one Another

God originally created man for fellowship with him, but man is disobedience distorted this fellowship (Gen.3:8-14). The Bible however told us that God sought after man, found him and brought him back for fellowship with Him through Jesus Christ. The Muslims too, have it that God revealed himself to Prophet Muhammad and gave him instructions on how to reconcile his people back to himself as contain in the Qur'an. Adherents of African religions also believed that God was close to man, but because of man's disobedience He is no longer close. The Supreme Being however had provided small deities to help reconcile man to him when appeals through scarifies and prayers.

So, if all the three religions accept the fact that God created man for fellowship, but that fellowship was distorted along the line and the essence of these religions is to revive this fellowship with God and one another. If this is the case, why not dialogue together on this common ground, but leave the uncompromising differences. Although coming from different directions, but they all want to get to a common destination. So, it is not out of place to discuss and interact as they move towards the destination.

3.2   Leadership of the Earth

Apart from fellowship, God mandated man at creation to rule this world and also subdue it. (Gen.2: 29). Even with man's disobedience that led to his partial separation from God, he is still in charge of this universe. This is why irrespective of religious affiliations, when it comes to the issues of leadership, you see people from different religions coming together to rule and subdue the earth in one way or other.

With reference to the situation in Nigeria, you will hardly tell who is a Muslim or Christain or an adherent of African religion when it comes to issues like politics, marketing, farming, education and so on. If this is the case, let Christians, Muslims and Practitioners of African Religion dialogue together to fulfil the divine mandate of ruling this universe.

4.0   CONCLUSION

God created humanity for fellowship and leadership of the earth. Therefore irrespective of our religious affiliations, let all believers' dialogue together on this common ground and live in peace with one another.

5.0   Summary

In this unit, you have learnt about the fulfilment of the creation as a common ground for dialogue among Christians, Muslims and followers of African religion. God created man for fellowship with him and also mandated him to subdue the earth. The fellowship was distorted, but the essence of religion is to restore this fellowship. So let us put our differences aside and dialogue together on this common ground.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

How will you convince adherents of Islam, Christianity and African Religion that fulfilling the aim of creation for humanity is a common ground for them to dialogue together?

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