

## SOCIAL ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF ABRAHAM'S REJECTION OF ISHMAEL,

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### Abstract

*The Nigerian society is experiencing a lot of violence and high crime rate which may be attributed to Religion. Nigeria has attracted international attention for the criminal activities that emanate from Religious fanaticism. In the country, the most conspicuous crisis any time any where Ethno Religious Crisis. The problem of Religious superiority is the anchor base of conflict in Nigeria. The country has lost confidence in her children, we live in fear of one another. We suspect one another and no one is sure of what will happen in the next moment of the day as human beings, man to man has become so unjust, you don't know whom to trust, even as brothers of the same father. We are all aware that the Religious conflict we suffer always is usually between the two brothers with the two major Religions of the world Christianity and Islam. "Somebody once asked me why is it that Muslims and Christians are always fighting" it is this question that prompted me to have an indebt look at these two religions, to see if I can trace the original source or the cause of this crises. For I know that, there is a time for crises and a time for peace. I know that fighting can be forgiven and forgotten but only scar that cannot be forgotten. Therefore, what is this issue that cannot be resolved for us to have a peaceful and cordial co-existence? How long shall we continue to exist in fear or suspicion of one another? When it is on record that Abraham is the father of Isaac and Ishmael. Yes they however, they are half-brothers of the same blood, what then is this problem that have resulted to this "ENDLESS RELIGIOUS CRISIS", which has become a "Generational Crisis", this is also the issue that brought these two Religions, which i captioned, "ONE GOD TWO RELIGION, for anybody to think that, the two religions worship different God's will be a misconception of knowledge: how will two brothers of one blood have two Gods, whom is said to be the father of all Nations. A proper study into these two Religions using biblical historical method shows that they are offshoots of the Jewish traditional Religion, called "JUDAISM", which is ascribed to ABRAHAM as the founder.*

### Introduction

The rejection of Ishmael by his father, it is already an established issue, which has led to several unpleasant situations in Nigeria and the world in general. And to think of reconciling this issue which already has two warring religions is a task that must be done if Nigeria will remain a United Nation.

How to handle this issue is the task of this research because, the injury it has caused in the world. The several religious crises, that has destroyed many things and the differences in doctrinal issues and beliefs with several lives and properties lost.

The question is why was the 1<sup>st</sup> child given the second place? Why was he, Ishmael denied every inheritance of his earthly father? Which takes us to the problem of legitimacy, of

the child remains an issue to be studied. If his birth did not receive God's approval, why did God allow the sexual relationship to take place and choose to bless him with great FORTUNE greater than that of Isaac. Does God delight in violence and confusion, war and wickedness, this study will confirm the bible story of Gen 16-12 that, Ishmael and Isaac are children of Abraham. Ishmael been the 1<sup>st</sup> born of Hagar his second wife and Isaac born by Sarah the first wife. Gen.16:2 says, "Sarah realizing she was not likely to have children, given her age says to her husband "go take my servant Hagar, marry her and her child shall be mine", Abraham complied and did as the wife directed. And when this child was born Sarah regretted what she did and blamed her situation on her husband saying "you are the cause of this problem (Gen. 16:5)". **"The problem of faith, doubt and impatience"** why, did God ever allow this relationship to take place is another major problem of this study. In fact, truly the Religious crisis we suffer today in this world is traced to this **REJECTION!** Ishmael becoming the father of Muslims and Isaac the father of the Jews. To which Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin observes;

*the Genesis account that is not an idyllic story, but the story of a dysfunctional family, he said "it is the eternal pattern of the book of Genesis; damaged relationships between siblings and within families".*

He said it is the battle between brothers, which we want to reconcile in Nigeria.

Crisis is inevitable but can be controlled, can there also be total solution to it? The truth is that to resolve crises is not an easy one, culture, language and other communication symbols must be used. So that to engage in crises resolution and reconciliation is to accept that crises is bad phenomena which we must get rid of.

There is also a crises perspective which asserts that conflicts are not generally resolvable. Crises can reoccur and take a new form. Or better still, we can perhaps only succeed in transforming the conditions of crises.

A crisis may roll on and take new forms between the parties concerned. A roll-on crises may have short term devastating consequences on human and material resources each time it occurs between parties. Such crises is believed to lack initial proper and adequate solutions or they may defy solutions according to "Oneigu Otite"

The question is how long shall we live without a lasting solution to crises? We cannot continue like this, from records so far though not accurate it is believed that over million Nigerians have lost their lives through crises and property worth millions destroyed. It is important to note that life is sacred and important. If you take somebody's live, there is no way you can bring back that live. I believe that for men and women of goodwill, Christians and Muslims, it is important to respect the sanctity of human life. It is time we put a stop of these killings.

In fact, the more disturbing fact of it all is that we do not only kill one another, we now roast one another. Roast human beings, unfortunate phenomena. Nigerians have so abused and deprived Nigerians of their fundamental human rights. According to M. Craston and quoted by Otite Eze in his book, Human Rights in Africa (1987) says – "A human right is something of which no one may be deprived without a great affront to justice. There are certain deeds which should never be done, certain freedoms which should never be invaded, something which are supremely sacred" "Nigeria is a blessed Country of God", it is Gods own country.

It becomes a burden in the hearts of goodwill Nigerians, while a United Nigeria should turn to a crises Nigeria. "One Nigeria now means divided Nigeria". That Nigeria is one and indivisible is no longer a reality. Can't we realize that we are brothers, the children of one man, Abraham, can't we forgive the mistakes or weakness of our fathers and uphold the love of **"BROTHERHOOD"**.

For Nigeria to remain indivisible something serious must be done and now is the time – The costs of Religious War are enormous and practically unnecessary. It is not only a waste of human and material resources but it also retards the civilization and economic strength of the nation. Today Boko Haram is another terrible and devastating problem in Nigeria. Our children are dying daily for an **"UNJUST WAR". WHY?**

Government has not actually taken it seriously to handle crises well knowing the pluralistic nature of the Country. And the problem of religious differences – Isaac and Ishmael should no longer be our problem, we are true brothers of two religions of God.

### **Purpose for this Study on the Rejection**

The purpose of this study is to provide some practical basis for Christian Muslim friendly discussion and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria and to find a lasting solution to Religious crises.

Christians and Muslims are found living together within the extended family, in the society as neighbours, they are found actively in government and in Nation-building. But religion has become a very sensitive matter in recent years. In consequence of which the liberty, peace and solidarity of Nigerians are seriously threatened.

This study therefore seeks to suggest ways and means of removing the crises which religious sentiments such as inferiorization of other religions, fanaticism which seeks to impose one's religious view on others and the inordinate political ambition which tries to manipulate government machineries to dominating minority group, have brought on our co-existence, unity and development in Nigeria,

*truly all these resulted from the foundation of the rejection of Ishmael, which indeed calls for a rethinking today. What then does peace mean in this country? The word that describes the intention of this work is "accord and reconciliation". In this case people of various creeds come together for the purpose of overcoming the challenges of our nation instead of one group aiming at dominating the other. The accord and reconciliation will also work even in political scene, when the participating groups see themselves as "National Brothers" and in a religious sense "brothers under one God but two religions vice regents on earth. It is on this regard that I have chosen to do research on principles that can usher in religious freedom, tolerance to the credit of Nigeria. The concentration is therefore the quest for peace and brotherhood, the basis for con-existence, co-operation and nation – building to find a lasting solution.*

A review of the machineries set by the government for crises will be taken seriously with entirely new hypothesis for experimentation viz. Advisory Council on Religious Affairs (ACRA) establishment in 1987 which was established under Decree No. 20 of 1987 and the establishment of NIREC – Nigerian Inter Religious Council, now handling Religious crisis,

*proper study of the implications and consequences of the Rejection of Ishmael, we will also do research to find time causes or remote causes of Religious crises and its true effect on the nation and individual lives.*

A study of the social Religious system of Islam and Christianity will also be done, the rules and norms, doctrine and values and virtues of each Religion will be addressed.

The issue is should there be crises in Nigeria a Country which was noted for peace, freedom and liberty now crises torn Nation. A Country with a significant National Anthem of 1960 –that says though tribe and tongue may differ, in brotherhood, we stand now with a new trade mark of killing one another and for wasting themselves – why this new occurrence? Indeed it is a “GENERATIONAL SIN” founded in immorality that was accepted as good. Which was arranged by Sarah, because of impatience? Our main scope will be the biblical story of Genesis 16-21 and the effect of the rejection in Nigeria and the problem of “KNOWLEDGE”

### **The Historical Background – gen. 16-21**

The historical background of this study has to do with the man Abram, who later became Abraham – Gen. 16-21 will be our study guide as concerns Abraham and Sarah, as the world first Jews. As the story goes, they moved to Canaan from Mesopotamia. Sarah being old and childless, Sarah gave her Egyptian maid, Hagar to Abraham in HOPE they may have a child by the maid. The question is “How did she arrange this “Relationship”? Is it as a wife or concubine? “Gen 16.2 and her child shall be mine.....

And when Hagar conceived her continued presence in their house became intolerable to Sarah, who complained to Abraham.

Abraham instead of controlling the situation supported Sarah, saying, “Do with her what you want”. This study will find out why Abraham did not blame Sarah for treating Hagar as a slave, his second wife:-

Sarah treated Hagar badly and Hagar escaped into the wilderness. There she met an Angel of the Lord, who told her to return to her mistress and submit to her mistress. Who also announced to her pregnancy. “saying you are with a child and shall bear a son, you shall call his name ISHMAEL, because the Lord has given heed to your affliction. He shall be a wild Ass of a man. “(Gen. 16:9-12) “Because of your affliction”

About 13yrs after, Sarah became pregnant and had a son Isaac, whom Abraham feted with great celebration at the event of Isaac’s weaning: - (1) Why was the birth of Ishmael not celebrated? (2) Was he not a true son of his father? (3) Did Sarah actually give Hagar to Abraham as a wife? (4) Or was their sexual relationship on illegal one? (5) Can Abraham be accused for fornication of an on-going master housemaid relationship, which has continued till today in our present society, also without blames we will try our best to do justice to these five implicating questions of Abraham’s attitude?

### **The Implications of the Rejection**

#### **The Problem of Surrogacy/Immorality**

Study and investigation of this rejection will proof if Hagar was Abrahams 2<sup>nd</sup> wife, Gen. 16:2 says thus, so Sarah said to Abram, “the Lord has kept me from having children.

*Go sleep with my maidservant, perhaps I can build a family through her.*

Abraham agreed and slept with Hagar and she conceived and gave birth to a child and his name is Ishmael.

It is this same child, legitimate child an offspring of Abraham that is rejected and reduced to an outcast from his father's house.

*Before Gods intervention, saying do not be displeased with what your wife is doing with your slave wife and son, listen to her and send them away. Why did Abraham wait for God to settle his own domestic problems? (Gen 21:9-13) Why did he not stand his feet as a man and manage his own domestic problem?*

*"How difficult and painful it is for a man to cast his innocent child whether male or female".*

Will it be true to say that Abraham committed Adultery or fornication and couldn't bear the shame of scandal? We will trace the truth of all these issues or can it be said to be Gods own design to establish another kingdom for himself. **"Islamic Kingdom?"** We shall study to prove the truth.

Was Abraham already in love with Hagar, and Sarah noticing it decided to make it official by handing her over to her husband to avoid shame and scandal? We shall find answers to this question.

Why did Sarah fail to show love, compassion and sympathy to this mother and child concerning her religious background?

### **One God two Religion (Islam and Christianity)**

We will seek to establish the fact both Christianity and Islam worship only one God, that is why I captioned it **ONE GOD TWO RELIGION**, to which Ishmael is associated with one, that is Islam why Isaac is for Christians. This two have their foundation from the Jewish traditional religion called "Judaism" which is ascribed to Abraham as the founder.

### **Introduction: one God two Religion**

One God, two religions is obviously a statement that will remain arguable in the sands of time. Men will continue to ask the question: why will God, constitute two religions?

*"Are despite ye not the people of the book, except with means, (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them, who conflict wrong and injury. But say: we believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in this which came down to you. Our Allah is one, and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)"  
(Quran – 29:46)*

This text from the holy Qur'an explains or enlightens us to know that we have only one God, who is the almighty of every religion but it is disheartening that men do not see it in this light but we shall broaden our understanding by looking into the case study of Ishmael and Isaac.

### **A Study of Ishmael and Isaac**

#### **Introduction**

Who is God? In monotheism God is conceived of as the Supreme Being and principle object of faith.

The concept of God as described by most theologians includes the attributes of Omniscience (Infinite knowledge), Omnipotence (unlimited power) Omnipresence

(everywhere) divine simplicity, and as having an eternal necessary existence. Many theologians also describe God as being Omni benevolent (perfectly) good and all loving.

God is most often held to be incorporeal (immaterial), and to be without gender. God has been conceived as either personal or impersonal.

In Theism, God is the creator and sustainer of the universe while in Deism God is the creator but not the sustainer of the universe. In pantheism, God is the Universe itself.

In atheism, God is not believed to exist while God is deemed unknown or unknowable within the context of Agnosticism. God has also been conceived as in the Hebrew Bible and Judaism, and the “greatest conceivable existence”. In the Hebrew Bible and Judaism, God is called “He who is”, “I Am That I Am” and the Tetragrammaton’s YHWH which means: “I Am Who I Am” “He who exists” are used as names of God, while Yahweh and Jehovah are sometimes used in Christianity.

In the Christian doctrine of Trinity, God, consubstantial in the three persons, is called, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In Judaism, he is referred to as Elohim or Adonai

Islam, the name Allah is used.

In Hinduism, Brahman is used.

In Chinese religion he is seen as Progenitor (first ancestor of the universe).

### **What does two Religion Means**

According to Emile Durkheim, religion is the unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things.

Two religions in this case is upon the two sons of Abraham Ishmael and Isaac, Ishmael the eldest while Isaac is the younger.

### **Ishmael**

According to Genesis 16:15, 17:23, is the eldest son of Abraham born by Hagar the concubine of Abraham Ishmael was born as mamre, when Abraham was eight-six years of age, eleven years after his arrival in Canaan (Gen. 16:3, 21:15), at the age of thirteen he has circumcised Gen. 17:25, he grew up to true child of the desert, wild and wayward. On the occasion of the weaning of Isaac his crude and wayward spirit broke out in expression of insult and mockery and Sarah, discovering this, said Abraham to “Expel this slave and her son”. Influenced by divine admonition, Abraham dismissed Hagar and her son with no more than a skin of water and some bread.

The narrative describing this act is one of the most beautiful and touching incidents of patriarchal life. Gen. 21:14-16.

Ishmael settled in the land of Paran a region lying between Canaan and the mountains of Sinai and “God was with him, and he became a great archer”. He became a great desert chief, but of his history little is recorded. He was about Ninety years of age when his father Abraham died, and Ishmael and Isaac came together and buried him.

The events of his life were known a little, he died at age of one hundred and thirty seven years, but where and when are unknown Gen.25:17. He had twelve sons, who became founders of son many Arab tribes or colonies, the Ishmaelites who spread over the wide desert spaces of Northern Arabia from the Red Sea to the Euphrates. (Gen. 37:20-28, 39:1)

**Isaac**

(Which means laughter) is the second but legitimate first son of Abraham born by Sarah. He was circumcised when he was probably two years old a great feast was held connection with his being weaned. He was forty years of age when Rebekah was chosen for him as his wife according to Genesis 25. After the death and burial of his father he took up his residence at Beer-Lahairoi Gen. 25:7-11, where his two sons Esau and Jacob, were born. He died at the age of one hundred and eighty years old and was buried in the cave of Machpelah.

**Ishmael Link to Islam**

Mohammed, the founder of Islam. Claims to be direct descendant of Ishmael and Muslim, today view themselves as both the physical and spiritual descendent of Ishmael.

A direct descendent of Ishmael named Mohammed birthed forth a new religion into the world. This religion teaches that God is not a father, God has no son, and Ishmael not Isaac is the heir with regard to the promise of God to the earth. The very things that those issues of rejection, woundedness and brokenness that took place in Ishmael's life were preserved in the line and two thousand six hundred years later, a man named Mohammed goes into the Cave, has an incredible dark encounter with some sort of spiritual being. It literally chokes the life out of him to where he feels as though he's going to die, three times this presence comes over him and it demands of him to recite. On the third, literally believed that he was demon-possessed. He was suicidal. "He was terrified"

After this, he runs home to his wife who eventually convinced him he was a prophet of God. This is the religion of Islam.

"In a spiritual sense, Islam is the broken, bitter cry of Ishmael" Ishmael is considered a prophet in Islam and is listed in many instances in the Qur'an Ishmael is being praised for being patient, good, and righteous.

As a descendent of Ishmael, Muhammad is justified as the prophet and continues the line of prophets from pre-Islamic times. As Islam became established, the figure Ishmael and these descendants from him, the Ishmaelites, became connected and often equated with the term Arab early Jewish and Christian literature. Before Islam developed as a religion Ishmael was depicted in many ways but after its establishment, Ishmael was almost always seen in a negative light in Jewish and Christian texts, as he became the symbol for the "other" in these religions.

The development of Islam created pressure for the Islam to be somehow different from Judaism and Christianity and accordingly, Ishmael's Lineage to Arabs was stressed in pre-Islamic times, in the manner, Mohammed ancestry leads back to Ishmael joining them "original biblical ancestry of Abraham with a distinctively Arab a final stock and connecting Mohammed with Mecca an Kaaba.

**Isaac Link to Christianity**

The New Testament states Isaac was offered up by Abraham his father and that Isaac blessed his sons; Paul contrasted Isaac "Christian Liberty" with the rejected older son Ishmael. Sarah is associated with the covenant of grace, unto which her son Isaac enters according to the epistle of James 2:21-24 states that the sacrifice of Isaac shows that justification requires both faith and works.

In the epistle to the Hebrews Abraham's willingness to follow God's command to sacrifice Isaac is used as an example of faith as his action in blessing Jacob and Esau with reference to the future promise by God to Abraham. The author views the release of Isaac from sacrifice as analogous to the resurrection of Jesus, the idea of the sacrifice of Isaac being a pre-figure of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Isaac is referred by Muslims to be a prophet of Islam, and described him as the faith of the Israelites and a righteous servant of God.

### **The Difference between Ishmael and Isaac**

1. Ishmael is the son of the bondmaid, Hagar, while Isaac is the son of the free woman Sarah.
2. Ishmael was born by Abraham and Sarah's desire and not the will of God, while Isaac was born through the promise of God to Abraham and Sarah, he is called the born after the spirit.
3. Ishmael represents Mount Sinai of Agar while Isaac represents Jerusalem.
4. Ishmaelites was not a true and legality of Abraham's heir, while Isaac is a true and legitimate heir of Abraham.
5. Ishmael belongs to the Islam, Muslim and Quran while Isaac belongs to Christian (Jesus) and the Holy Bible.
6. Believers in Christ are children of the freeman (Sarah), through whom Christ came. Islam is traced to the lineage of Ishmael among whom Mohammed was born.

### **Sarah and Hagar**

SARAH OR SARAI is a Hebrew woman married to Abraham and she is the mother of Isaac as described in the Bible. Her name was originally Sarai according to Genesis 17:15 God changed her name to Sarah as part of a covenant after Hagar bore Abraham his first son, Ishmael.

"Princess" or "noble woman".

Sarah was the wife of Abraham.

Sarah was the wife of Abraham.

Sarah was approximately ten years younger than her husband.

She was considered beautiful to the point that Abraham feared when they were near more powerful rulers she would be taken away and given to another man, twice he purposely identified her as sister so that he would be "treated well" for her sake.

No reason is given why Sarah remained barren (children). Suggested that Abraham have a child with her Egyptian handmaid Hagar, to which he agreed. This resulted in tension between Sarah and Hagar, and Sarah complained to her husband and that the handmaid no longer respected her and then demanded that she should be put with her son Ishmael which was done with the instruction of God to Abraham.

### **Hagar**

Was an Egyptian handmaid of Sarah, who Sarah gave to Abraham to bear a child. The production of the union was Abraham's first child "Ishmael" the progenitor of the Ishmaelite.

According to Theodore Noldeke. She is the biblical personification of the nomadic Hagarites. The name Hagar originated from the book of Genesis, and is only alluded to in the Quran. She is



considered Abraham's second wife in the Islamic faith and acknowledged in all Abrahamic Religion in mainstream Christianity, she is considered a concubine to Abraham (Genesis 16 and 12).

Ishmael and Isaac the sons of Abraham born by Hagar and Sarah respectively, are the two religions, Ishmael is link to the Islamic religion of (Muhammad) while Isaac was link to Christianity of (Jesus Christ). Ishmael remains an illegitimate son of Abraham with little or no recognition in Christianity but fully recognized in the Muslims of Islam which is believed to be among the founders and link of two Islamic religion. Isaac is a legal son recognized by Christians and Muslims, Bible and Quran to be the real hair of Abraham and link with Jesus Christ he is a promise come through in the life of Abraham and Sarah by God.

The religion crises in the world today among the Christian and Muslims are also link to Ishmael (Muslim) and Isaac Christian. So the disagreement has been there and many continue to be there but Isaac is still the spiritual hair of Abraham and it is the stand of Christianity till tomorrow.

### **Consequences of the Rejection**

One of the consequences of this rejection is the finding of two Religions but of one God. Christianity and Islamic Religions. Which i called

*"One God Two Religions"? In understanding this, the study will look at the personality of God, who is revered by both Religions. In the Christian faith He is been called God, Jehovah, Yahweh, Elohim etc and Allah, in the Islamic Faith, His person and attributes are worshipped*

By these two religions, it means both Religions totally accept his person, potencies, efficacies, powers and supremacy without criticism and syncretism. We find out that these two Religions are one and need to co-exist in peace and love as brothers. We will at the end of this work, see the need for repentance and forgiveness, which will usher in new Relationship and tolerance of the Religions as it has to do with TWO BROTHERS will be suggested.

### **Endless Religious Crisis Viz two Brothers**

As children of Abraham, Jews and Muslims draw upon rich moral traditions embedded within a shared past as recorded in Genesis of the Hebrew Bible and referenced in the Quaran, it is a past that identifies Ishmael as the father of the Arabs, while his half-brother Isaac becomes the progenitor of the Biblical Israelites. What we read in Genesis account, however, is not an idyllic story, but as Rabbi Jeffery Salkin observes, the story of a dysfunctional family.

*"it is the eternal pattern of the book of Genesis; damaged, scattered relationships between siblings and within families".*

Indeed, the great drama of Genesis, according to Salkin, is the battle between brothers, whether we talk about **Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, or Jacob and Esau**, the root of this crisis is fixed to Sarah which we belief that, if SARAH have shared her love between Isaac and Ishmael; if only she has brought them together instead of setting them apart, maybe some of today's tragedies would have been avoided. These Christians, Muslim problem is rooted in the separation of these two brothers.

Sarah's treatment of Hagar and Ishmael in terms of Hammurabi code of moral reckoning brutal andcruel. Even though the Rabbinical interpretations of the past tends to exonerate her actions by focussing on the insubordination of Hagar and Ishmael, more recent interpreters do

criticize her harsh demands. According to the great Rabbi, Mosheben Nahman's comment, that "when our ancestress Sarah persecuted Hagar, she committed sin and Abraham, by not preventing her, became an accomplice to that sin. He said that is why God heard the lament and tears of Hagar and gave her a wild Son, whose descendants are the Muslims of Islamic Religion.

### **Religious Crises in Nigeria**

Recent studies on religious identity have also understood the positive function of religion in promotion of peace. On the other hand, however, mobilisation of identity has been used to incite political groups to struggle and religious groups to legitimise wars and various modes of brutal and violent acts Politics and ethnic identity in Nigeria.

During the colonial period, the administrators allowed the emergence and aggravation of an 'us' versus 'them' syndrome, where Muslims were pitted against Christians, Northerners against the Southerners, Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo against each other, and so on. In this era religious and ethnic differences became prominent factors in instituting and executing socio-economic strategies and applications. The Hausa-Fulani and other smaller ethnic groups that inhabit the north of the country are Muslims while the Igbo and other smaller ethnic differences became prominent factors in instituting and executing socio-economic strategies and applications. The Hausa Fulani and other smaller ethnic groups that inhabit the north of the country are Muslims while the Yoruba found in the Southwest are almost half Muslim and half Christian. This Muslim North and Christian South cleavage enhances ethnic fractionalisations in Nigeria, especially in Northern Nigeria where Islamic identity plays a dominant role. It is clear that nearly the entire Northern half of the country consists of states with Sharia law.

Of course, exceptions should not be overlooked for both parts of the country. There is a considerable population of Muslims in the south, especially in the Southwest, and a sizeable number amongst the Benin in Edo State. Even in the Southeast, amongst Igbo, there has been a rising number of Muslims, causing the governors of some Igbo-speaking states to introduce state programmes for Muslims. The same goes for Christians in the North, where the considerable number of Christians cannot be disagreed in any analysis of religious groupings in Nigeria.

Nigeria has three major religious identities: Christian, Islam and traditional religions. Traditional religions are the most politically inactive of the three groups, 'numbering several hundreds of ethnic groups and sub-groups, villages, clans and kin groups; and, involving the worship of different gods and goddesses' on the other hand, Christian and Muslim identities have continued to be the backbone of religious disparity. It is worth noting that, within the wide Christian and Muslim categories, there lie many sub-cleavages and intra-group conflicts that have either been active politically in the past or have a potential of being salient in the future. Among the Christians, sub-cleavages include the protestants (Anglican 10% Baptist 8% Methodist 5%, and Lutheran 5%), the Catholics 15%, the Evangelical church of West African 2%, Jehovah's Witnesses 5% and a myriad of other Local (Aladura, Cherubim and Seraphim, Celestial Church of Christ 20%) and Pentecostal churches 30%.

The Pentecostal churches form the fundamental division of Christianity in Nigeria which has experienced rapid growth in numbers of followers in the last few years with the majority of adherents, especially the youths, joining the church from the older and more traditional

denominations. The church has played an important role in civil society in anti-military struggles and democratisation. This has been made possible through umbrella bodies such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), and the Catholic Bishops Conference. However, Politicisation of Christianity has been reliant on moves by the Muslims and the interventions of the government. Still, Protestant-Catholic cleavages have continued to play an important role in elections among the Igbo Communities living in the Southeast of Nigeria.

Muslims also belong to a number of sub-cleavages that include Ahmadiyya 12%, Sanusiyya 5%, Tijanniyya 3%, and Quadriyya 8% which have in turn been in conflicts. And as among the Christians, the Muslims also have umbrella bodies which aim at preparing different understandings of Islam. Notable among these organisations is the Jamaatu Nasril Islam (JNI) which was established by Saruana of Sokoto in 1961. Following events in Iran during the Islamic revolution of 1979, radical fundamentalist activities increased among Muslim youths. These conditions resulted in the formation of fundamental Muslim factions such as the Maitatsine, the Isala movement, the Shiites, the Taliban's and most recently the Boko Haram which demanded the establishment of a purist Islam based on Sharia law, the abolition of unorthodox innovations, and the creation of an Islamic theocracy. These relatively new sentiments that depend on a unique and radical interpretation of Islam provoke conflicts with the traditional and/or more moderate understandings.

### **Ethno-Religious Conflicts.**

The fact that an average Nigerian is very religious was observed by some sources. Religion plays a critical role in Nigeria society and has expressed itself as a potent force in the geopolitical development of the country. This force which has been used to unite Nigerians is the same force that has led to numerous conflicts in the country. Nigeria has been engulfed in numerous religious crises and /or conflicts between 1980 and 1994.

Due to their tendency to spread into other areas after an early stage in one area, ethno-religious conflicts have gained notoriety as the most violent crises in Nigeria. Most of these conflicts occur in the middle-belt and along the culturally borderline states of the predominantly Muslim North, and also take place between Hausa-Fulani groups and non-Muslim ethnic groups in the South. In conflict of this nature occurring along the convergence of ethnic and religious lines, it is often very difficult to tell the differences between religious and ethnic crises because the dividing line between them is slimmer than thin. Examples of such ethno-religious conflicts are the Kafanchan-Kaduna crisis that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, the Kaduna Sharia riots. Several hundred lives were lost during Kaduna crisis of 2000 and the Jos insurrection of 2001. The crises caused violent ripple effects that spread beyond Kaduna and Jos.

Other recent ethno-religious conflicts include the July 1999 conflict among the Oro cultists in Sagamu in Ogun state who claimed that Hausa women had come outside when the cultists were outside with their gnome. The result were arguments that finally turned into a full-scale crisis, Many Yoruba and Hausa people were killed before dusk under check in Sagamu, reprisal tracks continued in Kano, in Hausa city, leading to deaths and destruction of property worth billions of Naira.

Another ethno-religious conflict that had far reaching impacts on people of Nigeria was the October 2000 Lagos-Kano (Idi-Araba/Okoro-Oba) conflict which was caused by a misperception between the Hausa inhabitants and the Yoruba living in Lagos over the use of a convenience by a man from Hausa. The mayhem resulted in the death of many Yoruba's. As a consequence, the O'dua People Congress (a Yoruba militia) was formed and worsened the situation as the violence later spread.

Worse still, in September 2001, ethnic friction between the Tivs and the Lunkuns in the Plateau state reached fever pitch following what came to be referred to as 'mistaken identify'. What this means is that some Tivs took some nineteen soldiers to be lunkuns in fake army uniform. The Tiv youths captured on devastating reprisal attacks in Saki-Biam. According to some controversial numbers at least a hundred people died in the army attacks (Human Rights Watch 2001). Violence spread to Jos Plateau especially after a Christian was appointed as a Local Council Chairman. By the time the menace was brought to standstill, over 160 lives had been lost.

### **The way Forward for Nigeria**

#### **National Democratic Council for Religion and Ethnic Affairs (NADCREA)**

Under this topic we shall suggest or propose a hypothesis of the way forward on how Nigeria can remain a united Nation on Christian-Muslim relationship. Note the following topics

1. Religious concept of peace for co-existence
2. Implication of peace passages- from the bible and Quran.
3. Scriptural principles on Unity
4. Social Religious principle of Justice and Peaceful Relationship
5. Religious, Political and liberalization for co-existence
6. A functional National Ecumenical Council for Religion and Ethnic Affairs.

### **Conclusion**

Justice which is closely associated with the obligation to cultivate compassion in its people, the impediments to compassion's ethical work is supplied by shame, resentment, envy and disgust'. We have seen how disgust can block new meanings, being responsible for stereotypical notions that taint the relationship between radicalised others. And in its most extreme manifestation of disgust,

*Certain bodies may become fixed as objects of hate which may result in their destruction in what is known as hate crimes (Ahmed 2004 57, 60).*

The Sarah and Hagar narrative implore the reader not to ignore the injustice done to those who literature (and society) deem disgusting or unfit.

*For as Ahmed (2004, 57) warns us. To allow such bodies to disappear in our own analysis would be to repeat the crime rather than to redress its injustices;*

As biblical interpreters we are called to redress injustice and lift up interpretations that may restore the dignity of men, women and children scarred in situations of dehumanisation.

Abraham the son of Terah, the husband of Sarah who migrated from Ur to Haran was blessed with two children Ishmael and Isaac, Ishmael was the child of Hagar, wife and house maid of Sarah and Isaac is the son of Sarah the wife.

The both sons grew up and seen to symbolize both Islamic (Ishmael) and Christian (Isaac). Religion which is seen to be monotheist because of their belief in one God-Allah.

As children of Abraham, Christians and Muslims draw their moral tradition from the account in the Holy Bible and Koran. We truly need to rethink over our relationship for better prosperity

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