

**FORGIVENESS AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE BETWEEN  
CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN NIGERIA**

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## ABSTRACT

To spark up and maintain peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims, there is the fundamental need for mutual pardon, with each religion that has offended repenting and asking for forgiveness. Without true reconciliation, joint commitment on behalf of our fellow believers and for the good of the whole world will be impossible. In the world of today, Muslims and Christians can become examples of reconciliation as well as peace instrument when forgiveness is made paramount in relationship.

Christians and Muslims need areas of contact where affection between them would germinate and bear fruits if they have to be near each other in affection. A pious Muslim and a devout Christian manifest similar behaviour, motivated by faith in God's mercy and a will to serve with gladness.

However, a fundamental difference is obvious in the way they understand their interactions with God. Christians have the courage, through their faith in Jesus who has conquered sin and death, that they are always saved from the rightful consequences of their insufficiencies by the Grace of God, which is always supplied by the power of Jesus Christ. For the Muslims, God cannot be absolutely pleased by man but even then the need for a mediator or advocate between man and God is irrelevant. Thus for them, believers must seek their own well being by observing prescribed laws. To have the real philosophy of ending the vicious cycle of suspicion and hostility, which has poisoned relations between the Christian and Muslim communities for so long, individuals of goodwill must take active part in removing obstacles and building relationships whenever

possible and wherever they live.

There is the need for the realization of the fact that most people are Christians and Muslims more by accident rather than by conversion. Therefore, the hatred unnecessarily generated should be brought down with a serious and realistic empathic analysis of every situation.

Forgiveness is unequivocally entrenched in both Christian and Islamic doctrines as well as documented in the scriptures of both religions. The application of forgiveness as a concept allows openness to dialogue, which encourages tolerance and perseverance, bringing about peaceful co-existence as consequence.

## B **RECOMMENDATION**

If Christianity and Islam together make up fifty percent of the entire world population, it becomes important what the relationship of their followers is and what to do to guarantee peace between a half of humanity

A form of dialogue automatically comes to life, whenever and wherever Christians and Muslims meet. Such interaction may be stimulating and edifying or extremely negative. It is therefore imperative that Christians and Muslims should appreciate the fact that they have more to offer each other than constantly fanning flames of superiority, suspicion, distrust and antagonism between these two religions. They should play down the old polemical attitudes they hold toward each other in order to uplift the feeling of belonging to the community of faith. This will encourage reasonable dialogue based on true understanding of faults and the need to apply forgiveness, relevant to continuous, peaceful co-existence.

There must be tolerance for each other's shortcomings but respect for each others religious and moral norms. Various Governments should be more tactful when making appointments to political offices: education in schools should be devoid of proselytization and there should be the realization by people that they are Christians or Muslims more by accident rather than by conversion.

Christians should regularly be informed about Islamic realities in Nigeria to have realistic idea of its strength and weaknesses, its common elements and complexities. By this, the aim, method and objectives of the different trends of Islam, will be recognized, hence the situation of general condemnation of everyone for the offence perpetrated by only a few people will no longer exist. This situation will help to know who specifically

has offended and who requires pardon.

Christians should also be able to develop an up to date theology for Islamic religion in order to win the confidence of Muslims with respect to their conviction and the need for open collaboration wherever or whenever possible.

There should be an improvement in the zeal of the members of the Christian community for their faith. There is the need for Christians to close ranks and act in unity.

Minor aspects of life such as exchanges of gifts during festivities by believers of one religion can show goodwill towards other believers celebrating a religious feast. Goodwill messages encouraging them to reflect on how such period would be emphasized for the benefit of mankind could be incorporated in greetings. This will generate feedbacks, which can lead to the development of a positive relationship, culminating in peaceful co-existence.

Christians should be motivated by the love which Christ taught, gave, now through Christian, shares with the world. It does not seek to dominate for it does not insist on its own way. When attacked, it cannot retaliate in kind, for it is "patient, not irritable or resentful." (I Cor. 13:4f) It is a love, which reaches out and embraces our neighbour, no matter who he is or what his religious convictions. "We love because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). To be obedient to this love means to meet, love, understand, and relate to our neighbour where he is. We cannot set any pre-conditions on our love. Whether our neighbour is ignorant, illiterate, prejudicial, argumentative, learned or whatever, Christ died for him, and an immeasurable value has thereby been placed upon his person. We need to look up to him because Christ died for him.

Orville P. James, A. L. C. O. W.  
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