ISSN: 2141-7040

ILORIN JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

(IJOURELS)



Vol. 9, No. 2 December 2019

Scanned with CamScanner

CONTENTS

Dream Symbols and Prevalent Personae in the Best and Worst Dreams of Christian University Students
Victoria A. ALABI & Victor T. ALABI 1-20

Islam, Women and Politics in Nigerian Context
Ahmed Nafiu, ARIKEWUYO 21-34

A Re-Appraisal of the *Salafiyyah*'s Discourse on *Mawlidu 'N- Nabiyy*
Yusuph, Dauda Gambari & Oniye, Olayinka Ibrahim 35-52

Christian and Muslim Relationship in Ilorin Metropolis: A Model for Peaceful Co-Existence in A Multi-Religious Society
Hezekiah Deji Komolafe 53-62

Meeting the Financial Needs of Muslims through Islamic Cooperative Society: A Case Study of *Albir* Islamic Cooperative Society
Bello, Mufutau Olusola 63-74

Interpreting 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 in the Light of Church Building and Probity in Nigeria
Chibuzo Ikechi NWANGUMA 75-93

ISSN: 2141-7040

http://ejournals.unilorin.edu.ng/journals/index.php/ijourels

IJOURELS is abstracted in:
R & TA (Religious and Theological Abstracts)

Listed in:
-Ulrichsweb - Journalseek

Indexed in:
AJOL: African Journals Online
ATLA Religion Database
DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals
DRJI: Directory of Research Journals Indexing

Scanned with CamScanner

Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, (IJOURELS) *Vol.9 No.2, 2019, pp.53-62*

CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM RELATIONSHIP IN ILORIN METROPOLIS: A MODEL FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

Hezekiah Deji Komolafe
Department of Religions,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin
Email: hezkomolafe@gmail.com

Abstract

The experiences of religious violence between Christians and Muslims in many states in Nigeria have been frequent especially since the 1980s. In recent times, religious violence has been almost a yearly ritual with its attendant loss of lives and property. While some have argued that attempt to establish Islamic state has been the main cause of the menace, many are of the view that intolerance and lack of cooperation between leaders of the two faiths are the major reasons for the violence. In the case of Kwara State, Ilorin the capital has been adjudged widely in Nigeria as dominated by Muslims, yet other faiths are accommodated especially Christianity. Consequently, the state is being referred to as State of Harmony. This paper examines the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Ilorin metropolis with an ex-ray of the ingredients of their peaceful co-existence, so as to serve as a model for other multi religious states in Nigeria. The paper employed both historical and empirical methods. The findings revealed that though some religious violence has been experienced in Ilorin metropolis, inter-religious committee has been able to manage the crises and adherents of the two faiths live together in peace without fear or intimidations. The ingredients of their peaceful co-existence include religious tolerance, equal opportunities in social media, social interactions, fairness in appointment to political offices and establishment of inter-religious committee among others. It is therefore recommended that continuous dialogue, religious tolerance, social interactions by religious leaders and fairness in appointment which serve as bases for peaceful co-existence by the adherents of the two faiths in Ilorin metropolis, should also serve as way forward for a peaceful co-existence among people in multi-religious states.

Keywords: Peaceful Co-existence, Religious Violence, Inter-religious, Dialogue, Religious Tolerance

Introduction

People of different cultures, backgrounds, religious beliefs and political inclinations had in the past and even now engaging in wars, conflicts, threats, violence and confrontations of various kinds in order to get certain differences resolved or to consolidate on their superiority.

Scanned with CamScanner

There is no gain saying that violence and religious confrontations are on the increase in many regions of the world, especially in the Middle East and some parts of Africa like Egypt, Sudan, Chad, and Tanzania.[1] Some engage in war, violence or confrontations in order to effect the submission of their opposition to their wishes through compulsion.

Meanwhile, in Nigeria, religious confrontations have revolved mainly around the activities and relationships between Christians and Muslims for many years. These confrontations have increased in number, frequency and intensity, resulting in loss of lives, destruction of property, fears, suspicion, and displacement of people, thereby constituting major hindrances to the development of the nation. Indeed, with particular reference to Christianity and Islam, religion has been politicized because where a conflict is apparently devoid of any religious flavour, adherents of these two faiths have tended to give such a conflict a religious meaning.

Religious violence has claimed lives of many able bodied men and women who would have engaged in productive ventures and contributed to the economic development of the nation, Nigeria. The cost of rehabilitation and reconstruction of property destroyed after violence is very high and could have been channeled to more useful projects for further development of the nation's productive capacity.[2] Therefore, religious violence retards economic progress, hampers economic activities and consequently breeds unemployment, poverty and starvation.

In some Northern states of the country, adherents of these two faiths have at many occasions taken up arms to settle their differences, each believing that their values have divine sanction. Causes of incessant confrontations among the two faiths in Nigeria especially in the Northern part has been revealed to include the issue of Sharia, religious extremism, unnecessary rivalry, provocative attempt to impose state religion, close construction of churches and mosques to one another, the use of inflammatory statements by religious leaders against one another and many more but to mention a few.[3]

In the quest of solving religious violence in Nigeria, efforts are being made by government but it seems very little has been achieved. The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria contains considerable measures to guard against various kinds of polemics, particularly religious violence. Article 1, Section 38, in the Fourth Chapter on Fundamental Rights states that; Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice

Scanned with CamScanner

and observance.[4]This law has not been taken seriously in Nigeria as people are still being harassed to renounce their religion and accept a particular one by compulsion.

Apart from the constitution, prominent among the efforts of government is the establishment of the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) by President Olusegun Obasanjo in the year 2000 after the devastating riots over Sharia in Kaduna State.[5] The polarization between Christians and Muslims in reaction to the large-scale destruction of lives and property eventually led to the division of the city of Kaduna; sharia areas and non-sharia areas. President Obasanjo, shocked by the magnitude of the destruction, established NIREC and appointed Rev. Professor Yesufu Obaje, as its national coordinator and secretary. The Council was organized to provide a permanent forum where Christians and Muslims could foster and strengthen mutual understanding through dialogue. The Council was made up of equal numbers of Christians and Muslims, and was headed jointly by the Sultan of Sokoto (the leading Muslim ruler) and the National President of the Christian Association of Nigeria.[6] An office was opened in Abuja and regular meetings were scheduled to deliberate on resolving religious crises in Nigeria. Despite the above efforts, there are still states such as Borno, Bauchi, Kaduna and so on in the Northern part where Christians and Muslims still engage in religious violence.

Brief History of Islam and Christianity in Ilorin Metropolis

Ilorin, the capital of Kwara State is situated in the northern Yoruba land. Ilorin was founded by the Yorubas, one of the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, in 1450. It became a provincial military headquarters of the ancient Oyo Empire and later became a Northern Nigeria protectorate when Shehu Alimi, an itinerary Islamic preacher and teacher, took control of the city through the spread of Islam.[7]

Ilorin as a city has been recognized as one of the Islamic cities in Nigeria since the third decade of the nineteenth century of Christian era.[8]The first Ilorin Central Mosque was founded in 1820 in the Agbarere Area, popularly known as "Ile-elewa", under the leadership of Sheik Imam Muhammed Munab'bau. This was followed in 1835 by another Central Mosque at Idi-Ape during the reign of the first Emir of Ilorin, Abdulsalam. However, more than a century later when the Central Mosque could no longer cope with the growth of the population of worshippers, in 1974, the ninth Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Zulukanani Gambari invited personalities in Ilorin for the fund raising and construction of a new Central Mosque at Oja-Oba which worshipers are using till date.[9]

Scanned with CamScanner

Although the city retains a strong Islamic influence, it has a host of ancient and modern churches with moderate congregations. Such churches include the Holy Order of Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Anglican Church, Methodist Church, Celestial Church of Christ, The Holy Trinity Gospel Church International, Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA), Catholic Church, Baptist Church, Christ Apostolic Church and many others. In an interview with C.O.S. Fawenu, most of the Christian Churches in the state started schools and introduced innovative ideas that were readily adopted by the Muslim schools.[10]

Christian and Muslims Relationship in Ilorin City

Though there have been few cases of religious violence in Ilorin Metropolis, they are often managed collectively by leaders of the two faiths and the government without fear or favour. In 1986, Ilorin City witnessed a religious violence as Christians were attacked during Easter procession at Folawiyo Road, popularly known as Unity Road. Though no church was destroyed or vandalized, some shops were looted as many people ran for their lives. It was however reported later on the Radio by the state Governor that the Christians were not attacked by Muslims but by hoodlums who hijacked the situation to loot and destroy.[11]

On August 31, 2005, some Muslim extremists set ablaze a Church building in Baboko area of Ilorin city because according to them, it was too close to a Mosque. It was gathered that same Muslims in that area had at several times complained that the Church building was too close to the Mosque which is actually 500 meters away.[12] Some Muslim fanatics attacked the Church again on June 16, 2006, broke into the sanctuary, destroyed musical instruments and pulled down part of the Church fence. The government responded promptly to the situation by putting up a committee to investigate the matter and at the end supported the Church financially as recommended by the committee.[13]

Also, on the 31st December, 2017, violence erupted during the New Year eve programme at Taiwo Isale, Ilorin, where windows and other valuables of Methodist Church, CAC Oke-Isegun and St. Joseph Catholic Church were destroyed by youths suspected to be Muslim Quareeb group. The report by Punch Newspaper about the unfortunate incident in Ilorin has attested to the fact that it was crystal clear that the attack was not premeditated or carried out against the Christian Faithfull's as alleged by some Christians. For example, the Christ Apostolic Church and the Quareeb Muslim group in the area have a cordial and harmonious

Scanned with CamScanner

relationship. There are times when these two religious groups do help each other to control traffic probably because they do hold their service(s) directly opposite each other.[14]

According to an eye witness, what actually transpired on the night of the attack was that some hoodlums and miscreants who were prevented from holding their annual end of the year carnival due to security reasons were infuriated and later went haywire. Their first point of call was the Quareeb Muslim gathering where a young lady was stripped naked in the presence of his mother and was about to be raped when she miraculously escaped to a nearby church. And fortunately for her, the security men around the church rescued her from the thugs and she was subsequently taken to the church sanctuary. This infuriated the miscreants who later went wild and violent. The security men on ground called for reinforcement from the police and when the policemen arrived, the hoodlums confronted them and four of their Hillux vans were damaged and a police officer equally sustained a gunshot wound. The attackers later proceeded to the Christian gathering where they robbed and harassed worshippers.[15]

Efforts of both the Governor of the State and the Commissioner of Police were commended by leaders of both faiths for their timely intervention. Arrest were made and the religious leaders were appealed to by the State Commissioner of Police not to influence the release of the hoodlums by attaching religious tones to the issue.[16]

Despite the above experiences, Muslims and Christians have lived together in an atmosphere of peace in Ilorin metropolis for quite a number of years and when compared to some other states of the federation. For instance, Kano, Bauchi, Kaduna, Jos, and Maiduguri cities had experienced more than twelve major religious violence each from 1980 to date in which many lives and property were destroyed.[17] According to Akande, this view was shared by Bishop John Onaiyekan during the ordination of Bishop Ayo Maria Atoyebi in Ilorin on 17thMay, 1992 where he said it should be made known to the world that Christian and Muslim relationship in Ilorin is cordial.[18]

Some Factors for the Peaceful Co-existence in Ilorin City

Religious Tolerance

According to Akandeand Hadi, the development of churches in Ilorin has greatly improved despite the fact that Ilorin is a predominant Muslim town. Unlike some Northern states in the country where

Scanned with CamScanner

Christians are denied the opportunity to build church within Muslim dominated areas, churches could be found in Muslim populated areas such as Surulere, Oloje, Ogidi, and Ipata to mention but few.[19]It must be acknowledged that though churches cannot yet be found in predominant Muslim areas such as Ita Merin, Oke Eleele and so on in Ilorin city, Christians are living peacefully in those areas without any harassment and this is better when compared to some cities in the North such as Kaduna, Jos, Maiduguri where Christians are living in one part and Muslims live on the other part. In some areas in Ilorin city, Churches are situated side by side with Mosques without intimidation. In an interview with Prophetess Adimabua, she submitted that, as Muslim voice wakes people up at dawn for prayers through the echo of loud speakers without being considered an offence by Christians, likewise some Christians goes for evangelism either with handy speakers or tracts without any harassment by Muslims.[20]

Celebration of Religious Festivals

Muslims and Christians in Ilorin have had course to celebrate their festivals like Christmas and Eid-Fitri on the same day without chaos. Adherents of both faiths always comport themselves with maturity, going to their various praying places without any harassment. For more than six years, governors who are Musims in Ilorin City do visit homes of some Christian leaders during Christmas and on the other hand, some Christian clerics do visit and pray for the governors during Eid-fitri celebration.[21]In most gatherings, congregations or meetings where adherents of the two faiths are present, opening and closing prayers are alternated.[22]These practices also showcases the harmonious relationship between Christian and Muslim in Ilorin city.

Equal Opportunity in Social Media and Sponsorship

As opposed to practices in some states in the Northern part of Nigeria, where state owned radio and television stations are used to propagate Islamic programmes alone, in Ilorin city, equal slots are usually given to Christians and Muslims on Radio and Television programmes. Akande and Hadi note that while Radio and Television stations open and close with Muslim and Christian prayers, state owned newspapers like the Herald, specific pages are dedicated to Muslims on Fridays and Christians on Sundays.[23] In an interaction with a Kwara radio programme presenter, she confirmed that the state owned radio and television do not only give opportunity to religious bodies to air their programmes, jingles are

Scanned with CamScanner

produced to invite for the sponsorship of programmes especially Christians and Muslims during their festivals.[24]

Government Sponsorship of Christians and Muslims on Holy Pilgrimages

In encouraging inter- religious harmony in the state, government does sponsor some Christians and Muslims on pilgrimage to their Holy lands. The committee on Christian and Muslim pilgrimage has been a composition of Christians and Muslims in the State. On May 6, 2018, another ten (10) member committee composing of Christians and Muslims was put in place by Bukola Olusola Saraki all for the purpose to complement the effort of state government on pilgrimage sponsorship to Mecca and Jerusalem.[25]One must admit, of course, that such pre-occupations and expenses, on the part of government and political actors, contribute to politicization of Islam and Christianity.

Educational Interaction

As part of the mutual understanding and cooperation between adherents of the two faiths in Ilorin, many mission and private schools owned by Christians have many Muslim children as students and pupils. Schools like Bishop Smith Memorial College, Saint Anthony's Secondary School, Cherubim and Seraphim College, St. Joseph's Nursery and Primary Schools are good examples. However, there is still low turnout of Christians in Muslim schools like Ansarul Islam Secondary School, Al-Alim Nursery and Primary schools for logistic reasons. In an interaction with Aminat Balogun in her office, she attested to the fact that there is a cordial relationship between Christian and Muslim in Ilorin City. To her, there are homes where Christian and Muslim students live together as one family without problem. Also, in virtually all the primary schools in the city, Christian pupils are required to recite the Lord's prayers and Muslim pupils are asked to recite the *fatiha*.[26]

Fair Appointment to Positions

To further sustain harmonious relationship between the two faiths in Kwara state, it has been the common practice that when a governor is a Muslim, the deputy will be a Christian, except that when Cornelious Adebayo (a Christian) was governor, Usman Obatemi (a Muslim) was his deputy. For example, when Shaba Lafiagi (a Muslim) was the Governor, Ojo Fadimula (a Christian) was his deputy. When. When Lawal was the governor, Simeon Fayomi (a Christian) was his deputy. When Bukola

Scanned with CamScanner

Saraki was the governor, Chief Joel Ogundeji (a Christian) was his deputy. When Fatai Ahmed was the governor, Peter Kishira (a Christian) was the deputy governor. So far, there is no doubt that Christians play second fiddle in Kwara state in respect of governorship position but Christians in the state do not seem to have any problem with.

Committee Members on Inter- Religious Affairs

To ensure continuous peaceful coexistence of the two religions in the state, the Kwara State Government in 2005 set up a body known as committee on Inter-religious Affairs. This committee is consisted of Christian and Muslim leaders who meet regularly to discuss issues bordering on peaceful co-existence of adherents of the two religions in the state and especially in Ilorin City. At a Radio program in Ilorin, Alhaji Mohammed Shaaba Koro (Chairman Inter Religious Committee, Kwara State) and Evangelist Timothy Opoola (Chairman CAN Kwara State) said the Emir of Ilorin must be appreciated because he has been very cooperative, accommodating and has continued to ensure that the people of the state live together peacefully.[27]

Appointment of the Special Assistant to the Governor on Religious Matters

Another factor for peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims in the state is the appointment of Special Assistants to the Governor on religious matters. Since the political era, the appointment of special assistants to the Governor on religious matters has always been one Christian and one Muslim. These special assistants often serve as intermediaries between the government and leaders of the two religious bodies.[28]

Conclusion

From the discourse so far, the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Ilorin City has been adjudged to be cordial and peaceful based on some factors. Though, some cases of religious violence have been experienced in Ilorin City, Christians and Muslims have found a way of living together in peace and harmony without any molestation or chaos. Leaders of the two faiths have been able to sustain religious peace through religious tolerance, social interaction and celebration of religious festivals among others. Government must on its own part ensure appointments to positions; give equal opportunities in government owned parastatals, and

Scanned with CamScanner

establish inter-religious committee where the two faiths would be equally represented to hear and settle grievances.

Notes and References

1. The Daily Star: Lebanon News: http://www.dailystar.com.ib, Accessed January 26th, 2011.
2. Kayode A. Balogun, "Religious Intolerance as a Cause of National Disintegration "*in S.B Mala (Ed) Religion and National Unity,* (Ibadan: University Press, 1988), 166
3. Dele Omotunde, "A Harvest of Crisis" in *Tell Magazine*, (August 31, 1992), 23-24.
4. Sam Amadi, "Religions and Secular Constitution: Human Rights and the Challenge of Sharia" www.hks.harvard.edu/cchrp/pdf/Amadi.pdf., 2003
5. "NIREC" *Constitution of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council.* http://www.nirecng.org/home/docs/NIREC_CONSTITUTION.pdf 2001.
6. "NIREC" *Constitution.*
7. I.T. Hassan, "Religion in Ilorin City" http//www.ilorinng.org/kwara/Nigeria
8. H.O. Danmole, "The Spread of Islam in Ilorin Emirate in the Nineth Century" *in a Journal of the Nigerian Associations of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies,* (NATAIS Vol. II No 2 December, 1981), 1.
9. I.T. Hassan, "Religion in Ilorin City"
10. Interview with Rev. Cornelius Fawenu, (Immediate Past Secretary of CAN Kwara State Chapter) at his church in Oke-Oyi, Ilorin on 22nd November, 2014.
11. News at Noon, Kwara State Broadcasting Station, 2nd August, 1986
12. Interview with Rev. Cornelius Fawenu
13. The Punch, 1st January, 2008
14. Anonymity, Ilorin, through social media, (*WhatsApp*), 15th January, 2018
15. Police Report in The Herald Newspaper, 3rd March, 2018
16. Interview with Rev. Cornelius Fawenu
17. Rotgak Gofwen, *Religious Conflict in Northern Nigeria and Nation Building: The Throes of Two Decades,* (1980-2000), 82.
18. L.B. Akande and A.M. Hadi" An Evaluation of Christian/ Muslim Relations in Ilorin during the fourth Republic" in Suleiman Jamiu

Scanned with CamScanner

and Raphael Akanmidu (eds), Religious Experiences in Nigeria (Department of ICCES, Kwara State University, 2012), 121.

19. L.B. Akande and A.M. Hadi, "An Evaluation of Christian/ Muslim Relations in Ilorin during the fourth Republic"
20. Interview with Prophetess Paulina B. Adimabua, (Incumbent Chairperson, Women wing of CAN Kwara State Chapter) at her Church C & S Muritala way, Ilorin on 8th March, 2018.
21. Interaction with Dauda Ariyoosu at the International Conference on Law, Religion and Development, held in the University of Ilorin. 23rd June, 2016.
22. Interaction with Emmanuel Dada Obafemi, immediate past Registrar, University of Ilorin, 13th June, 2018.
23. L.B. Akande and A.M. Hadi" An Evaluation of Christian/ Muslim Relations in Ilorin during the fourth Republic"
24. Anonymous, Presenter in Kwara State Radio, Ilorin, August, 2018
25. Saraki Inaugurates Pilgrimage Committee, Daily Trust, 6th May, 2018.
26. Interview with Amimat Balogun, Principal Education Officer, Kwara State Ministry of Education, Ilorin on 8th March, 2015.
27. Kwara Christians and Muslims agree on peace: https://www.ilorin.info/fullnews.php?id, 2017.
28. Kwara Christians and Muslims agree on peace.

Scanned with CamScanner