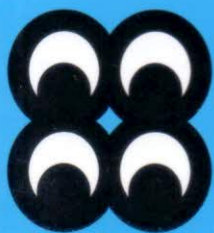


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SALVATION IN CATHOLICISM AND ISLAM: A CHALLENGE FOR BETTER HUMAN RELATIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

For centuries Christianity and Islam have been in competition for souls. They have both been locked up in competing truth claims that have sometimes resulted in bitter rivalries and conflict. In Nigeria in particular, clashes between Christians and Muslims have resulted in enormous loss of lives and property. This paper however argues that, in spite of their competing truth claims, Christianity and Islam can co-exist in peace and harmony. Using the concept of salvation in Catholicism and Islam as the basis, this paper posits that there is common ground for creating peace, understanding and harmony.

Introduction

Religions function, among other things, to correct people's journey on earth and provide them with right guidance to attain spiritual and bodily happiness. In other words, religions are concerned at once with message of salvation and ways to salvation. This function of religions is applicable both at the individual level and at the level of the human society as a whole. In this regard, Hans Kung sees religions as approaches to life and basic patterns that embrace the individual and society. According to him, "religions are transcendently grounded and immanently operative system of coordinates, by which man orients himself intellectually, emotionally, and existentially."¹ If religions function to provide comprehensive meaning for life, and create unconditional norms for humans and community cohesion, how does anyone

explain the fact that the same religions serve as sources of tension, conflict, and violence among human beings? It is a given that religious differences exist globally and in Nigeria. But is it not a contradiction that the management of religious differences in Nigeria is counted among the causes of the problems facing people in the 21st century?

The above questions that bother on the value of religions throw up the issue of salvation and human relations, especially within the background of the many religious and ethnic crises in Nigeria in the past and recent times. In contemporary Nigerian society, it was incredible to witness what 2001 to 2011 brought to bear on human relations in Jos and its environs. The irrational passion was let loose which triggered the destruction of Churches and Mosques. Several people have been displaced as homes and businesses were destroyed. People watched their loved ones maimed or killed. Consequently, the communal nature of human existence has been disrupted as people divided by the crisis were forced to live kilometers away from each other. Thus, in some parts of Nigeria, there are areas where Christians or Muslims cannot go; there are roads where Christians or Muslims cannot follow even when adherents of both religions seek for eternal salvation.

This goes a long way to confirm that religions have the capacity to draw out the creative energies in human beings, giving its adherents an absolute purpose, and a clearly defined direction in life. In Nigerian context, "members of a given religious group, with its shared vision, values, and sense of cohesion as a community, tend to draw a sharp line of distinction between themselves and those outside the group."² This sharp divide often turns to an attitude of "us" and "them", and consequently, degenerates to stale relationships. Therefore, conflicts, violence among individuals, ethnic groups, and communities easily arise in the name of religions. And contemporary Nigerian society has had a painful experience of such conflicts and violence. For example, *The Guardian Newspaper* reported one of such painful experiences in Nigeria thus, "... this Anti- Bomb Squad Mobile policeman deployed in Jos, Plateau State for peace keeping was killed, and sadly by a butcher that he bought beef from. The butcher killed the security operative by ripping off his stomach with a knife. He watched the policeman

¹ Hans Kung, *Christianity & World Religions* (New York: Orbis Books, 1986), xvii

² David R. Brockman & Ruben F. Habito (eds.), *The Gospel Among Religions* (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 6

as he gasped for breath, slumped and died on the spot. Youths who watched the scenario played out took to violence".³

The Good News of Jesus Christ is that God's reign is in our midst, and that all people are called to enter into God's Kingdom. Similarly, Islam is the religion of peace. Therefore, in this paper, we intend to examine the pursuit of salvation in Christianity and Islam. This would help to evolve solid grounds to challenge people of these religions to recognise that everyone has humanity as a datum that precedes any religious affiliation. It is in this regard that the paper, using historical, comparative, and analytical methods, argues that efforts to achieve better human relations in Nigeria must transcend absolute truth claims.

Theoretical Framework

In order to understand properly the concept of salvation and put in perspective the fact of human relations, it is necessary to build up a theoretical framework. The concept of salvation and human relations are closely connected. To sever links with fellow humans is also to sever relationship with God. In other words, better human relations and salvation go hand in hand. Consequently, this paper applies the framework of inclusive pluralism of salvation in the light of Augustine, Cyprian of Carthage, and Second Vatican Council. However, it could be said comparatively speaking that the concept of salvation in Islam does not exist in a form that might mirror the Catholic Christian conception. Hence, inclusive pluralism becomes an appropriate conceptual framework.

In traditional Catholic Community, the people of God regard themselves as the ark of salvation. Outside the ark, which is understood as the church, there is no salvation. The Latin formula used to express this claim was "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*". That is, outside the church there is no salvation. This could also mean that there are no prophets outside the Catholic Church.

It was Augustine of Hippo who first muted the idea that the Catholic Church exists for the salvation of the world. He saw authority and holiness residing in the institutional church. According to him, "since the worldwide church, founded by the apostles, was the only true church, whoever left it

³ Isa Abdulsalami, "Jos Monarch Relocates from Palace as 12 Die in Violence" in *The Guardian* (Wednesday February 16, 2011), 6

was self-evidently wrong."⁴ Cyprian of Carthage made the traditional Catholic position on salvation famous and "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" became applied universally in the Roman Catholic Church. During this time,

The Church mediated salvation through baptism and the Eucharistic community. Accordingly, whoever did not seek this remained outside of salvation. Afterwards the formula was extended to all non believers.⁵

In 1302, Pope Boniface VIII endorsed Cyprians' teaching on salvation. In a papal bull, the pope stated thus, "we declare and proclaim that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff."⁶ In similar vein, the Ecumenical Council of Florence in 1441 stated in clear terms that, not only pagans but also Jews, heretics and unbelievers will have no share in eternal life. They will go into the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they become aggregated to the Catholic Church before the end of their lives.⁷ Here, one encounters an extreme form of Christianity or Catholicism; as there could as well be extreme form of Islam. Extreme forms of Christianity and Islam manifest themselves when people believe that there is no salvation outside the Church and the *Umma*. Olupona, quoting Pierre Bourdieu calls this approach to religion, symbolic violence; "a clever use of force which aims to convince people that one's own religious affiliation holds the key to salvation."⁸ Symbolic form of violence is a fall out from Western and Arab missionaries who sought to superimpose their faith on native African culture and subsequent Africanised forms of Christianity and Islam. Symbolic violence is a strategy used to protect foreign forms of capital over indigenous ones. This form of violence contradicts African worldview that is deeply anchored on indigenous social practices. These social practices include concern for communalism, peaceful co-existence and the ethos of "*Egbe bere, Ugo bere*", that is, live and let live.

⁴ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber Limited, 1967), 259

⁵ Heinrich Dumont, "Salvation" in Karl Muller, Richard Bliese, et al (eds.), *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 408

⁶ Quoted by David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 218

⁷ Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Dogma* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 8

⁸ Jacob Olupona, "Nigeria at the Crossroads: Religion, Education and Nation Building" in *The Guardian* (Monday February 14 2011), 59

However, contemporary Catholic Church has tried to reach a broader understanding of Cyprian's "*extra ecclesiam*", reinterpreting it in a step forward direction. The traditional Catholic position is, nowadays, no longer the official position. Vatican II Council (1962-1965) not only considered the goodwill of the individual as a way of salvation but also regarded the faith traditions, outside Christianity, as orientation towards salvation. The Council states it thus, "Men and women who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ and his Church, but who sincerely search for God and who strive to do his will, as revealed by the dictates of conscience, in deeds performed under the influence of his grace, can win eternal salvation."⁹

In the light of the above, people of other faith traditions, like Islam can win eternal salvation. In this regard, the way of salvation becomes inclusive and is no longer confined to Christianity alone. This broader approach of contemporary Catholic Church on the issue of human salvation now serves as bedrock for genuine human relations and interfaith engagements in the 21st century. Hence, salvation acquires another meaning which points to the capacity for continually intensifying the depth and breath of relationship with the religious others, nature and God.¹⁰

What is Salvation?

Salvation as a concept or religious doctrine is predicated on the dualistic view of reality that has dominated most faith traditions. It is not the concern of this paper to dwell on the issue of dualism which has been problematic in religious circles. But it suffices to note that the world religions differentiate between this world and the next world. Hence, salvation involves deliverance from this planet earth. Jains (adherents of Jainism) strive to free their souls from material bondage and endless rebirths. This is further explained by Mahavira in his teaching on salvation as escape from Karma and freedom from life. He taught that, "salvation is absolute from the totality of actions through the absence of the causes of bondage and exhaustion of past Karmas"¹¹

⁹ Vatican II, *Constitution on the Church* (1965), No 16

¹⁰ Walter J. Burghardt, *Justice: A Global Adventure* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 28

¹¹ Tattvartha Sutra, 10, 2.

Hindus and Buddhists concern themselves with liberation from the cycle of reincarnation. Christians and Muslims who are the concern of this paper, long for a joyous life with God and life after death in paradise respectively.¹² Adherents of Christianity and Islam fear divine judgment and eternal punishment in hell. Within this context, salvation is understood as deliverance from sin, afflictions, and transformation that linger forever.

At the level of speculation, Peter Koestenbaum points out that salvation is situated within the basic structures of human consciousness. In other words, he meant that salvation is natural to humans. Koestenbaum submits that, "man's condition is to reach for some perfection, some otherness, that leads to a region beyond his personal ego."¹³ So, salvation, in this paper, could be defined as wholeness, deliverance from destructive forces, and regeneration of broken relationships with God and fellow humans.

In the light of the above, the remaining sections of this paper would deal with the pursuit of salvation in Christianity and Islam including the extent to which salvation is brought about by human effort. Thus, the question at stake is: what part does relations with people of other faith traditions play in the drama of salvation in Christianity and Islam within the Nigerian context?

Biblical Salvation

The Old Testament (OT) presents salvation as an experience of a people, experience of liberation and deliverance from hostile condition. In this light, Israel confirmed the reality of salvation "in the wonderful acts of liberation that the people experienced: liberation from Egyptian slavery; assistance while wondering through the desert; help against... hostile neighbouring peoples."¹⁴ Overtime, in the OT history, the meaning of salvation shifted to include an era in which God alone would guarantee peace for all people. In this regard, the concept of salvation expanded to reflect individual expectations before God for healing, and preservation

¹² Roger Schmidt, *Exploring Religion* (Belmont: Wadsworth Press, 1988), 51

¹³ Peter Koestenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology" in J.C Fever & W. Horosz (eds.), *Religion in Philosophical & Cultural Perspective* (New York: Van Nostrand Press, 1967), 181

¹⁴ Dumont, "Salvation..." 407

from death. At this point, God appears as "the God of my salvation" (Psalm 50: 16). Hence, Heagle writes that,

Salvation is an emergence from any form of bondage or exploitation. In human history, it involves the long struggle to become free from oppression and destructive violence. The first creation story of Genesis opens with the... Spirit of God moving across the face of Chaos to create the stunning beauty of the cosmos. It is the Bible's first account of God's saving role.¹⁵

It can then be said that salvation in the OT means holistic redemption in body and soul, in the here and now and at the end of time made possible by God alone.

The New Testament (NT) understood the "passing over" of Jesus through his death to new life as the core sign of salvation for all people. The Book of Revelation closes with the early Christian community longing with radiant hope for the coming of the risen Christ as the final salvation into the heavenly community. The contents of this longing are the reign of God, the disarming of all powers hostile to peace, liberation from broken relationships with nature and fellow humans, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a community-building force. This is the meaning of the New Testament "good news". This salvation comes about when human beings turn in faith to Jesus, who becomes their saviour. In the same way all who follow him will experience salvation. For salvation was merited on the cross for all people and for all times.¹⁶

These ideas of NT salvation were developed further by Paul. He presented salvation as new creation, justice, and eternal life. Thus, in the NT Jesus bears in his very name the Hebrew word for salvation: *Jehosu'a*, which means Yahweh saves. Rossano therefore, submits that,

The chief assertion of Christianity is the saving intervention of God in the course of human events through the agency of Jesus Christ, an intervention

¹⁵ John Heagle, *Justice Rising : The Emerging Biblical Vision* (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 4

¹⁶ Dumont, "Salvation..." 407

which continues through time and gives meaning to the life of the Christian and to his view of history.¹⁷

In other words, salvation is always a fact of the whole person in his/her society and culture. Efforts for just and equitable society, a life of communion and inclusive belongingness constitute ways of obtaining salvation.

In the 21st century discourse, "liberation" comes to be another word for "salvation." Both terms deal with God's desire to free people from sin, oppression, and ultimate death. The slit difference between salvation and liberation is seen in the fact that salvation traditionally connotes what happens after one dies, in the afterlife. On the other hand, the issue of liberation gives attention to what happens in this world, in history without making a sharp distinction between this world and the next. Groody affirms this when he maintains that,

Liberation theologians insist on making the integral connection between God's Kingdom on earth and God's Kingdom in heaven, between the secular and sacred, and between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. Liberation then deals with God's action in history to free people from all that oppresses them right now and at the end of time.¹⁸

Contemporary discourse presents the concept of salvation in a very expansive way to include the unfolding in all creation, not just with humans. Therefore, salvation in the Christian context today means "the unfolding of the universe through the evolution of energy, matter, biological life, and human consciousness."¹⁹ In this sense, the challenge to build better human relations and take responsibility for the care of the earth become an invitation to experience salvation. Matthew 25:35-46 clearly points out that ultimate salvation is based on acts of kindness and cordial interpersonal relationship rather than acts of war. And this criterion of judgment cuts

¹⁷ P. Rossano, "Salvation in Christianity" in Paolo Marella (ed.), *Religions: Fundamental Themes for Dialogistic Understanding* (Rome: Editrice Ancora, 1970), 93

¹⁸ Daniel G. Groody, *Globalisation, Spirituality and Justice* (New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 184

¹⁹ Heagle, *Justice Rising...* 4-5

across religions and cultures. In fact, the criterion of judgment is predicated on people's response to the needs of one another, including the needs of those we meet on the streets.

Qur'anic Salvation

Islam is a way of life that is all embracing. It can be described as a living web of life, religion, culture, politics, law and arts. Hans Kung describes Islam as an "all-embracing view of life, an all-involving attitude towards life, an all-determining way of life."²⁰ Thus, amidst the activities of this temporary life, Islam proposes a way to eternal life or a way of salvation. Osasona rightly notes that, "it is not a divine initiative to rescue man from himself and from his sins, but as a human endeavour to escape God's anger and punishment which threaten all sinners."²¹ Such escape is made possible through faith-influenced adoration of one God and the proclamation of His uniqueness. The Vatican II acknowledges the true and holy there are in Islam as a reflection of divine revelation and within this context this paper makes analysis of salvation in Islam.

As a universal religion, Islam addresses itself to the entire human person, covering all aspects of the life of man and woman on earth. In this regard, Caspar, a 20th Century Islamic scholar, maintains that,

It is for this reason that in the social and political domain what is profane is not to be separated from what is religious; the state is not to be separated from religion. Islam intends to ensure man's happiness in this life and in the next.²²

Islam does not neglect bodily life and at the same time, it encourages due attention to the soul. Hence, it did not say to any of its adherents "go, sell your possession and come follow me." But the Qur'an conveys a message of social justice as a way to escape future punishment. We see this in Qur'an 99: 6-8:

²⁰ Kung, *Christianity & World Religions*...22

²¹ J.O Osasona, "Plurality in the Ways of Salvation: A Theological Problem in Christian-Muslim Relation" in *EPHA Ekpona Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol 2, No 1, June 1998, 65

²² R. Caspar, "The Pursuit of Salvation in Islam" in Paolo Marella (ed.), *Religions: Fundamental Themes for a Dialogistic Understanding* (Rome: Editrice Ancora, 1970), 108-109

On that day will men proceed in groups sorted out,
to be shown the deeds that they had done. Then
shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of
good, see it! And, anyone who has done an atom's
weight of evil, shall see it.

It is within the background of preaching social justice and life after death by Prophet Muhammad, that the ideas concerning salvation derive their meaning in Islam. Again, the act of faith in Islam preserves one from hell and makes paradise a certainty. (Qur'an 15:88; 71:28). Therefore, to believe means "to protect oneself from the danger of judgment and hell." (19:72; 44:50).

Like Paul of Christian religion who says that faith without work is dead, faith that leads to salvation in Islam is not a mere declaration. The desire to experience salvation must be translated into actions. This is because salvation is of this earth as well as being heavenly. It is the privilege of the believer to put his/her faith into practice by exercises of worship, and by caring for the poor. Mahmoud Ayoub, from the context of what we have elaborated above, brings out additional meaning of salvation from Islamic tradition. According to him, salvation in Islam "involves people dealing with their own sin through repentance, fasting, prayer, and giving to the needy."²³ Here, Ayoub teaches that in Islam, salvation involves believers' dealing with their sins through prayers, fasts and sharing their wealth with the poor.

Following this general overview of salvation in Islam, Zuhayli gives what he sees as the juridical aspect of salvation in Islam. He writes,

Anyone who believes in God, holds fast
to the strong rope of faith, and
performs righteous deeds will be among
those who will attain salvation. It
matters not whether he lived as a
Muslim, Jew, or Christian, or was one of

²³ Mahmoud M. Ayoub, "Towards an Islamic Christology: The Death of Jesus: Reality or Delusion" in *The Muslim World* 70, No 2, 1980, 93

those who had irrevocably abandoned their religion and accepted Islam.²⁴

For Zuhayli, good deeds rather than religious affiliations are the fundamental cause of salvation in Islam. He went further to acknowledge the intimate social and human relations that the Qur'an legislates for Muslims with the people of other faith traditions. Qur'an 5:5 states it thus,

This day are all things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the people of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them.

Yet, in Nigerian situation, some Christians and Muslims live a life of contradiction whereby their religions, which are supposed to be based on love, create an unprecedented suspicion and animosity in daily human relations. This is further enhanced by the competitive posture of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria to gain territorial control in various parts of the country. To counteract this attitude, Religions are encouraged to focus on human engagement both individually and collectively in the pursuit of salvation. This was the thinking of Heagle when he emphasized that "today Islamic scholars tell us that jihad has come to mean an inner struggle to overcome vengeance with compassion."²⁵

Disfigured Truth

Christianity and Islam, particularly in Nigeria, promise temporary and everlasting happiness, but they are divided over the place of human relations with adherents of other faith traditions in the struggle for salvation. In his brief commentary on Qur'an 2:62 Sha'rawi advises anyone who follows a religion that came before Islam, to abandon that religion and accept Islam. To such a person, Sha'rawi strongly says,

God, glorified and exalted be He, has definitively dealt with this issue in His saying, "anyone who seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him," and His saying, "surely, the true religion with God is Islam."²⁶

²⁴ Quoted by Irfan A. Omar (ed.), *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue* (New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 194

²⁵ Heagle, *Justice Rising*...71-72

²⁶ Quoted by Irfan A. Omar, (ed.), *A Muslim View of Christianity*...195

This is an unusual and uncompromising interpretation of the word of God from the scripture, which does not encourage dialogue and acceptance.

On the other hand, in Nigeria, Christian fanaticism anchors human relations on the truths they possess or by which they are possessed. Therefore, the truth, which might be mistaken, limited or incomplete, becomes obstacles which prevent constructive human relations. For example, the religion that insists that it is her duty and resolve to proclaim without fail Jesus Christ who is "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn.14:6) cannot be promoting meaningful human relations. The quest for better human relations is possible on the basis of religious and cultural pluralism. This means that Christians and Muslims in Nigeria must accept the fact that God did not speak only Hebrew, Greek, or Arabic, "but rather he speaks to every people in their own tongue and to their own cultural and spiritual situation."²⁷ Islam and Christianity claim to derive from one God. But unfortunately some people are prepared to disobey God by always looking forward to maim, kill and destroy properties of other people without hindrances.

The greatest difficulty faced by adherents of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria today is the falsification of truth. Some religious leaders falsify and deface the truth of religions. They present the truth belonging to their own religion as more attractive and present the truth belonging to the followers of another religion as less attractive. As noted by Al-Jaber, these diverging truths are only the "work of men themselves..., they are not truths but pseudo-truths, half-truths, sometimes non-truths."²⁸ There can be no better truth than the one that helps to "transform our human existence to human co-existence"²⁹ and provides a source of life, meaning and beauty.

As noted earlier in this paper, salvation, particularly Biblical salvation is not for souls but for persons, for the natural world (Rom. 8:19-19), and the universe. The blessings of salvation encompass everything that sustains life. It is not only limited to the private sphere of the individual person but also has to do with the social, political, economic, and other

²⁷ Irfan A. Omar (ed.), *A Muslim View of Christianity*...242

²⁸ Khaled Al-Jaber, "Pathways of Dialogue: A Muslim Point of View" in *Oasis International Studies*, No 8, 2008, 45

²⁹ P.U Nwosu, "Search for Coexistence: The Okonko Ethos" in *Benue Valley Journal of Humanities*, Vol 8, No 1& 2, 2009, 58

dimensions of life.³⁰ However, in Nigeria it has been difficult practicing the concept of salvation in the relationships of Christians and Muslims. This difficulty, among other reasons, is because in Nigeria religion is very much connected with ethnicity, culture, politics and even economy. For example, in Northern Nigeria, the Islamic culture permeates all aspects of life to the extent that Hausa-Fulani identity is tied to Islamic religious identity. Therefore, religion could be appealed to very easily to galvanise people's sentiment to achieve certain goals.

Again, Nigerians, especially Muslims and Christians are always busy participating in ritual activities like pilgrimage to Makkah, Madina, Jerusalem and Rome without a corresponding concrete effort to put into practice the important values that bring about salvation. For instance, "duty towards God and duty towards fellow human beings" is a cardinal principle of religions in Nigeria. But most adherents of Islam and Christianity fail woefully in putting it into practice. Within this context, Olupona correctly notes that, "this attitude permeates our national life and is reflected in social conditions of our communities, our underprivileged youth and the poor among us".³¹

However, to promote peaceful co-existence and pursuit of salvation among Nigerians, particularly, Christians and Muslims, the Governments at the Federal, State, and Local levels support faith based associations like the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Council of Imams and Ulama. Through these associations, the Government builds bridges across the country and provides enabling environment for Christians and Muslims to enjoy their religious rights. To enhance the efforts of the Government and enable the concept of salvation to take roots in the hearts of Nigerians, Christians and Muslims are encouraged to truly love their fellow human beings. Sincere efforts in the area of dialogue and doctrinal understanding are needed especially when adherents exhibit gross ignorance and insensitivity towards one another's doctrinal stance. Salvation is not, and cannot be a monopoly of any particular religion. The fact that God appears to people of different races, at different times and in environments suited to their culture makes it impossible for all humanity to be of one faith.

³⁰ Carlos H. Abesamis, "Salvation" in Virginia Fabella, et al, (ed.), *Dictionary of Third World Theologies* (New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 181-182

³¹ Olupona, "We are Ruled by Greedy Individuals Who Joy in Seeing Others Hungry" in *The Guardian*, Saturday July 16, 2011, 25

Conclusion

In this paper, it has been argued that the nature of the human person that desires salvation is the same both in Islam and Christianity. This fact gave the paper the platform to x-ray the doctrine of salvation in the broader perspectives of Roman Catholicism and Islam.

While Islam and Roman Catholicism may be standing apart on the role of the individual person in the pursuit of salvation, both religions have a common ground on the belief that salvation is about joy and liberation. Salvation in both religions means liberation from oppression, injustice, hunger and violence against human beings. The paper argues the fact that one cannot experience salvation without a cordial relationship with the adherents of other faith traditions. It holds that all selfish inclinations presented as truths ought to be transformed into service of God and humanity. This is necessary since God's will is about building cordial relationships among humans and across communities of faith.

To achieve the foregoing, the paper submitted that Christians and Muslims should pay closer attention to the problems of human disobedience, violence, discrimination, and killings in the name of God, especially in Nigeria. This is in line with the New Year Prayer for Peace of Ehusani. He notes that, "the truly brave and truly heroic are not those who can kill, oppress, dominate and cause untold hardship for others. The truly brave are those who can forgive, those who can love in return for hatred, and those who can transform an enemy into a friend,"³² irrespective of political, ethnic and religious affiliations.

³² George Ehusani, "A New Year Prayer for Peace" in *The Guardian*, Sunday January 9, 2011, 74