About The Author

EMMANUEL ANDE IVORGBA, Ph.D is the Executive Director of New Era Educational and Charitable Support Foundation. He serves as Global Study Circle Coordinator for The Dalai Lama Foundation, Africa Program Director for Project Happiness, West Africa Liaison for United Religions Initiative (URI), Council Ambassador to the Parliament of the World's Religions and presenter of "Projecting the Real You Workshops" and Counselling Sessions tailored to help people achieve their dreams and purpose. He has made several contributions in the fields of Philosophy and Religion, Education for Liberation, Youth Empowerment, Interfaith Dialogue and Peace Education, especially in Nigeria.

Emmanuel had his primary, secondary and early tertiary education in Nigeria and later earned a Ph.D in Philosophy and Religion, specializing in Metaphysics and Comparative Religion at the University of Sedona. Emmanuel also studied and obtained a Certificate in Principles and Guidelines for UN Peacekeeping Operations at the Peace Operations Training Institute (POTI) as well a Certificate in Conflict Analysis at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Washington DC., in addition to several other professional trainings. Emmanuel is Convenor/Director of the Annual International Conference on Youth and Interfaith Dialogue which holds every October in Nigeria. Emmanuel is a scholar, entrepreneur, social innovator, peacebuilder and author of several books. He has travelled widely and presented papers at conferences, seminars and workshops in Nigeria and abroad. He currently lives in Nigeria where he coordinates several other projects, including Creative Minds International Academy, a Jos-based Government—approved Nursery, Primary and Secondary School facilitating values-based education, academic excellence, creative self-expression and positive character development. Emmanuel is also the Chairman/CEO of Solutions and Innovations Technologies, a strategic marketing, consulting, training and human resource management firm he established in June 2012.
ANATOMY

OF

RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

Emmanuel Ande Ivorgba, PhD

A Forward by Len and Libby Traubman
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Forward

Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa and seventh-most on Earth. She is wealthy in abundant natural resources and creative intelligence, bringing great affluence to some while disregarding and leaving the majority in hopeless poverty. Nigerians' desperation is often expressed violently, even brutally, pathetically seeking order, fairness, and dignity. Neither government nor its constituency is distinctive about rejecting violent means. Various citizens will diversely attribute root causes to tribal competition, economic poverty and greed, corruption, revenge, manipulation of fear, misuse of power, famine of relationships, indigene-settler rivalry, and religion. Since the default setting of most humans is to take sides, faith communities and institutions -- Islam, Christianity, and African Traditional Religion -- have been variously targets of blame and attacks, organizing centers of defensiveness and hostility, and sacred refuges of sanity, wisdom, and creative initiatives to reunite and heal Nigerians and Nigeria as one.
In Anatomy of Religious Violence, our dear friend and author, Emmanuel Ande Ivorgba, uncovers a rich history of Nigeria, usefully clarifying religions' conditioning of Nigerian people and habits over centuries. His narrative of religions begins 5,000 years ago (3,000 BCE) in the Near East and brings us to this 2012 year in his beloved Nigeria. Reading Ivorgba and Nigerian context is a paradox. We are awed by the diversity, beauty, meaning, and evolution of the religions. And we are challenged by the different perceptions and practices, yet exemplary lives-lived of women and men inspired by each faith tradition.

Like rivers lead to oceans, Ivorgba helps us see universal principles where the religions and their faithfults converge. He gives concrete hope that Nigerians and humankind -- from their root teachings and face-to-face engagement -- will experience that the soul's oldest memory is of union, and the soul's deepest longing is for reunion: Ivorgba's own vision of a world of "peace and love." In brilliant versatility, he uncovers from each faith the aim to dignify the "other" and thus oneself, known around Earth as The Golden Rule.
We intimately observed Emmanuel's exemplary intellect and courage to live his dream by gathering 200 brave Muslims and Christians for face-to-face youth interfaith dialogue in a bold response to bloody 2010 violence right there in Jos. Shoulder to shoulder with him during those historic days and evenings, we saw that new breed of young Nigerians experience that "an enemy is one whose story we have not heard." And we saw how religious Ivorgba truly is.

Yet given the reality of daily life which is stressful for the masses, and bare subsistence for vast millions more, it is hard to imagine his Nigeria of "peace and love." Ivorgba is frank in his description of the problems, and lays out a plan of required steps to meet the needs of the Nigerian people. It won't be easy, but the principles are crystal-clear in all the religions. The challenge is for the people to grasp the seriousness and that there is no individual survival. Each Nigerian is called to fulfill religions' universal call for inclusiveness, familiarity, and affection that allows decisions to assure basic human needs and unite people as neighbors forever, with everyone dignified
and no one excluded. Nigeria's survival and rise to new heights totally depends on grasping that they are totally interdependent and interrelated, regardless of their tribal ties or personal religious paths.

Ivorgba deftly leads us through the politics of Nigeria and the workings of the Constitution and how change happens. In the end, the scholar and social innovator makes clear that living models of change must come from the people, and governments alone will do no magic. He prescribes beginning with family, living life at the highest by principles that embody the supreme truth of our oneness where the faith traditions converge.

Len and Libby Traubman
Co-Founders of Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue (since 1992)
An Introduction

From 22\textsuperscript{nd} - 27\textsuperscript{th} August, 2011, I was in Kampala, Uganda in East Africa, at the invitation of United Religions Initiative- Africa and the Great Lakes Regions to participate in an International Conference on the Role of Religions to Build Peace, Security and Counter Violent Extremism in Africa. The Conference was conducted at the Hotel Africana in Kampala. At that conference, I presented a paper titled: "Reflections on Religious Conflicts in Nigeria". This Book is both a product of the paper I presented at that conference and some years of Academic Research and Studies in Philosophy and Religion.

As I write this piece today 11\textsuperscript{th} July, 2012, there are reports of religiously-motivated violence, visited upon the inhabitants of Plateau State in Central Nigeria, with the usual attendant loss of human lives and destruction of property, including the death of a serving Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Senator Gyang Dantong and the majority leader of the Plateau State House of Assembly, Hon. Gyang Fulani. The daily news reminds us of the ongoing violence and
conflicts in Nigeria, especially violence and conflicts based on regional politics, ethnic identities, land, economics and above all, religion. In a Secular and multi-religious Nation Country where freedom of religion is expected to have been a cardinal virtue, tensions between Christians and Muslims have risen to uncomfortable and unacceptable levels recently. But this seems not to be a new tension; it stretches back to the colonial era. Considering the level of hostilities, especially in Northern Nigeria and the general misinformation concerning discussions around this topic, it has become necessary to get the history and facts straight.

While it is true that Religious Violence has been responsible for the collapse of many nations around the world, there is no denying the fact that responsible manipulation of religion has also resulted in the rapid growth and development of some powerful nations today. In Nigeria, experience shows that the incidence of Religious Violence has become a yearly ritual, often leading to the destruction of precious lives and property, the loss of precious time and energy, among others. This way of handling religion leads to self-
destruction and backwardness. Nigeria is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society with enormous potential for economic, social, and democratic development. Within the last two decades Nigeria has witnessed a variety of disturbances some of which have threatened our corporate existence and survival as a nation under God. The causes of these conflicts may not be unconnected with the way and manner religion is portrayed to its adherents and mistrust between the followers of the various religious and ethnic groups.

That we have a situation of disequilibrium to contend with is never in doubt. Inevitably, our society is becoming increasingly fragmented; divisions and rifts have persistently manifested themselves with increasing force and frequency. For a very long time now, we have constructed a world based on our sense of separation, which has resulted to endless wars and violence, racism, oppression, gender battles, and pseudo politics, economics, ethnicism and several other forms of “isms” today.

Despite our profound sense of interdependence and interconnectedness, our world appears to be shaped
and lubricated by differences. Regrettably and too often, religion is misused as an instrument for division and injustice, betraying the very ideals and teachings that lie at the heart of each of the world's great religious traditions. We are today confronted with the danger of one-sided conversations, appointments, and generation of exaggerated stories. There are all kinds of people and institutions misusing power, money, fear and religion to disintegrate, and to demonize and diminish one another. Relationships take many forms. Regardless of whatever form of relationships, they are all vulnerable to the same kind of poison. Dr. Robert W. Fuller calls this poison “Rankism”. He describes “Rankism” as a 'degrading assertion of rank. It's what's happening when a person, a group, or nation acts as if it outranks another and attempts to demean, humiliate, or exploit it', a situation whereby either party presumes its superiority over the other, and treats its opposite number as a “nobody”. Dr. Fuller then lists examples of rankism to include all the ignoble isms (racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, ableism, etc.), as well as bullying of every kind, predatory lending, corporate corruption,
sexual abuse, and pay-to-play politics. This is what people who think of themselves as somebodies do to people they take for nobodies—putting people down, advantaging oneself at others' expense. Rankism is dominating or exploiting others. Victims of rankism feel degraded, dismissed, discounted, disenfranchised, dissed, indignified, and humiliated. When we're put down, when our dignity is insulted, we feel indignant.

Problems generally arise when some people think and behave as if their God is superior to others. This should not be the case. As Thich Nhat Hanh observes, religion's purpose is primarily to assist us in dealing with pain, grief and to end human "suffering within". Strangely however, and so often, as we attempt to deal with this inner suffering, we tend to hurt others. But it is possible to stop for a moment and hold our pains, sufferings and grief instead of flinging it back on others. Religion should provide Meaning, Purpose and Hope to our lives. The belief in God whose desire is our goodness; God who watches our every move and will eventually decide our ultimate destiny, should be strong motivation toward moral behavior. Believe in
God who loves us should be a great incentive to please him and to be people of love and peace ourselves. As V.V. Raman observes, "Religion informs and inspires the values and visions that are part of one's existence. It provides a backdrop for one's life, present and future, terrestrial and beyond, real and visualized. The spiritual yearning has taken concrete forms in human history as different religions with deep historical, geographical cultural links. Though its essence transcends such links, it is through these that the religious experience becomes meaningful, enriching, and relevant in its observance".

More than ever before, now is the time for humanity to live in unity. We are all totally dependent on the same creation to the extent that there cannot be individual survival. We are all in this together, regardless of our race, religion or nationality. All of us who inhabit the earth today have a choice to either embrace peace only after unimaginable horrors precipitated by our stubborn attachment to old patterns and primitive ways of conduct or to be embrace peace now by an act of consultative will. Failure to arrest and stem the increasing tide of disorder and conflict in our world
today would be disastrous and, according to a Baha'i expression "unconsciously irresponsible".

Meantime, the notion of enemies is to humanity what HIV is to the immune system: big trouble. In the body, this sort of trouble can lead to AIDS; in the human community, it leads to war. AIDS and war lead in similar directions, to needless suffering and death—often on a massive scale. Indeed, the paradigm of reality that features the concept of enemies is like an autoimmune disease of the human collective: dysfunctional and killing us. The entire paradigm of adversarial, confrontational, aggressive, competitive taking-of-sides, featuring the notion of enemies at its conceptual apex, is overdue for retirement. The paradigm emerging to take its place offers a very different orientation, featuring networking, interdependence, mediated conflict transformation, constructive cooperation, co-development and partnership. This book intends to help create a vibrant public conversation around the idea that the very notion of enemies is obsolete.
Chapter One: Towards an Acceptable Definition

1.1 A Brief History of Religion

A study of the history of religion is a study of the period beginning with the invention of writing about 5,000 years ago (3,000 BCE) in the Near East. So the history of Religion refers to the written record of human religious experiences and ideas, while prehistory of religion relates to a study of religious beliefs that existed prior to the advent of written records. The school of religious history called the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* was a 19th century German school of thought which was the first to systematically study religion as a socio-cultural phenomenon. It depicted religion as evolving with human culture, from primitive polytheism to ethical monotheism. The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* appeared at a time when scholarly study of the Bible and church history
was flourishing particularly in Germany. The study of the history of religion is important because religion has been a major force in many human cultures. Religion has often shaped civilizations' law and moral codes, social structure, art and music. Religion has also been a source of a great many conflicts and wars throughout human history.

The earliest evidence of religious ideas dates back several hundred thousand years to the Middle and Lower Paleolithic periods. Archeologists refer to apparent intentional burials of early *Homo sapiens* from as early as 300,000 years ago as evidence of religious ideas. Other evidence of religious ideas includes symbolic artifacts from Middle Stone Age sites in Africa. However, the interpretation of early paleolithic artifacts, with regard to how they relate to religious ideas, remains controversial. Archeological evidence from more recent periods is less controversial. A number of artifacts from the
Upper Paleolithic (50,000-13,000) are generally interpreted by scientists as representing religious ideas. Examples of Upper Paleolithic remains associated with religious beliefs include the lion man, the Venus figurines and cave paintings from Chauvet Cave and the elaborate ritual burial from Sungir.

In the 19th century, various theories were proposed regarding the origin of religion, supplanting the earlier claims of Christianity. Early theorists Edward Burnett Tylor and Herbert Spencer proposed the concept of animism, while archaeologist John Lubbock used the term "fetishism". Meanwhile, religious scholar Max Müller theorized that religion began in hedonism and folklorist Wilhelm Mannhardt suggested that religion began in "naturalism", by which he meant mythological explanation of natural events. All of these theories
have since been widely criticized; there is no broad consensus regarding the origin of religion.

Through the bulk of human evolution, humans lived in small nomadic bands practicing a hunter gatherer lifestyle. The emergence of complex and organized religions can be traced to the period when humans abandoned their nomadic hunter gatherer lifestyles in order to begin farming during the Neolithic period. The transition from foraging bands to states and empires resulted in more specialized and developed forms of religion that were reflections of the new social and political environments. While bands and small tribes possess supernatural beliefs, these beliefs are adapted to smaller populations.

The religions of the Neolithic peoples provide evidence of some of the earliest known forms of organized religions. The Neolithic settlement of Çatalhöyük, in what is now Turkey, was home to
about 8,000 people and remains the largest known settlement from the Neolithic period. James Mellaart, who excavated the site, believed that Çatalhöyük was the spiritual center of central Anatolia. A striking feature of Çatalhöyük is its female figurines. Mellaart, argued that these well-formed, carefully made figurines, carved and molded from marble, blue and brown limestone, schist, calcite, basalt, alabaster, and clay, represented a female deity of the Great Goddess type. Although a male deity existed as well, "...statues of a female deity far outnumber those of the male deity, who moreover, does not appear to be represented at all after Level VI" (Mellaart 1967:180). To date, eighteen levels have been identified. These careful figurines were found primarily in areas Mellaart believed to be shrines. One, however - a stately goddess seated on a throne flanked by two female lions - was found in a grain bin, which
Mellaart suggests might have been a means of ensuring the harvest or protecting the food supply.

The Pyramid Texts from ancient Egypt are one of the oldest known religious texts in the world dating to between 2400-2300 BCE. Writing played a major role in sustaining organized religion by standardizing religious ideas regardless of time or location. Organized religion emerged as a means of providing social and economic stability. Organized religion served to justify the central authority, which in turn possessed the right to collect taxes in return for providing social and security services to the state. The empires of Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia were theocracies, with chiefs, kings and emperors playing dual roles of political and spiritual leaders. Virtually all state societies and chiefdoms around the world have similar political structures where political authority is justified by divine sanction. Organized religion emerged as
means of maintaining peace between unrelated individuals. Bands and tribes consist of small number of related individuals. However states and nations are composed of thousands or millions of unrelated individuals. Jared Diamond argues that organized religion served to provide a bond between unrelated individuals who would otherwise be more prone to enmity. He argues that the leading cause of death among hunter gatherer societies is murder.

The period from 900 BCE to 200 BCE has been described by historians as the axial age, a term coined by German philosopher Karl Jaspers. According to Jaspers, this is the era of history when "the spiritual foundations of humanity were laid simultaneously and independently... And these are the foundations upon which humanity still subsists today" (Cited in “The Spiritual Foundations of the Human Family”: ACYDF News, Vol.1, No.3, p.46). Intellectual historian Peter Watson has summarized
this period as the foundation of many of humanity's most influential philosophical traditions, including monotheism in Persia and Canaan, Platonism in Greece, Buddhism and Hinduism in India, and Confucianism and Taoism in China. These ideas would become institutionalized in time, for example Ashoka's role in the spread of Buddhism, or the role of platonic philosophy in Christianity at its foundation.

Newer present-day world religions established themselves throughout Eurasia during the Middle Ages by the Christianization of the Western world; Buddhist missions to East Asia; the decline of Buddhism in the Indian subcontinent; and the spread of Islam throughout the Middle East, Central Asia, North Africa and parts of Europe and India. During the Middle Ages, Muslims were in conflict with Zoroastrians during the Islamic conquest of Persia; Christians were in conflict with Muslims

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during the Byzantine-Arab Wars, Crusades, Reconquista and Ottoman wars in Europe; Christians were in conflict with Jews during the Crusades, Reconquista and Inquisition; Shamans were in conflict with Buddhists, Taoists, Muslims and Christians during the Mongol invasions; and Muslims were in conflict with Hindus and Sikhs during Muslim conquest in the Indian subcontinent. Many medieval religious movements emphasized mysticism, such as the Cathars and related movements in the West, the Jews in Spain, the Bhakti movement in India and Sufism in Islam. Monotheism reached definite forms in Christian Christology and in Islamic Tawhid. Hindu monotheist notions of Brahman likewise reached their classical form with the teaching of Adi Shankara.

European colonisation during the 15th to 19th centuries resulted in the spread of Christianity to
Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas, Australia and the Philippines. The invention of the printing press in the 15th century played a major role in the rapid spread of the Protestant Reformation under leaders such as Martin Luther and John Calvin. Wars of religion followed, culminating in the Thirty Years War which ravaged central Europe, 1618-1648. Both Protestant and Catholic churches competed in a global endeavour to Christianize the world.

The 18th century saw the beginning of secularisation in Europe, gaining momentum after the French Revolution. By the late 20th century religion had declined to only a weak force in most of Europe. In the 20th century, the regimes of Communist Eastern Europe and Communist China were explicitly anti-religious. A great variety of new religious movements originated in the 20th century, many proposing syncretism of elements of established religions. Adherence to such new movements is
limited, however, remaining below 2% worldwide in the 2000s. Adherents of the classical world religions account for more than 75% of the world's population, while adherence to indigenous tribal religions has fallen to 4%. Currently, an estimated 15% of the world's population identifies as nonreligious.

1:2 The problem of Definition

Right through the ages, it has never been easy to find a definition of religion that is universally acceptable, empirically testable and useful. This is because most definitions of religion tend to either present a narrow perspective of religion, while excluding several other belief systems which are acceptable as components of religious practice, or such definitions tend to be rather too ambitious and vague to the extent that anything and everything becomes a religion. In the first instance, religion may be defined only in terms of the speaker's own beliefs or those of his or her cultural heritage, while
excluding the religious beliefs of other cultures. On the other hand, some definitions of religion tend not to sufficiently delimit religion from other equally important fields of human thought, including law, psychology, and philosophy, among others, when such definitions become too vague and inclusive. Some have even argued in favour of the non-existence of religion. Jonathan Z. Smith writes that:

"..... while there is a staggering amount of data, phenomena, of human experiences and expressions that might be characterized in one culture or another, by one criterion or another, as religion- there is no data for religion. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no existence apart from the academy"
So, in attempting to present a definition of religion, I take profound cognizance of the above dilemma.

In the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, religion is defined in terms of its traits, rather than a declaration of religion as being one thing or the other. Some of the traits listed include, but not limited to- belief in supernatural beings or gods, ritual acts focused on sacred objects, a moral code believed to be sanctioned by the gods, prayer and other forms of communication with gods, a distinction between sacred and profane objects, a social group bound together by the above, among others. The above definition, though it includes the sociological, psychological and historical factors and allows for broader gray areas in the concept of religion, it presents its own flaws however. Its
conception of "supernatural beings" seems rather too specific, and among others, not every religion revolves around the supernatural. Mircea Eliade defines religion in reference to a focus on the "sacred".

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, International Student's 7th Edition defines Religion as: (1) "The belief in the existence of a god or gods, and the activities that are connected with the worship of them. (2) One of the systems of faith that are based on the belief in the existence of a particular god or gods (3). A particular interest or influence that is very important in your life".

The etymology of religion lies with the Latin word *religare*, meaning "to tie, to bind". Cicero connected religion with *relegere*, which translates as "to read or repeat over again". According to the philologist Max Müller, the root of the English word "religion", the
Latin *religio*, was originally used to mean only "reverence for God or the gods, careful pondering of divine things, piety", which Cicero further derived to mean "diligence". Max Müller characterized many other cultures around the world, including Egypt, Persia and India, as having a similar power structure at one point in history. What is called ancient religion today; they would have only called "law". Modern scholars such as Tom Harpur and Joseph Campbell favour the derivation from *ligare* "bind, connect", probably from a prefixed *re-ligare*, i.e. *re* (again) + *ligare* or "to reconnect," which was made prominent by St. Augustine, following the interpretation of Lactantius. Several different languages have words that can be translated as "religion", but they may use them in a very different way, and some have no word for religion at all. For instance, the Sanskrit word *dharma*, though translated as "religion", also means law. Throughout classical South Asia, the study of law consisted of
concepts such as penance through piety and ceremonial as well as practical traditions. Medieval Japan at first had a similar union between "imperial law" and universal or "Buddha law", but these later became independent sources of power. In Hebrew there is no precise equivalent of "religion", and Judaism does not distinguish clearly between religious, national, racial, or ethnic identities. One of its central concepts is "halakha", sometimes translated as "law", which guides religious practice and belief and many aspects of daily life. These Laws can be found in The Talmud.

From a sociological standpoint, Bate (2000:8) identified society, and not the individual as that which distinguishes between what is sacred and the profane. He observes that religion does not originate from the individual, but from the society as a 'collective' or group of individuals. From a psychological perspective, Freud describes religion
in terms of a 'neurotic need which all people would grow out of as mankind matured'. For Freud therefore, religion was a neurotic requirement for the stabilization of phobias and conflicts in all individuals. Anthropologically, Taylor sees religion as belief in spiritual beings. In all of the above definitions, one thing clearly stands out - that religion is a binding force; it brings individuals to a state of cohesion. Parrinder (1962:10) maintains that, regardless of race, there is a great similarity in religion. Personally, I am deeply convinced that religion begins in knowledge and awareness, and leads to practice and ultimately in a relationship and worship of God.

The development of religion has taken different forms in different cultures. Some religions place an emphasis on belief, while others emphasize practice. Some religions focus on the subjective experience of the religious individual, while others consider the
activities of the religious community to be most significant and relevant. Some religions claim to be universal, believing their laws and cosmology to be binding for everyone, while others are intended to be practiced only by a closely defined or localized group. In many places in the Muslim world, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, etc, religion has been associated with public institutions such as education, hospitals, the family, government, and political hierarchies.

Religion originates in a deliberate effort to represent and order beliefs, feelings, imaginations and actions that emanate in responses to direct experience of the spiritual and the sacred. As this attempt expands in its formulation and elaboration, it becomes a process that creates meaning for itself on a sustaining basis, in terms of both its originating experiences and its own continuing responses. The Sacred is described as a mysterious manifestation of power and presence that is experienced as both
primordial and transformative, inspiring awe and rapt attention.

Man, by his very nature, is a religious being. Clifford Geertz (1973:25) calls religion as a Cultural System, while Talal Asad (1982:51) describes it as "an anthropological category". In academics, Scholars tend to divide religions into three broad categories, namely: world religions, referring to transcultural, international faiths; indigenous religions, which refer to smaller, culture-specific or nation-specific religious groups; and new religious movements, which refer to recently developed faiths. One modern academic theory of religion, known as social constructionism, says that religion is a modern concept that suggests all spiritual practice and worship follows a model similar to the Abrahamic religions as an orientation system that helps to interpret reality and define human beings, and thus religion, as a concept, has been applied
inappropriately to non-Western cultures that are not based upon such systems, or in which these systems are a substantially simpler construct.

1:3  The Universality of Religion

Man by his very nature, is *homo religiosus*; (religious man). By its very definition, despite its varying forms and shapes, the universal nature of Religion is undisputable. Religion is a worldwide phenomenon that has played a part in all human culture and so is a much broader, more complex category than the set of beliefs or practices found in any single religious tradition. An adequate understanding of religion must take into account its distinctive qualities and patterns as a form of human experience, as well as the similarities and differences in religions across human cultures. In all cultures, human beings make a practice of interacting with what are taken to be spiritual powers. These powers may be in the form of gods, spirits, ancestors, or any
kind of sacred reality with which humans believe themselves to be connected. Sometimes a spiritual power is understood broadly as an all-embracing reality, and sometimes it is approached through its manifestation in special symbols. It may be regarded as external to the self, internal, or both. People interact with such a presence in a sacred manner—that is, with reverence and care. Religion is the term most commonly used to designate this complex and diverse realm of human experience. There are some people who live what they consider to be a “spiritual” life but do not follow a particular religion.

The first recorded Western attempts to understand and document religious phenomena were made by the Greeks and Romans. As early as the 6th century BC, Greek philosopher Xenophanes noted that different cultures visualized the gods in different ways. In the following century, Greek historian Herodotus recorded the wide range of religious
practices he encountered in his travels, comparing the religious observances of various cultures, such as sacrifice and worship, with their Greek equivalents. Roman historians Julius Caesar and Cornelius Tacitus similarly recorded the rites and customs of peoples that they met on their military campaigns.

Although the systematic study of religions did not emerge until the latter half of the 19th century, the groundwork was laid in the three preceding centuries. In the 16th century, Western knowledge of other cultures increased dramatically through extensive trade and exploration. Explorers and missionaries reported in detail on the range of religious beliefs and practices around the world. As a result, a great deal of traditional bias against non-Christian religions was challenged as early as the 16th and 17th centuries.
In the Age of Enlightenment (early and mid-18th century), thinkers took a special interest in what they termed natural religion—the inborn capacity of all humans to arrive at a belief in the existence of a supreme being and to act on that belief. To thinkers of the Enlightenment, natural religion compared favourably with the supernatural religion of the Bible. For example, French philosopher Voltaire condemned the social effects of revealed religion, that is religion that is communicated through supernatural authorities such as prophets or sacred scriptures, and German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder argued that every culture possesses a unique spirit that is part of its religion and its language. In a critique of biblical history, Scottish philosopher David Hume demonstrated the historical difficulties involved in tracing all human cultures to the offspring of the biblical patriarch Noah or in asserting that monotheism is the original form of religion.
In the mid-19th century, German scholar Friedrich Max Müller, who has been called the father of Comparative Religion, became the most prominent advocate of historical and linguistic analysis in the study of religion. Beginning in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the scriptures of many non-Western traditions had been translated and published, offering a view of faiths that previously had been inaccessible. In addition, archaeological excavations had revealed new features—including some scriptural texts—of previously obscure religions, such as those of the ancient Middle East. Presented with this mass of information, Müller undertook a critical, historically based investigation of world religious traditions. Although his approach emphasized the view that all traditions were the product of historical development, Müller believed comparative study would demonstrate that every religion possessed some measure of truth.
By the end of the 19th century, scholars were making religion an object of systematic inquiry. Müller's comparative approach was adopted in many European and Japanese universities, and as a result the common features of world religions (such as gods, prayer, priesthood, and creation myths) were the subjects of sustained scholarly investigation. In addition, field anthropologists had begun to compile firsthand accounts of the religions of peoples who previously had been dismissed as savages. The study of tribal religions contributed a great deal to the general analysis of the role of religion in human societies.

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, scholars had begun to pose basic questions about the origin and development of religious ideas. Scholars questioned how religion began and the stages of its evolution. Some maintained that it originated with a
belief in spirits (*animism*), then evolved into the notion that there were many gods (*polytheism*), and ultimately emerged as the ideal of a single god (*monotheism*). Others held that religion began in a sense of awe at the impressive activities of nature (*Nature Worship*), in a feeling of reverence for the spirits of the dead (*Ancestor Worship*), or in an attempt to overcome mortality (*Immortality*). Many other important questions about the nature of religion were addressed during this period: Can religion be divided into so-called primitive and higher types? Is religion a product of psychological needs and projections? Is it a function of political and social control? Such questions have continued to generate a large number of theories.

The word *religion* is derived from the Latin noun *religio*, which denotes both earnest observance of ritual obligations and an inward spirit of reverence. In modern usage, *religion* covers a wide spectrum of
meanings that reflect the enormous variety of ways the term can be interpreted. At one extreme, many committed believers recognize only their own tradition as a religion, understanding expressions such as *worship* and *prayer* to refer exclusively to the practices of their tradition. Although many believers stop short of claiming an exclusive status for their tradition, they may nevertheless use vague or idealizing terms in defining religion—for example, “true love of God,” or “the path of enlightenment.” At the other extreme, religion may be equated with ignorance, fanaticism, or wishful thinking.

By defining religion as a sacred engagement with what is taken to be a spiritual reality, it is possible to consider the importance of religion in human life without making claims about what it really is or ought to be. Religion is not an object with a single, fixed meaning, or even a zone with clear boundaries. It is an aspect of human experience that may
intersect, incorporate, or transcend other aspects of life and society. Such a definition avoids the drawbacks of limiting the investigation of religion to Western or biblical categories such as monotheism (belief in one god only) or to church structure, which are not universal. For example, in tribal societies, religion—unlike the Christian church—usually is not a separate institution but pervades the whole of public and private life. In Buddhism, gods are not as central as the idea of a Buddha (fully enlightened human being). In many traditional cultures the idea of a sacred cosmic order is the most prominent religious belief. Because of this variety, some scholars prefer to use a general term such as the sacred to designate the common foundation of religious life.

Religion in this understanding includes a complex of activities that cannot be reduced to any single aspect of human experience. It is a part of individual
life but also of group dynamics. Religion includes patterns of behaviour but also patterns of language and thought. It is sometimes a highly organized institution that sets itself apart from a culture, and it is sometimes an integral part of a culture. Religious experience may be expressed in visual symbols, dance and performance, elaborate philosophical systems, legendary and imaginative stories, formal ceremonies, meditative techniques, and detailed rules of ethical conduct and law. Each of these elements assumes innumerable cultural forms. In some ways there are as many forms of religious expression as there are human cultural environments (Paden, 2009:1).

Aristotle argued for the existence of a divine being, in his metaphysics, and described God as the “Prime Mover”, who is responsible for the unity and purposefulness of nature. God is perfect and therefore the aspiration of all things in the world,
because all things desire to share perfection. Other movers exist as well—the intelligent movers of the planets and stars (Aristotle suggested that the number of these is “either 55 or 47”). The Prime Mover, or God, described by Aristotle is not very suitable for religious purposes, as many later philosophers and theologians have observed. Aristotle limited his “theology,” however, to what he believed science requires and can establish. (Brumbaugh, 2009:2)

God is the center and focus of religious faith, a holy being or ultimate reality to whom worship and prayer are addressed. Especially in monotheistic religions (Monotheism), God is considered the creator or source of everything that exists and is spoken of in terms of perfect attributes—for instance, infinitude, immutability, eternity, goodness, knowledge (Omniscience), and power (Omnipotence). Most religions traditionally ascribe
to God certain human characteristics that can be understood either literally or metaphorically, such as will, love, anger, and forgiveness (Redmond, 2008:4)

The philosophical and religious conceptions of God have at times been sharply distinguished. In the 17th century, for instance, French mathematician and religious thinker Blaise Pascal unfavourably contrasted the "God of the philosophers," an abstract idea, with the "God of faith," an experienced, living reality. In general, mystics, who claim direct experience of the divine being, have asserted the superiority of their knowledge of God to the rational demonstrations of God's existence and attributes propounded by philosophers and theologians (Mysticism). Some theologians have tried to combine philosophical and experiential approaches to God, as in 20th-century German theologian Paul Tillich's twofold way of speaking of
God as the "Ground of Being" and "Ultimate Concern." A certain tension is probably inevitable, however, between the way that theologians speak of God and the way most believers think of and experience him.

God may be conceived as transcendent (beyond the world), emphasizing his otherness, his independence from and power over the world order; or as immanent (present within the world), emphasizing his presence and participation within the world process. He has been thought of as personal, by analogy with human individuals; some theologians, on the other hand, have maintained that the concept of personality is inadequate to God and that he must be conceived as impersonal or suprapersonal. In the great monotheistic religions, God is worshiped as the One, the supreme unity that embraces or has created all things; but
polytheism, the belief in many gods, has also flourished throughout history.

These contrasts are sometimes united in a single theological scheme. Thus, while theism (belief in a supreme being) emphasizes divine transcendence and pantheism (belief that God is the sum of all things) identifies God with the world order, in panentheism God is understood as both transcendent and immanent. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity and similar doctrines in other religions acknowledge both the unity and the inner diversity of God. Christianity is a form of monotheism in which the absolute unity of God has been modified. It has also been argued that God has both personal and impersonal aspects, or even that he alone is truly personal and that at the finite level there is only an imperfect approximation of personal being. These attempts to unite seemingly opposite characteristics are common in religious and mystical
writers and are intended to do justice to the variety and complexity of religious experience. Fifteenth-century German philosopher Nicholas of Cusa, for instance, believed that God can be apprehended only through mystical intuition. Nineteenth-century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard insisted on the paradoxical nature of religious faith. These formulations suggest that the logic of discourse about God is necessarily different from the logic that applies to finite entities.

The idea of transcendence is introduced in the opening verses of the Hebrew Scriptures, in which God is presented as Creator, and this conception impresses itself on all Jewish discourse about God. To say the world is created means that it is not independent of God or an emanation of God, but external to him, a product of his will, so that he is Lord of all the earth. This explains the Jewish concern over idolatry—no creature can represent
the Creator, so it is forbidden to make any material image of him. Nonetheless, it is also part of the creation teaching that the human being is made in the image of God. Thus, the Hebrew understanding of God was frankly anthropomorphic (*humanoid*). He promises and threatens, he could be angry and even jealous; but his primary attributes were righteousness, justice, mercy, truth, and faithfulness. He is represented as king, judge, and shepherd. He binds himself by covenants to his people and thus limits himself. Such a God, even if anthropomorphic, is a living God. It is true that the name of God, Yahweh (*Jehovah*), was understood as “*I am who I am,*” but this was not taken by the Hebrews of Biblical times in the abstract, metaphysical sense in which it was interpreted later. The Hebrew God was unique, and his command was, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me!” (Exodus 20:3) - (although in some biblical passages the Spirit of the Lord and the angel of the Lord and,
in later Jewish speculation, the divine wisdom appear to be almost secondary divine beings).

Christianity began as a Jewish sect and thus took over the Hebrew God, the Jewish Scriptures eventually becoming, for Christians, the Old Testament. During his ministry, Jesus Christ was probably understood as a prophet of God, but by the end of the 1st century Christians had come to view him as a divine being in his own right (Christology), and this created tension with the monotheistic tradition of Judaism. The solution of the problem was the development of the doctrine of the triune God, or Trinity, which, although it is suggested in the New Testament, was not fully formulated until the 4th century. The God of the Old Testament became, for Christians, the Father, a title that Jesus himself has applied to him and that was meant to stress his love and care rather than his power. Jesus himself, acknowledged as the Christ, is understood
as the Incarnate Son, or Word (*Logos*), the concrete manifestation of God within the finite order. Both expressions, Son and Word, imply a being who is both distinct from the Father and yet so closely akin to him as to be “of the same substance” (Greek *homoousios*) with him. The Holy Spirit—said in the West to proceed from the Father and the Son, in the East to proceed from the Father alone—is the immanent presence and activity of God in the creation, which he strives to bring to perfection. Although Christian theology speaks of the three “persons” of the Trinity, these are not persons in the modern sense, but three ways of being of the one God.

Islam arose as a powerful reaction against the ancient pagan cults of Arabia, and as a consequence it is one of the most starkly monotheistic of the three biblically rooted religions. The name Allah means simply “the God.” He is personal,
transcendent, and unique, and Muslims are forbidden to depict him in any creaturely form. The primary creed is that “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is Allah’s Prophet.” Allah has seven basic attributes: life, knowledge, power, will, hearing, seeing, and speech. The last three are not to be understood in an anthropomorphic sense. His will is absolute, and everything that happens depends on it, even to the extent that believers and unbelievers are predestined to faith or unbelief.

In Hinduism, Holy Being can be understood in several ways. Philosophically, it is understood as Brahman, the one eternal, absolute reality embracing all that is, so that the world of change is but the surface appearance (maya). In popular religion, many gods are recognized, but, properly understood, these are manifestations of Brahma. Each god has his or her own function. The three principal gods, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva—charged
respectively with creating, preserving, and destroying—are joined as the Trimurti, or three powers, reminiscent of the Christian Trinity. Strictly speaking, the creator god does not create in the Judeo-Christian sense, for the world is eternal and he is simply the god who has been from the beginning. In bhakti Hinduism, the way of personal devotion, the god Ishvara is conceived as personal and is not unlike the Judeo-Christian God.

It is sometimes said that Theravada Buddhism, is atheistic, but this may not be exactly so. The gods are real, but they are not ultimate. The ultimate reality, or Holy Being, is the impersonal cosmic order. A similar concept is found in ancient Greek religion, in which cosmic destiny seems to have been superior to even the high gods. In the Mahayana Buddhism of China and Japan, the Buddha himself was transformed into a divine being, although the connection with the historical
Buddha became very tenuous. The many Buddha figures of Asia are cosmic beings. In the indigenous Chinese religions, the ultimate Holy Being also seems to have been conceived as an impersonal order. In Daoism (Taoism), it is the rhythm of the universe; in Confucianism, it is the moral law of heaven.

In polytheism, there are many holy beings, each manifesting some particular divine attribute or caring for some particular aspect of nature or of human affairs. Polytheism was the most common form of religion in the ancient world and was well developed in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, and elsewhere. It tends, however, to develop into a form of religion that has a unitary conception of the divine, either through philosophical criticism or through one of the deities in the polytheistic pantheon (assemblage of gods) acquiring an overwhelming superiority over the others. The gods
of a pantheon were usually conceived in some family relationship, which ensured from the beginning a sense of their unity. Polytheism probably developed out of a more primitive form of religion (still practiced in many parts of the world) called animism, the belief in a multitude of spiritual forces, localized and limited in their powers, some friendly and some hostile. In animism the sense of Holy Being is diffused throughout the environment. ("God." Microsoft® Encarta® 2009 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008).

1:4 Religion as a Function of Society

It is important to note that, in many cases, the things that people consider sacred are determined by the community to which they belong. So the holiest things to one group of people—its gods, saviours, scriptures, or sacraments—may not necessarily be seen as sacred absolutes by another group. The notion that sacredness is a value that a
given society places on objects, that such objects shape and generate the religious feelings of its members, and that religiousness is therefore a function of social belonging was first suggested by French sociologist Émile Durkheim. According to his classic theory, set forth in *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: Le système totemique en Australie* (1912; translated as *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 1965), the distinguishing mark of religion in its most basic form is not belief in divinity or in the supernatural but the existence of objects considered to be sacred by a group of people.

In Durkheim's view, it is the authority and beliefs of a society that make things sacred or profane/nonsacred. Religion is consequently best understood neither as the result of supernatural revelation (although Durkheim recognizes that this may be a personal view held by the members of a
religion), nor as an illusion or set of mistaken ideas (which might be the viewpoint of a skeptical outsider who does not accept the religious beliefs). Rather, religion is best understood as the power of a society to make things sacred or profane in the lives of its individual members. According to Durkheim, the social and religious power of sacredness are one and the same, since to hold something sacred is to demonstrate one's commitment to and respect for the authority of one's tradition.

Sacred things are those objects and symbols, including principles and beliefs that must be preserved from violation because they represent all that is of most value to the community. In secular Western societies, the sacred might be embodied in certain principles, such as individual rights, freedom, justice, or equality. In Durkheim's view, therefore, religion is not a matter of claims about the universe that are either true or false, but is the
normal way that a society constructs and maintains its cherished tradition and moral values (Paden, 2009).

A very different approach, emphasizing individual experience, was developed by German theologian Rudolf Otto. In Das Heilige (1917; The Idea of the Holy, 1958), Otto argues that the experience of the numinous (Latin numen, "spiritual power") is the distinctive core of religiousness. Such experience is marked by a sense of awe in the face of the mysterious other reality that dramatically intersects our limited, vulnerable existence. According to Otto, it is this reality that religious traditions symbolize by concepts such as God. The numinous can be experienced as something fearful and alienating, but also as something comforting with which one feels a certain communion or continuity. Religious ideas such as the wrath of God or the peace of God express these different aspects of
numinous experience. In Otto’s view, the capacity for such awareness lies within each person, and it is the purpose of religious language and observance to shape and elicit this awareness. In formulating this approach, Otto followed in the tradition of earlier thinkers such as German theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher. In his book Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern (1799; On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, 1893), Schleiermacher argued that religiousness is only secondarily a matter of doctrine or morality; he claimed that it is primarily a matter of intuitive feeling, an immediate experience that was prior to language itself, and a sense of the infinite.

For many people, religion is best understood at the level of individual spiritual life. An influential book employing this approach is The Varieties of Religious Experience (1902), by American philosopher and
psychologist William James. James attempted to study all the different forms that religious experience can take, from extreme asceticism (*practice of self-denial*) and mystical union with the divine, to modern techniques of positive thinking. He gave special attention to conversion experiences, or life-changing encounters with spiritual forces.

James documented his study with hundreds of cases in which individuals reported that they had experienced contact with something divine or transcendent and that their lives had been changed decisively. Many of these episodes came in the form of a sudden and unsolicited consciousness of spiritual unity or insight. They were mystical experiences and were ineffable (*incapable of being described in words*). James also hypothesized the existence of a wider, subconscious dimension of the self that could help account for the source of apparently supernatural visions, voices, and
revelations. The notion of a creative unconscious, understood as an element of the mind surrounding the individual ego and often expressed through religious symbols, was also described by the influential Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung in his *Analytical Psychology of Consciousness*.

Romanian scholar Mircea Eliade, who taught at the University of Chicago from 1957 to 1985, emphasized that religious people experience the ordinary world differently from nonreligious people because they view it as a sacred place. In Eliade's view, believing in the divine foundations of life transforms the significance of natural objects and activities. He believed that for homo religiosus (*Latin for "religious man," a term used by Eliade to designate a person who lives according to a religious worldview*), time, space, the earth, the sky, and the human body can all come to have a symbolic, religious meaning. Like Rudolf Otto, Eliade held that the study of religion
must not reduce its subject matter to something merely social or psychological, but must take seriously the idea that in the believer's world the experience of sacredness defines a distinctive reality.

For Eliade, myth and ritual represent the central language by means of which religious worlds are structured. In his approach, myth is not merely fiction or folktale but the powerful words and stories that recount the actions of gods and founders and the guidelines they set down for human life. In this sense, myth describes not what is simply fantastic but what is most real, naming the spiritual forces that established the world and that continue to permeate it. Religion has its own language to describe the spiritual order of the universe, just as science has its descriptions of the physical world. Moreover, the purpose of describing the divine time of origins is not only to provide an explanation for how the world began, but also to provide a reference
point—in a sense, a script—for living in the present world. Religious people aspire to live in the time of divine origins: For observing Jews, Friday night is not only Friday night, but also the beginning of the Sabbath as instituted by the Creator at the beginning of time; and for observing Christians, Christmas becomes the time of the birth of Christ. Ritual times and places create opportunities for religious people to come into contact with the sacred and its regenerative power.

1:5 Religious Symbols, Rituals and Practices

Every religion is distinguished by its unique symbols, rituals and practices through which members express and pursue their beliefs and religious obligations. If ‘religion’ is the paradigm by which we define our place in the world, then the ritual is the mechanism by which we interrelate and connect with it. This relationship can be defined by its underlying objectives of which there are two
main categories; cohesion and, petition and benediction. While the purpose of cohesion is to solidify and reinforce the individual's own spirituality as well as the social aspect of the spiritual community as a whole, accomplished through veneration, systemization and formalization; Petition and Benediction's purpose is to request a favour, which can be spiritual or materialistic. Depending on the type of petition, this favour might require a sacrifice as a part of the ritual. After being favoured, a ritual expression of gratitude will complete the circle. Examples include purifications, invocations, salvations, prayers, spells and some divinations. Rituals find their place in every aspect of our daily life. Some of these rituals are derived out of our patterned behaviour but many of them are consciously contrived. Each ritual system has its own governing factors, which determine its nature, format and objective.
African Traditional Religion preserves and expresses the ideal of harmonious community-living through its dominant ritual symbols. In an effort to ensure that this and other important values relating to the survival of the Africans is well preserved and successfully transmitted to successive generations, in the absence of developed literary culture, traditional Africans avail of different kinds of oral means and media to encode and communicate their important cultural values over and over again. Repetition is, no doubt, a typical feature of oral cultures around the world. Traditional Africans rely on speech-forms such as myths, proverbs, wise sayings and songs, as well as art-forms like sculpture, dance, ritual objects, etc to preserve and impress their key beliefs, ideas and values in the minds of successive generations of society. Dominant ritual objects are particularly relevant because of their tremendous potential as effective means of communication in the oral cultural
background and their prominence in the socio-cultural and religious dynamics of life of traditional Africans. They encapsulate and express for traditional African groups vital information relating to their different areas of awareness; the intuitive, physical, aesthetic, social and normative.

The Golden Stool which is the dominant symbol of the Akan preserves vital information regarding the Asantehene (*traditional king*) and the kingdom itself; its culture and religion. The *Ofo* ritual object features prominently in traditional Igbo life and culture. It is the dominant symbol object that expresses for the traditional Igbo people important ideas, beliefs and values concerning their religious, social and political life. *Ofo* has several types and a wide range of functions. There are Personal *Ofo* which is owned by individual persons; Titular *Ofo* which is kept by titled male elders, Institutional *Ofo* kept by officials like traditional priests and
Professional *Ofo* is used by practitioners like diviners.

The Lineage *Ofo* is certainly the most prominent kind of *Ofo* among the traditional Igbo. It is kept by the male head at every level of the Igbo social-political structure; the family, kindred, village, clan (minor, major, and maximal lineage levels). The lineage *Ofo* is of great importance among the traditional Igbo. It is at times, referred to as 'the soul of the lineage'. It is believed to represent the unity of the particular group as well as the ancestors who are thought to be the guarantors of the unity. It is normally inherited and kept by whoever is the eldest surviving male member of the lineage, or as the case may be, the eldest son of the family that has the primacy of honour in the community. It goes by such names as *Ofo-Okpala, Ofo-mbichiriama* and *Ofo-Umunna* depending on the area of Igboland.
The lineage *Ofo* has far-reaching implications for the socio-political and religious life of the traditional Igbo. The people are dominantly patrilineal in their pattern of family integration and social organisation. They live in less centralised groups. They, therefore, make serious use of lineage *Ofo* to reinforce the basic structure of leadership and endorse important traditional values.

*Ofo* is primarily the medium of communication with spirits, including the ancestors and divinities. It is known as the 'ear of the spirits' (*Ofo bu nti ndi Muo*). As a key religious symbol, it is used in ritual sacrifices, in prayer, for cleansing taboos and abominations, as well as for a wide variety of rites. Its socio-ethical functions include its use for attesting to the truth, for affirming one's innocence, in settlement of disputes, for covenant-making, oath-taking, and decision-making. Igbo male elders usually begin their day by offering prayers to the
ancestors and other spirit beings for the health of members of the family, good fortune and general progress in life. They do this with the help of the lineage *Ofo* which they hold in their right hand while pronouncing the prayer and benediction. Most times, when traditional Igbo male elders of a particular community gather to discuss a serious matter affecting the community, each of them brings with them the lineage *Ofo* to the venue of the meeting. At the end of their deliberation, the spokesman would normally recap the agreement reached. The assembled elders would then seal their decision by striking their respective lineage *Ofo* on the ground while invoking divine sanction of ancestral spirits on any person or member of the community who would defy or disobey their decision.

*Ofo* may be of different kinds and uses, but it is invariably connected to the ancestors and spiritual
beings from whom it is believed to obtain its power and efficacy. Most male members of the traditional Igbo community could acquire and keep one kind of Ofo or another. The constant use of this powerful ritual symbol in prayer, sacrifice and a wide variety of rituals, its recurrence in social and political life of the people, including maintenance of law and order, makes it easily the most effective instrument for mobilising and strengthening community consciousness among the traditional Igbo people. The power of the ritual object resides not itself as such, but in the supernatural beings to which the object primarily refers.

Many Christian rituals and religious practices vary between denomination, individual church and individual Christian, but some practices are common to virtually all forms of Christianity. Most Christians attend worship services at church on Sundays, which generally include singing, prayer
and a sermon. Most Christian churches have a special ritual for ordination, or designating a person fit for a leadership position in the church. At home, most practicing Christians pray regularly and many read the Bible. Nearly all Christians will have been baptized, either as an infant or as an adult, and regularly participate in communion (The Lord’s Supper or The Eucharist). Baptism and communion are considered sacraments - sacred rituals instituted by Christ himself. The Catholic Church recognizes five additional sacraments, as well as many other distinctive practices that are known as "sacramentals" or "devotions" and include praying the rosary and going on pilgrimages. Both Catholic and Orthodox Churches have religious orders. The most distinctive practice of Orthodoxy is the emphasis on icons, although Catholics use them as well.
There are, generally, two types of ritual in Christianity, namely Rites of Passage and Personal and denominational practices. 'Rites of Passage' mark seminal events in the progress of a person as they live through their Christian faith. These rituals will vary depending on the sect of denomination, but they will include Baptism, Confirmation (in some churches), first Holy Communion (in the Roman Catholic Church), Marriage and Funeral rites. Interspersed among these will be, in some churches, other sacramental rituals - confession, or reconciliation, the last rites, etc, and, for some, ordination. Personal and denominational practices is the second group of rituals no less important but is often much more personal and will reflect the beliefs and teachings within the church but maybe also within particular families. They occur more regularly than the major rites of passage, but are practised, in some cases, on a day to day basis.
The Rites of Passage are normally associated with the sacraments of the church. This is in itself divisive as many churches are non sacramental and do not recognise the rites practised by others. It is normally agreed within the Christian tradition that Baptism and the Lord's Supper will be part of Christian worship. These are called the 'Dominical Sacraments' because the Master, Jesus, shared in them and they are, therefore, exemplary. It is sufficient to notice here that two Christian groups, The Salvation Army and the Quakers, are neither of the above. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to make generalisations about Christian practice. Many Christians read the Bible regularly. The 66 books (27 in the New Testament and 39 in the Old Testament) are regarded as a testimony to the activity of God in creation. The whole Bible is, of course, interpreted through Christian eyes and although the Old Testament is, in effect, the Jewish Scriptures. There is a fundamentally different approach to its
interpretation and understanding. Christians read their Bible for support, guidance, devotion etc, but relatively few Christians adopt an academic approach or scrutinize its contents critically.

Christian prayer is generally held to be of several kinds: intercession, repentance and adoration for example. All Christians are expected to pray in these ways by themselves as well as in a congregation. Prayer (whether silent, spoken, chanted or sung) is used both as a personal, and humble, way of talking to God and as the form through which the rites and rituals of the gathered community can be expressed. In many Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican churches, candles are used as symbols of light. Jesus, in John's Gospel, is referred to as the 'Light of the World'. In fact the light brought into the world by Jesus is a major theme of the Gospel. So in those churches there will be candles on the altar, lit during services; there will be votive candles often before images of saints or Mary or Jesus around the
church where people can light a candle and offer up a prayer. For those who use candles, nothing can be more powerful. Easter time sees a 'new fire' kindled at the altar in Orthodox churches and brought out to the congregation who then light their own candles from it, and the light is spread. 'Carols by Candlelight' is a familiar part of Christian worship as Christmas draws near.

From the earliest days of Christian worship, believers have sung hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God and used music to express their feelings. Many of the first Christians would have been Jewish and familiar with the psalms as used in Jewish worship. The main strands in Christian music could be defined as: Communal praise, expressed largely in hymns, Music for reflection and Music for specific occasions. These often overlap - for example a requiem may be performed as a memorial for a specific occasion, or may be used for general reflection. Oratorios may tell a biblical story in a
concert performance or be used more prayerfully in a performance in church. Hymns are often seen as a discrete music form, and there have been many great writers of hymn tunes throughout the ages, but there is also a very strong tradition of using folk music and the popular melodies of the time as a basis for religious music. For many centuries, church music was probably the most elaborate and developed form of music - certainly the church and private patronage were the only ways to support musicians financially until comparatively recently - and the prevalence of 'religious' music would have reflected the fact that life was conceived of by most people in terms of seasons and values set out by the church.

In more recent times, from the Enlightenment onwards, a greater variety of musical styles has been reflected in a greater variety of religious music. Today the tradition of turning popular music to religious use continues apace and includes
everything from Christian rock bands and folk groups through new forms of plainchant to abstract musical compositions. The deep spirituality of music from the Orthodox tradition has gained recognition in recent years. In the late 20th and 21st centuries, world musics have also found popularity in the western world. Exciting liturgical settings from, e.g. Africa and South American provide new vitality and insights for worship together with a timely reminder that Christianity is a world religion.

Whether simple or elaborate, the church interior tells a story about the worshipping community that uses it. Battles have been fought over the question of whether a church should be decorated or not (think of Thomas Cromwell and the mass destruction of statues and church ornaments during the Reformation). Is it better for the church to reflect the glory of God and the best that man can offer, or for the building to embody a humility and poverty that befits the simplicity of the message of Jesus?
There has always been a tension between these two approaches to the place of worship and the theology that they reflect.

The place of worship itself is, therefore, symbolic. When looking at it, a first glance will tell whether Word or Sacrament has the predominant place: Where is the altar? Where are the pulpit and the lectern? Which are the most obvious? How does it look as if the building is used? Protestant traditions tend to emphasise the lectern and pulpit. One of two, such as the Quakers, may have neither. In churches of the Orthodox traditions, where does the main action take place? The building will have a screen to hide the main sanctuary, which is accessible only to the priests, like the ancient Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

Stained glass windows are an ancient way of telling Bible stories but were seen by some after the Reformation as too 'Catholic'. The more candles
there are, the 'higher' the church is likely to be ('High Church' is a name given to Anglican traditions whose practices are closer to Roman Catholic ones). The shape of the church itself has meaning. Many are built in the shape of a cross, but some are round and others are just a square room. Church furniture also tells a good deal about what a group of Christians' values.

The importance of art in the transmission of the Christian message and culture is almost immeasurable. Except for some extreme Protestant sects, most Christian denominations use pictures to convey messages about their beliefs. From the earliest mosaics depicting Christ in majesty in Ravenna, via the countless depictions of Bible stories by most of the great artists in the Western world up until the 19th century, through a myriad of interpretations from the cultures of the world, images of Jesus, his life and times and stories from the Bible, have formed a core of art with which we
are familiar today. One of the most fascinating aspects of the way in which Jesus and the Christian story have been depicted through history is the way in which they are also reflections of the culture in which the artist lived. Until comparatively recently, they have usually shown the imagined world of the Bible which is seen to be the same as that of artist; it is the only world the artist knows, but it also holds the profound truth that the gospel is directly relevant and alive in the world in which the artist lives – it can only be understood in terms of everyday human experience.

There have always been conventions in art for portraying certain ideas. For centuries, when the Bible was not read in a language that most people could understand, its message was conveyed largely by visual means. So any picture that tells a Bible story also tells other stories – stories of the aspirations and beliefs of the society in which it was made. This holds true today too. Much religious art
is abstract, focusing on the spiritual. Other striking art seeks to place Christ in the context of everyday 21st century life, in the old tradition but with effects that somehow seem more startling to us because we are so used to seeing Christianity depicted in a past age. As well as the overall symbolism of the style, choice of subject and structure of a piece of art, there is an enormous vocabulary of symbol within paintings. Whether looking at a painting, sculpture or building with a religious theme, what you see is almost certainly not all there is!

Hinduism is one of the world’s oldest major religions. It has about 900 million adherents; 780 million of those are in India, comprising 79 percent of that country’s population. Hindus also make up 89 percent of the population of Nepal, where there are about 19 million adherents. In the United States, roughly two million individuals are Hindu. A red dot on the forehead, a red vertical line and three white horizontal lines are marks that adorn devout Hindu
foreheads. Intricate patterns at the entrance to a house, a swastika and an Om on the wall, a string of green leaves across the doorframe.

Traditional Hindu families believe in leaving footwear outside the house, a very practical habit. Ask any home maker and she’ll agree. But there is also a spiritual significance here. Slippers are symbolic of a person’s ego. Leaving them outside a temple or home symbolises humility and a cooperative approach. Lighting of lamps is another significant powerful everyday reminder. Just as the light from the lamp dispels darkness, the very act is supposed to be a reminder of the knowledge of higher values in life that dispel darkness from within and help one become a better person. It is done in most homes twice a day. Interaction with the world leaves you vulnerable to pitfalls, hence the double reminder to become a better person.
It is a Hindu tradition to offer eatables that no one else has partaken of to the deity, at the time of worship. A Hindu is supposed to actually invoke the Lord before eating. This prayer is a thanksgiving to all those who have helped him appease his hunger.

The Hindu greeting— the namaste— said with palms together, signifies “I bow to the divine within you.” It is to serve as a reminder of the divine aspect within each of us. The best thought for excellent interpersonal relationships. After all how would you interact with God? If all the symbols and rituals in practice can be interpreted and understood then the true richness of the Hindu heritage would be revealed.

It is said that Hinduism is a way of life not just a religion. The many symbols used in Hinduism are a practical way of reinforcing powerful positive thoughts. The purpose of religion is to guide a
human being towards God. The means it offers is prayer. Prayer is not just a few words said in a particular manner or a ritual performed in a specified way. Prayer is a full time awareness of God and symbols and rituals play an important part in prayer. By rationalising symbols and rituals we can make optimum use of them and appreciate a unique and meaningful heritage.

Although there are different schools of Buddhism, throughout India, Japan, Tibet, China, and Southeast Asia, they all utilize a number of similar sacred rituals in the journey to self-enlightenment. Although meditation is typically one of the most well-known Buddhist rituals, mantras, mudras, prayer wheels, and pilgrimages are some of the other ritualistic practices incorporated by traditional Buddhists.
Meditation is a way of mentally focusing or being mindful that is intended to help the practitioner achieve enlightenment. The variations between Buddhist schools of thought have produced different types of meditation, the two primary forms being samatha (tranquility) and vipassana (insight). The two types may be used either separately or together.

A mantra, a Sanskrit word which means “that which protects the mind,” is a sacred sound that is believed to invoke deities, garner supernatural protection and generate personal power. Tibetan Buddhism is focused more on mantras than most other types of Buddhism, and mantras are often chanted during meditation practice. A well-known Tibetan Buddhism mantra is “Om mani padme hum”, which is intended to invoke the deity Avalokiteshvara, and translates roughly to “Praise to the Jewel in the Lotus.” Mantras may be chanted privately or in large
groups, depending on the strength of protection desired.

Less commonly known than mantras, mudras are a Buddhist ritual that involves the use of symbolic hand gestures in order to evoke specific ideas, Buddhas, deities, or scenes. They may be used in practice or be depicted in artistic renderings, and are intended to aid in Buddhist meditation. The five main esoteric mudras found in Buddhist art depict the five Dhyani Buddhas.

Mostly used by Tibetan and Nepalese Buddhists, prayer wheels are another aspect to Buddhist ritual. Prayer wheels are hollow cylinders, inside which are placed scrolls of mantras that are mounted on rods and spun by Buddhists in lieu of chanting the mantras out loud. Oftentimes, prayer wheels may also represent the Wheel of the Law (Dharma) that
Buddha set in motion. Prayer wheels are especially popular among devotees on pilgrimage.

Buddhist pilgrimage is a ritual of great significance. The most important destinations for Buddhist pilgrims are in Northern India and Southern Nepal's Gangetic plains, between New Delhi and Rajgir, where Gautama Buddha lived and taught. The four main sites of pilgrimage are Lumbini (Buddha's birthplace), Bodh Gaya (Buddha's place of enlightenment), Sarnath (where Buddha first preached), and Kusinagara (where Buddha achieved Parinirvana).

Tibetan Buddhist practice features a number of rituals, and spiritual practices such as the use of mantras and yogic techniques. Supernatural beings are prominent in Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhas and bodhisattvas abound, gods and spirits taken from earlier Tibetan religions continue to be taken
seriously. Bodhisattvas are portrayed as both benevolent godlike figures and wrathful deities. This metaphysical context has allowed Tibetan Buddhism to develop a strong artistic tradition, and paintings and other graphics are used as aids to understanding at all levels of society. Visual aids to understanding are very common in Tibetan Buddhism - pictures, structures of various sorts and public prayer wheels and flags provide an ever-present reminder of the spiritual domain in the physical world. The lay version has a strong emphasis on outwardly religious activities rather than the inner spiritual life: there is much ritual practice at temples, pilgrimage is popular - often including many prostrations, and prayers are repeated over and over - with the use of personal or public prayer wheels and flags. There are many festivals, and funerals are very important ceremonies. Lay people provide physical support to the monasteries as well as relying on the monks to organise the rituals.
The *Five Pillars* are practices regarded by all sects as essential to the Muslim faith. Other notable Islamic practices include the mystical rituals of Sufism and various distinctive Shi'ite practices. The Muslim prayer is a combination of physical actions, verbal sayings, and an internal feeling in the heart. Muslims are required to be in a state of calmness, serenity and humbleness while performing their prayers. Once the prayer is started, a series of sayings and actions are performed. The sayings include reciting parts of the holy Qur'an, as well as other sayings glorifying God and thanking Him for all of His blessings. It also gives Muslims the opportunity to ask God for anything they desire. This could include asking for help in getting a job, asking God for forgiveness of sins, etc. Muslims are required to pray at least five times every day, and are encouraged to pray extra prayers if they can. The required prayers have specific times that they are to
be performed. These are dawn, noon, mid afternoon, sunset and at night.

Fasting for the Muslim means refraining from having all kinds of food, drink and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset especially during the month of Ramadan every year. Ramadan is a month based on the lunar cycle, as opposed to the solar calendar used today by most people. Therefore, the start and end of the month of Ramadan change each year according to the lunar cycles. Ramadan can be either 29 or 30 days. Muslims are also encouraged to fast on other optional days. It is as a way of cleansing the soul of all worldly desires and devoting oneself completely to the obedience of God. It is also an opportunity for wealthy Muslims to experience life without food and drink for a day, which is meant to remind them of the poor and encourage them to have sympathy and
to be generous in donating to help the poor and the needy.

The *Hajj*, the pilgrimage, is a physical and spiritual journey that all financially and physically-able Muslims are expected to make at least once in their lifetime. Muslims travel to the holy city of Makkah, located in Saudi Arabia, to perform the required rites of the pilgrimage. There, they are expected to spend their days in complete devotion to worship, and to asking God for forgiveness and for anything else. They also perform specific rituals, such as walking around the Kaaba, the black cube-shaped building located in Makkah.

A very important aspect of Islam is giving charity to the poor. Muslims are required to give certain percentages of any type of wealth that they have accumulated. This ensures some re-distribution of wealth among Muslims. Also, Muslims are strongly
encouraged to make charitable giving a habit. Most Muslims donate to charity on a weekly basis when they attend Friday prayer services at the Masjid, the Islamic place of worship. Before performing certain rituals, most importantly before prayers, Muslims are expected to perform a form of purification, known as ablution (wudu).

Muslims also offer Animal Sacrifice, a term which may sound weird, unusual or shocking to some people when they first hear or read it. But the reality is that the majority of people in the world do eat the meat of many different kinds of animals. Muslims believe that God has given them the right to kill animals for food. Therefore, Muslims are required to mention God at the time the animal is killed. This reminds them that these animals were created by God and that God gave them the permission to benefit from them. This is why it is called a "sacrifice", and this is why it is considered a religious
practice. Muslims are encouraged to perform animal sacrifice at special occasions in the Islamic calendar. In these special occasions, it is expected that part of the meat of the animal would be donated to the poor.

The Tiv group of Central Nigeria believe that some people grow a substance called *tsav* on their hearts. This is both a sign of and source of special talent or ability, whether musical and artistic, social and political, or the ability to live to old age. One such special talent is to manipulate the forces that repair the society ritually. The Tiv postulate that some of those with the special talents of *tsav* meet at night as an organization to keep the social and cosmic forces working for the benefit of society as a whole. The people with *tsav* (*mbatsav*) perform rituals to repair the land, but they may, through reckless human emotions such as spite, envy, or fear, use
their power for antisocial and deadly purposes that spoil the land.

The postulated activities of the mbatsav, both for the good of the community and for the evil purposes of some individuals, are associated with certain rituals performed with symbols called akombo. This ritual manipulation is called repairing the akombo. Those aspects of the natural and social world about which Tiv are most concerned are parcelled out among named akombo, which exist as amulets, figurines, pots, or plants. Each is associated with a disease (although certain diseases are not associated with akombo because the Tiv recognize that some diseases are merely contagious). Each has its own ritual required to activate it or to pacify it. Akombo, however, are not personalized and are not spiritualized; they are certainly not gods. They work by forces akin to what Westerners may consider as “Laws of Nature”.

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When Tiv become ill, they assume that an akombo is the cause. That means either that some person of ill will who grows tsav has ritually manipulated the akombo so that it would seize a victim, or else that the victim or one of his or her close kinsmen has performed an act that was precluded by that akombo at the time of its creation (usually a commonplace and neutral act, although adultery and battery are prohibited by one or more akombo). To determine just which akombo is involved, Tiv consult diviners who throw chains of snake bones and pods to determine which akombo have been used to cause an illness or create social misfortune. When the responsible akombo is revealed, the Tiv perform rituals to neutralize it. They must also remove the malice that activated it. The latter is achieved by a modest ritual in which every person concerned takes a little water into his or her mouth and spews it out in a spray, signifying that any
grudges are no longer effective. Medicines will work only after the ill will is ritually removed and the akombo repaired. The ritual for each akombo varies, but the climax of all is a prayer that "evil descend and goodness ascend." These rituals are as much group therapy sessions as they are religious acts.

Tiv recognize two major categories of akombo. Small akombo attack individuals and their farms; their repair demands minor sacrificial animals, usually a chicken. A few small akombo require special sacrificial animals such as turtles or valuable ones such as goats or rams. Coins or other forms of wealth can be added to a less valuable sacrificial animal to make it taller and so serve as a more valuable one. The great akombo, on the other hand, attack social groups; they must be repaired either by the elders of the community acting by day, or by a secret group (the same people) acting as the mbatsav by night. At the end of any akombo ritual
carried out by day, or as the last act of any funeral, the Tiv prepare and break a symbol called *swem*. Made in a potsherd from hearth ashes and symbolic plants, it is held high and then smashed to earth. The ashes, spreading on the breeze, mean that justice spreads through the land and that *swem* will punish evildoers. The Tiv would say "*God knows*" at funerals if they can find no other reason for the death. This means that they have not yet discovered the human motivation behind the misfortune. But they do not question that the motivation is there and that ultimately it will be detected and either neutralized or punished.

1:6 Religion and Sacred Histories

Religion provides for continual renewal by setting aside special times for the adherents to recollect and demonstrate what they hold sacred. These occasions may take place annually, monthly, weekly, daily, or even hourly. Muslims are expected to pause for
prayer at five different times every day, and during the holy month of Ramadan—which honours the month when the Qur'an was first revealed—they are expected to observe a fast every day from sunrise to sunset. For Jews, the High Holy Days—a ten-day period in autumn celebrating the new year and concluding with the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement)—is a major time of spiritual renewal, as is Passover in the spring. Jews dedicate the seventh, or Sabbath, day to recalling the divine basis of life. Christians follow a similar seven-day cycle but give special prestige to Sunday, honouring the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which, according to the Christian scriptures, occurred on the first day of the week. Every religion, large or small, has regular major festivals and observances that celebrate and display its fundamental commitments and that intensify and renew the spiritual memory of its followers.
Most religious systems are organized around certain past events and models. Each religion has its own account of the history of the world—the great time when gods, creators, sages, ancestors, saviours, founders, or heroes established or revealed the essential elements of the religion. These collective memories are ordinarily preserved in carefully maintained oral traditions or in the classic accounts known as scriptures or sacred writings. In Christian histories, the key event of the past is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, whose teachings, death, and resurrection set the model for the meaning of Christian life. In Judaism the great time was the Exodus and the subsequent receiving of the Law at Mount Sinai. The enlightenment experience of the Buddha and the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad are defining events in Buddhism and Islam, respectively. The Islamic calendar begins with the birth of Islam in AD 622, the Christian calendar begins with the birth of
Christ, and the Jewish calendar begins with the biblical time of the Creation itself.

Religion not only creates sacred times that define the calendar and occur throughout the year, intersecting with ordinary time, they also establish special places that localize the sacred in the midst of ordinary space. Sometimes these are places of natural beauty or imposing power, such as mountains, caves, or rivers. They may also be sites that commemorate great religious events of the past—for example, the birthplace of the Hindu god Krishna; the site of the Buddha's enlightenment; or the spot where Muhammad is believed to have journeyed to heaven. Sometimes they are places where miraculous spiritual appearances are believed to have occurred, as in the case of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Lourdes, France. They may also be shrines and temples built to house the gods or their representative symbols, such as the
Parthenon in Greece, which was dedicated to Athena, patron goddess of Athens. Holy places also become objects of pilgrimage, such as the Kaaba, the holiest shrine of Islam, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. For Muslims, the Kaaba is the symbol of true monotheistic religion and is believed to have been built by biblical patriarch Abraham. All Muslims are expected to visit it at some time in their lives. Sometimes the act of building a sacred place occurs each time the rite is performed and is thus part of the ritual itself, as in the case of the annual Native American Sun Dance ceremonies, for which a new lodge is erected each year.

The use of space reveals a great deal about a religious worldview. Some structures, such as Pueblo kivas (ceremonial chambers), are built into the ground, acknowledging the earth as the place from which human beings emerged and as the source of sustenance for the Pueblo's agricultural
society. Others, such as the European gothic cathedrals, through their delicate architecture and skyward reach, suggest the transcendence of the divine realm. Shinto shrines in Japan express reverence for nature in the harmonious way they blend with the natural environment. On the other hand, some so-called megachurches of modern North America have taken the form of corporate office complexes geared for efficiency of organized service. Some holy places are understood to be the actual dwelling place of the god. Others—as in certain branches of Protestant tradition—are understood to be primarily places of gathering for the faithful. In such cases, a plain architectural style follows naturally from the desire to de-emphasize the importance of the physical building itself.

Religious cultures provide their members with established, patterned ways of interacting with spiritual beings. Such communication is often the
center of religious practice. Perhaps the most widely practiced forms are petitionary prayer, offerings and sacrifices, purification and penance, and worship. Sometimes these are regular events, and sometimes they are performed in times of special need, such as illness, drought, infertility, or war—times when human beings find themselves especially dependent on or subject to the forces of the universe that are beyond their control. At other times, religions have forms of communion, such as the Christian Eucharist or meditation on the presence of a supreme being. Reciting the name of the Buddha is the primary religious practice in Pure Land Buddhism, and this practice has parallels among other religious groups, such as the Sikhs.

The gods, in turn, are believed to make their will, power, or presence known to humans in a variety of ways, including prophecy, states of trance, dreams and visions, divination, healings, special signs and
miracles, intuition, mystical experiences, and embodiment in the lives of special individuals. In many societies, possession, which is the control of a person's body by a spiritual entity, is a common form of interchange with the spirit world. Through intensive training, a shaman acquires the ability to enter trance states and negotiate with gods and spirits. In so-called possession rites, spirits are believed to enter the bodies of devotees. Divination, or techniques for reading the will and timing of the gods through the shape or significations of physical objects, is also widespread. Relationship with the divinity can also be expressed in terms of moral behaviour. In this case, service to the gods means devotedly adhering to their revealed precepts for conduct and their standards of spiritual life in general. In some religions, individuals cultivate a lifelong personal relationship with their deity.
Ritual is a form of communication in its own right. Rituals involve performance and symbolic bodily actions, displayed in a tangible, visible way. They have the power to focus experience and thus function to intensify the sense of the sacred. Rituals can be as simple as bowing one’s head before a meal, chanting a certain phrase, or removing footwear. At the other extreme, they can involve intricate ceremonies performed by teams of priests and lasting several days. Rituals reveal the sacred through specific, symbolic actions and objects, including processions, special clothing, and special sounds—for example chanting—or silences, masks, symbolic objects, and special foods. Some religions use rituals to great effect, while others assign them a lesser role. Where ritual is central, there is usually priesthood. This is the case in the Catholic and Orthodox forms as well as in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shinto. Jews, Muslims, and many Protestant churches do not have a priesthood as such because
they emphasize a direct faith and consideration of scripture. They do, however, have Rabbis, Imams, or Ministers who are considered the heads of their religious sanctuaries.

Religions differ in their use of images. Jews, Muslims, and puritanical forms of Protestantism prohibit images of God in order to preserve the transcendence and holiness of the divine. But images of holy persons or of the deity are important objects of veneration in Catholicism, in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and in most other religions.

Most major religions provide paths that deliver individuals from the bondage of sin, immorality, ignorance, and other types of impurity or disharmony and lead them toward a state of purity of soul, spiritual knowledge, wisdom, godliness, enlightenment, or even eternal life. Religions typically hold that human beings have a higher
nature that exists in tension with a lower nature, and the religions offer ways to redeem the former from the latter. Even within a single religious tradition there may be different versions of this process. Some emphasize the separation of the spiritual part of the self from worldly attachments, while others emphasize living harmoniously in relation to nature, self, and divinity.

Two corresponding religious ideals can be discerned from the different ways in which religions consider salvation. On one hand, the saved or truly religious person may be one who has achieved liberation from the material world and has reached a heavenly state of afterlife (such as heaven) or a supreme state of consciousness (such as nirvana). On the other hand, this person may be one who has come to embody the virtues of holiness; however they are defined by the particular religion, while still living on earth. Monasticism arose in some religions, such
as Buddhism and the classical forms of Christianity, although it has no place in others, including Judaism, Islam, and Protestantism. Many religious virtues—such as love, self-control, compassion, nonviolence, and wisdom—appear in more than one religion, but differences in belief systems can give varying significance to these virtues. All the historic religions address the need for individual holiness in some form and can point to saints, mystics, or spiritual exemplars who fully embody the ideals of their tradition.
Chapter Two: The Major Religions of Nigeria

2:1 The Central Teachings of Christianity

Christianity is currently the largest religion in the world with over 2 billion followers on all seven continents. This religion is focused on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem of Judea over 2000 years ago, who Christians believe to be the Son of God. The Christian Holy Book, divided into the Old and New Testaments, is the Bible. The New Testament explains how God sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to restore the broken relationship between people and God which had been caused by sin or human wrong doing. Jesus was executed on a cross (Crucifixion) as a criminal by the Romans and according to Christian teaching after three days he rose from the dead (the Resurrection).
Christianity is a monotheistic religion that professes belief in Jesus Christ, "Yeshua HaMashiach" as the Son of God. Followers of Jesus are called Christians, meaning "of Christ" or "belonging to Christ." The early Christian faith was sometimes called That Way, (Acts 19:1, 9, 23; 24:22), and its adherents were also called Nazarenes (Acts 24:5), evidently after the city of Nazareth where Jesus lived. The Book of Acts 11:26 records that "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." The title Christian is also used in Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16. Christians believe that there is only one God, but that he is revealed in three different forms: God the Father, God the Son and The Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity is central to Christian theology. The God of the Christian is the creator of all things, is everywhere present, exists in all times, is transcendent, all-knowing (omniscient), just, and all-powerful (omnipotent).
The Christian Religion teaches two fundamental truths. Firstly, that there is God for who man has a capacity. This God, who is the Almighty, is described in several passages of Sacred Scripture as having created the world; visible and invisible, in a majestic display of power and purpose, the climax of which is man and woman, in His "image and likeness", with a mandate to "conquer and dominate the earth" (Genesis 1:28). God's power is unimaginable; a Being that is capable of producing an entire universe, including all manner of life with a mere command: "Let there be" and so it was (Genesis 1:2-26). God's words do not seem to merely evoke a reaction; His words seem to be the action itself. God's words are a reflection of His thoughts and since God's thoughts cannot be denied, His thoughts are reality. It is in this sense that God is described as a Being in whom all positive potentialities are actualised.
The second Christian Truth deals with the reality of Sin and the Mystery of the Incarnation. Dorothy L. Sayers once described this as the "Greatest Drama Ever Staged" in human history: that God in all His Divinity embraced the "humble position of a slave and appeared in human form" (Phil. 2:7), and by this mystery became a Jew and Descendant of the royal Davidic family, and "died for our sins" (1Cor. 15:3) by crucifixion and was "raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25) and designated "Son of God in power by means of his resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). This certainly is God's power and its application.

In the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 1:18-24, we find an important narrative in which an angel of God named Gabriel visits a 'Poor Carpenter' in Nazareth called Joseph, in a dream. Joseph; this poor carpenter was betrothed to Mary of Nazareth, daughter of Joachim and Ann. Mary of Nazareth became a "Pregnant Virgin" by a divine act of the Holy Spirit. By this act,
Mary became the “place” where the eternal Son of God would make a dramatic entrance unto the scene of human history. She became the place where, according to John Paul II, ‘the hypostatic union of the Son of God with human nature is realised and accomplished; a reality which dates back to the proto-evangelium (Gen. 3:15), where man’s ultimate victory, humanity’s first glimmer of hope and salvation was pronounced’. Ultimately, in Christ God has spoken his final Word, and the Word which God has spoken is purely and authentically Christological. The Holy Bible has this to say:

“Christ is the Image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation. For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together------ For God was pleased to have all his fullness
dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the Cross" (Col. 1:15-20). NIV

This is a fact to which the Bible constantly bears eloquent testimony in a variety of contexts because it is the truth that underlines and determines the whole superstructure of divine manifestation and revelation. The Apostle Paul writes that God’s secret plan is made manifest in Christ, for it is a plan centred on Christ, designed long ago to God’s pleasure (Eph. 1:9). The Person of Jesus Christ is very unique in all human history. Beginning with the first Messianic prophecy in the Book of Genesis Chapter 3:15, there are several other prophecies accurately predicting the birthplace of Jesus Christ, his lineage, the nature of his life and death, etc. His Virgin birth clearly stands out. God Himself took up residence in the womb of a woman and became human, with no
genetic connections to a human father. This again, is God's Power and its application.

A central theme of Christianity and of the Bible is God's Love. In the Hebrew Old Testament the idea is expressed as hessed, which has been translated in several ways as loyal love, tender mercy, steadfast love, mercy, goodness, etc. The same idea is expressed in the New Testament in the Greek word agape, which is translated as Unconditional, Selfless Love, Compassion, Charity, etc.

During the reign of Caesar Augustus, the second Person of the Trinity, also known as the "Word", became flesh" or incarnated and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14). He was born in the town of Bethlehem and was given the name Jesus as foretold long before Jesus was born (Matthew 1:21, Acts 13:23). At approximately the age of thirty (30), he was baptised by John the Baptist and began to
preach in the area of Judea and Galilee. About three years later, his teachings and works of mercy prompted the Jewish authorities to plot his death and he was crucified and killed by the Romans. He rose from the dead and was seen by over 500 people. He ascended to Heaven. The four Gospels contain the basic account of what Jesus did and said. Before his resurrection and ascension into heaven, Jesus personally summarised his life and teachings in what is described as the “Greatest Commandment:"

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang of these two commandments” (Matthew 22: 37-40, Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18).NIV
It was on the basis of this that Jesus, after his ascension into heaven and appearances to his disciples, commissioned them all, without exception to:

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).NIV

Peace, like love, compassion and forgiveness of wrongs done by others are key elements of Christian teaching. The English word "peace" derives from its Latin root, "pax". Among the earliest Romans, pax meant to live in a state of agreement, where discord and war were absent. Shalom (שלום) is the word for peace in the Hebrew Bible, and has other meanings also pertaining to well being, including its use as a
form of greeting. In his *Meditations*, the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius expresses peace as a state of unperturbed tranquility. The New Testament is for the Christians, first and foremost the "*Gospel of Peace*". In the New Testament God is described as the God of Peace and Love. Jesus Christ is not only the Way, the Truth and Life; he is also the King of Kings and the Prince of Peace, and Peace itself. Jesus' message is the summation of peace found in the Hebrew *shalom*. In him, all the meanings of peace inherited from the Jewish tradition and translated into the Greek of the New Testament are deepened and expanded.

In the New Testament we find that Christ brings reconciliation of humanity to God and of humans to one another, healing, nourishment, and renewal to the world, liberation to the poor and oppressed. In this way he fulfils the promise of the messianic kingdom and the peace that the prophets preached;
wholeness and fulfillment—the deepest meanings of peace. Jesus' Sermons on the Mount (Mt. 5:1-16) and on the Plain (Lk. 6:20-45) together with his call to "Love your enemies" (Mt. 5:38-48) encapsulate his teachings on peacemaking. Pope Benedict XVI, during an address at St. Peter's Square on February 18, 2007 observed that "loving the enemy" is the nucleus of the 'Christian revolution,' a revolution not based on strategies of economic, political or media power. The revolution of love, a love that does not base itself definitively in human resources, but in the gift of God, that is obtained only and unreservedly in his merciful goodness. Herein lies the novelty of the Gospel, which changes the world without making noise. Herein lies the heroism of the "little ones," who believe in the love of God and spread it even at the cost of life. Continuing, the Catholic Pontiff was emphatic that "Christian nonviolence...does not consist in surrendering to evil - but in responding to evil with good, (Romans
12:17-21), and thus breaking the chain of injustice. It is thus understood that nonviolence, for Christians, is not mere tactical behavior but a person's way of being, the attitude of one who is convinced of God's love and power, who is not afraid to confront evil with the weapons of love and truth alone”.

Respect for human dignity is the starting point and central concern of Christianity about social justice and human rights. The Christian Bible teaches that each person is created in the “image and likeness of God” and so has an inalienable, transcendent God-given dignity. This means that each member of the human family is equal in dignity and has equal rights because we are all children of the one God. We are brothers and sisters to each other, descendants from one common ancestor. Christians understand God to be a trinity of persons and the image of God is reflected not only in individuals, but also in communities. Together in community we
bear the image of God whose very nature is communal. Therefore, a commitment to social justice becomes an essential characteristic of a life lived according to the Gospel and teachings of Jesus Christ. It is therefore not possible to be a Christian, to live out a full life of faith in the absence of an evident commitment to social justice. The work for social justice is an essential and urgent task for Christians since too many people are suffering and urgent reforms and bold transformations are required.

In his social encyclical, *On Social Concerns*, John Paul II, warned that humanity is increasingly under threat from the products of its own hands. Ethical and spiritual development is lagging behind technological advance. We have forgotten the priority of ethics over technology, the primacy of the person over things and the precedence of labour over capital. The fact that human beings are created
in the image of God and have been redeemed by Jesus Christ means that they have a fundamental dignity. This dignity carries with it a number of inalienable rights and responsibilities, including that of actively shaping our histories, both as individuals and communities. The Good News of Christianity requires all those who believe in it to work towards a radical transformation of the world. The Magisterium of the Catholic Church, for instance, has over the last hundred years developed a systemic body of teachings on social justice, development and peace for Christians as they seek the renewing of the earth. God's plan and purpose for humanity is a new heaven and a new earth, a kingdom of social justice and peace as well as holiness, grace and personal fulfilment.

Jesus came to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom and the need for conservation, a turning around of our lives, a turning upside-down of the world's
values. This, Jesus proclaimed at the very beginning of his public ministry. His mission was to teach and preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the successful year of the Lord. This certainly, is a mission and a message of liberation, of freedom from everything which militates against the fullness of life and our collective social existence.

Forgiveness, the renunciation or cessation of resentment, indignation or anger as a result of a perceived offense, disagreement, or mistake, or ceasing to demand punishment or restitution is a central Christian teaching and practice. In the New Testament, Jesus speaks of the importance of forgiveness and of showing mercy towards others. The Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke Chapter 15:11-31 is perhaps the best known instance of such teaching and practice of forgiveness and mercy. In
Luke 23:34, Jesus demonstrated this in very practical terms by asking for God's forgiveness of those who crucified him. "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing' Luke 23:34 (NIV). Also in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly spoke of forgiveness and mercy, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." Matthew 5:7 (NIV). "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you; leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV) "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." Mark 11:25 (NIV) "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also." Luke 6:27-29 (NIV) "Be
merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” Luke 6:36 (NIV). “Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven” Luke 6:37 (NIV).

2:2 The Tenets and Core Values of Islam

The word “Islam” is derived from the Arabic word “salam,” which is often interpreted as meaning "Peace." A Muslim is a follower of Islam. The word "Muslim" is an Arabic word that refers to anyone who submits themselves to the will of God. Like Christianity, Islam is a monotheistic religion. It developed in the Middle East in the 7th century C.E. Islam, which more appropriately means "surrender" or "submission," to Allah, was founded on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad as an expression of surrender to the will of Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of the world. The Quran, the sacred text of Islam, contains the teachings of the Prophet that were revealed to him from Allah. Islam
is predicated on the belief that there is but one God, Allah, and the Creator of the universe and of humankind...Mercy and compassion are his principal qualities. Muslims are taught and required to practice their religion via the five "pillars" of Islam. The first and most essential element of the “Five Pillars” or practices is belief and recitation of the creed "There is no god but the One God, and Muhammad is his prophet." These five practices include a ritual profession of faith, ritual prayer, the zakat (Charity), Fasting, and the Hajj (Pilgrimage to Mecca). The Five Pillars serve as a great unifying characteristic to the several branches of Islam, such as the Sunni and Shi'a. Many Muslims are characterized by their commitment to praying to Allah five times a day. Muslims gather at mosques to worship Allah, pray, and study scripture.

At the core of everything Islam is the concept of only one God. This is reflected in the first pillar, but
also in everything else that Islam is and stands for. To the Muslim, God is One sovereign, all-mighty and unique Being. In Islam man is not to know God and become more like Him, but to learn God's will and become more obedient to His commands. To associate anything or anyone with Allah is incomprehensible to a Muslim and constitutes blasphemy. God is absolutely alone in the place given to Him by Islam. The Quran says "He is God; there is no god but he. He is the Knower of the unseen and the visible; He is the All-merciful, the All compassionate. He is God. There is no God but He. He is the King, the All-holy, the All-peace, the Guardian of Faith, the All-preserver, the All-mighty, the All-compeller, the All-sublime. Glory be to God ... He is God the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper. To Him belongs the Names Most Beautiful. All that is in the heavens and the earth magnifies Him; He is the All-mighty, the All-wise." (59:22 Quoted from Pickthall's translation of the Quran). Next to the idea of one
God is the concept of Mohammed as the Prophet of Allah. While Muslims do not worship Mohammed (that is for Allah alone) they do revere, glorify, and adore him. Muslims also regard him as a great religious teacher, social reformer, tremendous administrator, military genius, perfect husband and father, and faithful friend. Muslims regard the Quran as the absolute word of God given via the angel Gabriel to Mohammed when he was about forty years old. Mohammed memorized it and dictated it to his companions who then wrote it down. The Quran is accepted by Muslims as the last revealed word from God, and it supplants and supersedes every other prior revelation of God. The basic tenets of Islam are: Belief in God, the one and only one God with no partner, no son, no associate, and no companion, Belief in prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) as God’s prophet and Messenger, Belief in the five pillars of Islam, Belief in six articles of faith (faith in God, His angels, His holy
books, His prophets, Resurrection day, and destiny, Belief in Quran and following Quranic teachings, Following Islam morals and Performing good deeds).

Muhammad, also known Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ṬAḥār ibn ṬAbd Allāh ibn ṬAbd al-Muttalib ibn Hāshim, was a leader from Mecca who unified Arabia into a single religious polity under Islam. He is believed by Muslims and Bahá'ís to be a messenger and prophet of God, and by most Muslims as the last prophet of God. Muslims consider him the restorer of an uncorrupted original monotheistic faith of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and other prophets of God. Muhammad was born in Makkah (Mecca), a town in the desert of western Arabia, around the year 570 C.E., in a polytheistic society. His name means "highly praised." He was the first and only son of Abd Allah bin Al-Muttalib and Amina. Abd Allah died before Muhammad's birth and
Muhammad was raised by his mother Amina. When Muhammad was about five or six his mother took him to an oasis town a few hundred miles north of Mecca, to stay with relatives. On the return journey, Amina took ill and died. Halima, his nurse, returned to Mecca with the orphaned boy and placed him in the protection of his paternal grandfather, Abdul Al-Muttalib. In this man's care, Muhammad learned the rudiments of statecraft. Mecca was Arabia's most important pilgrimage center and Abdul Al-Muttalib was the most respected leader. He controlled important pilgrimage concessions and frequently presided over Mecca's Council of Elders. His grandfather died in 578 c.e. and Muhammad, aged about eight, passed into the care of a paternal uncle, Abu Talib. Muhammad grew up in the older man's home and remained under his protection for many years.
In his early 20s, Muhammad became a servant of a widow named Khadija; a wealthy merchant in Mecca. He took her goods to the north and returned with huge profits. Khadija eventually proposed marriage to Muhammad and they were wed in about 595 when Muhammad was just twenty-five (25) years old. She was nearly forty. They had six children; two sons who both died in infancy, and four daughters. At that time Mecca became a prosperous, well-off trading center in the hands of an elite group of clan leaders who were mostly successful traders. But Muhammad was deeply disturbed and concerned about Mecca's new materialism and its traditional idolatry, and so he began making long retreats to a mountain cave outside town during which he fasted, prayed and meditated. On one of such occasions, Muhammad was said to be visited by an overpowering presence and instructed to recite words of such beauty and force that he and others gradually attributed them
to God. He only dared to talk about it outside his family several years after and reveal the messages he was receiving to his tribe. These were gathered verse by verse and later would become the Quran, Islam's Holy book. In the next decade, Muhammad and his followers were first belittled and ridiculed, then persecuted and physically attacked for departing from traditional Mecca's tribal ways. Before his death Muhammad established the Islamic religion and laid down a moral code, initiated numerous social and political reforms, established a dynamic and powerful society to practice and represent his teachings and he revolutionized the worlds of human thought and human action for all time. He came into this world and left his footprints as a man with a noble and dignified mission. His mission was to unite humanity in the worship of the One and only Allah and to teach them the way to honest living. He would describe himself as a
messenger and servant of Allah and as one not wanting to hold praise or power above others.

Islam teaches that each person is “born pure and clean” (www.alislam.org). The Holy Quran teaches that Allah (God) has given human beings a choice between good and evil and to seek Allah’s pleasure through faith, prayer and charity. Islam’s main message is to worship Allah and to treat all Allah’s creation with kindness, equality and compassion. The rights of parents, orphans and the needy are clearly stated and should be well observed and treated. Women’s rights were and always will be protected, and they are truly respected and looked upon as the seeds to life and development. The unconditional respect and honor towards women in Islam is a very important mentality to posses. Islamic teachings encompass every imaginable situation and its convention and principles are considered by Muslims to be true. It means
therefore that Islam as a religion respects and honors individual purity, sanctity of life and human dignity. One of Prophet Muhammad’s major teachings is that each person is born pure and that human beings are given a choice on earth, whether to do evil or practice goodness. Worshipping God and treating all of God’s creations with equality and compassion becomes a key requirement. The entire message of Islam is derived from the Holy Quran and the Sunnah and Hadith, which are the traditions and practices of the Holy Prophet.

It is interesting to note the great Islamic teaching that God is The All-Forgiving “Al-Ghaffur” and is the original source of all forgiveness. Forgiveness in Islam often requires the repentance of those being forgiven. Depending on the type of wrong committed, forgiveness can come either directly from Allah, or from one’s fellow man who received the wrong. In the case of divine forgiveness, the
asking for divine forgiveness through repentance is important. In the case of human forgiveness, it is important to both forgive, and to be forgiven. Ideally, violent behavior on the part of Muslims is not permitted, except in defending one's religion, one's life, or one's property. Outside of this, the Quran makes no allowances for violent behavior. Whenever possible, it is better to forgive another than to attack another. The Quran describes the believers (Muslims) as those who, “avoid gross sins and vice, and when angered they forgive” (Quran 42:37) and that “Although the just requital for an injustice is an equivalent retribution, those who pardon and maintain righteousness are rewarded by Allah. He does not love the unjust” (Quran 42:40). As for Idol worship, the Quran however, states explicitly that God will not forgive idol worship: “God does not forgive idol worship and He forgives lesser offenses for whomever He wills. Anyone who idolizes any idol beside God has strayed far astray”
One example of Muhammad's practice of forgiveness is found in the Hadith, the body of early Islamic literature about the life of Muhammad. This account is as follows: The Prophet was the most forgiving person. He was ever ready to forgive his enemies. When he went to Ta'if to preach the message of Allah, its people mistreated him, abused him and hit him with stones. He left the city humiliated and wounded. When he took shelter under a tree, the angel of Allah visited him and told him that Allah sent him to destroy the people of Ta'if because of their sin of maltreating their Prophet. Muhammad prayed to Allah to save the people of Ta'if, because what they did was out of their ignorance. "Islam Online: Forgiveness: Islamic Perspective". (2006. Retrieved 2012-06-23).

The "root" of the word "Islam" in Arabic is "Salaam" translated to mean Peace and / or Submission; a submission to God and peace to all humanity. It is,
thus, no wonder why the salutation in Islam is: "Al-
Salamu Alaikum" or Peace on You. The Prophet
Mohammad is said to have ordered his fellow
Muslims to salute others, including non-Muslims
with peace when he said: "Peace before Speech". It
has also been reported that, since the time of
Muhammad, an enemy warrior who pronounces the
word "peace" is given totally immunity during war
times. Whether that is happening in very practical
terms now or not, that is the rule.

An Arabic term, used in the Quran, referring to
peace and peacemaking is sulh. This is also the root
of the word islah, indicating development and
improvement. This term is also used for
peacemaking in Islam. Peacemakers are agents of
good and those who breach it are elements of
corruption and sin. It is therefore observed that
peace and peacemaking are seen in Islamic tradition
as part and parcel of human development. In Islam
peace and making peace are seen as Godly acts worthy of praise and reward. In Islam peace is advocated as a divine quality to be pursued in order to achieve the state of felicity comparable to the one in paradise, man's final dwelling place. According to a tradition of the Prophet, 'Peace is Islam' (Al-Bukhari). This means that peace is one of the prerequisites of Islam. One Hadith states that a Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands people are safe. One of the attributes of God described in the Quran is 'As-Salam', meaning 'peace and security.' This means that God's Nature itself is a manifestation of peace. Indeed, God is Peace (Al-Bukhari). The Quran likens divine guidance to the paths of peace (5:16). Paradise, the ultimate destination of God's true devotees, is called the 'home of peace' (6:127). It is also said that, the people of Paradise will wish peace to one another, indicating that the social culture of the people of Paradise will be based on peace.
Values in African Traditional Religions (ATR)

African traditional religious experience and expression, having emerged from the limbo of negation and skepticism to eventual recognition, is gradually taking its rightful place among the religions of the world, and is considered the legitimate expression of a genuine religious experience of African peoples in their encounter with the divine. Religion is a fundamental and perhaps, the single most important experience in the life of most Africans. Religion enters so deeply into every sphere of life of the African to the extent that it cannot be studied in isolation. A study of African Traditional Religion is therefore a study of the Africans who practice the religion. This oldest religion of the world has had its history and traditions handed down orally and preserved in the culture and religious artifacts of the African people.
The three essential features of African traditional religions are belief, worship and morality.

In African traditional Religion, the main elements are, God, the divinities, spirits and ancestors. Belief in God as a supreme being is central to African Traditional Religion. Next to God in that order, are the divinities which are spiritual beings who owe their origin to and are dependent on God and are messengers of God. There is also a class of innumerable spiritual beings who may be good, mischievous or evil. Some are the spirits of people who have died but perpetrated some evil deed in their lives. There is also a belief that the spirits of witches and wizards are able to leave their bodies and inhabit lower animals in order to harm other people. It is also believed that there are good spirits known as “living-dead” who are members of the family who have passed and now live in a state that allows them a special relationship with God, the
divinities and good spirits. They protect the family from harm as they have power over the evil spirits.

Olupona (1991:16) observes that African traditional religion is at last being recognized by Western scholars and theologians as central to authentic black African cultures. Once relegated to the realm of "primitive" and stigmatized as "pagan," today there is a new acknowledgment of its importance, especially in its stress on folk practices, communal values, and personal relationships. African Traditional Religion refers to beliefs and practices of the Africans. According to Awolalu (1976:1), 'it is the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans, and which is being practiced today in various forms and various shades and intensities by a very large number of Africans, including individuals who claim to be Muslims or Christians'. By traditional, is meant that which is indigenous, that which is foundational or
aboriginal, and handed down from one generation to the next, upheld and practiced by Africans, even today. Awolalu maintains that 'it is a heritage from the past, which connects the past with the present and the present with eternity'. It is in this sense I find it most appropriate to describe the African Traditional Religion as a 'past-presentist-futuristic' experience of the Africans.

As mentioned earlier, African Traditional Religion is based fundamentally on oral tradition. Its place is neither in the pages of books nor the mass media, but in the hearts and minds of men and women of Africa, passed down to them through oral history, rituals, shrines and religious functions. Unlike many of the world's religions, African Traditional Religion has neither known founders nor reformers, as it also does not belong to a single hero. It is the religion of the African people. Even though African Traditional Religion does not train missionaries to propagate or
proselytise like the Christians and Muslims do, its adherents appear to be very loyal worshippers, which is why most Africans find it extremely difficult to sever ties or connection with this religion.

However, because of its lack of historical documentation, like the other world religions, African Traditional Religion and the African Continent itself was described by foreign investigators and theorists as being a “Dark Continent”, and as Idowu (1973:87) cited, “a land where the inhabitants had no idea of God, a land where the Devil in all his abysmal, grotesque and forbidden features, armed to the teeth and with horns complete, held sway”. One such Theorist, Leo Frobenius (1913: XII), recorded in a Berlin Journal that:

“Before the introduction of genuine faith and higher standards of culture by
the Arabs, the natives had neither political organization nor strictly speaking any religion.....Therefore, in examining the pre-Muhammadan conditions of the negro races, to confine ourselves to the description of their crude fetishism, their brutal and often cannibal customs, their vulgar and repulsive idols and their squalid homes”.

Edwin Smith (1966:15) also observes, concerning the Africans in such derogatory words, “How can the untutored Africans comprehend God? Deity is a philosophical concept which savages are incapable of framing”. In the above two quotations, I see ignorance combined with arrogance of the highest order, prejudice against the Africans and their Religion and fallacy of a degenerative magnitude. Even the nomenclature of African Traditional
Religion, as formulated by the foreign investigators, is itself derogatory. After all, all religions, by their very origin and nature, are traditional and indigenous. It is important to note that, while other world religions are identified specifically for what they are, or named after their hero founders, the Religion of the Africans is identified by its people, their land, their soil and their traditions.

Denigration of Africans and their religious traditions, customs and indigenous values was in the past, a common feature of colonialism. The Europeans brought commercialization along with Christianity, but they believed and concluded that African people were primitive and hence, backward. In the process, they destroyed the much revered African traditions, including the chieftaincy system, by manipulating the chiefs and weakening their authority. The people’s attitude to their ancestors and customs was hence referred to as ‘idolatry’,
superstitious and fetish. Africans who believed and benefited from their indigenous religious practices were described as 'heathens', lost and confined to eternal doom and damnation. For the Africans, the Europeans were ignorant of the fact that:

"The world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with others" Achebe (1959:141).

The question begging for answers right now is—could there have been any people anywhere in the world, who were completely or totally devoid of God, of religion and of culture? The answer definitely is such people could not be found anywhere in the world. According to Father Schmidt of Vienna, "belief in, and worship of, one supreme deity is universal among all really primitive people—the high God is found among them all, not indeed everywhere in the same form or with the same
vigour, but still everywhere prominently enough to make his dominant position indubitable”. God is therefore, by no means a late entrance or development in African Traditional Religion. What is really, truly baffling is that, in the midst of overwhelming evidence, Africa was still described as a “Spiritual Desert”. It is however refreshing and worthy of note that some scholars and genuine seekers of truth did admit that the whole of Africa, like any other continent of the world, could not have been a spiritual vacuum.

African Traditional Religion is propagated in practice, by living it rather than by preaching it. In this religion the followers are more preoccupied with its practice than with its theory while dogmas and doctrines have a very little role or no significance at all. There is no separation between the sacred and the profane. As Father Richard Nnyombi of the Missionaries of Africa rightly
observes, “its influence covers all aspects of life, from before the birth of a person to long after he or she has died. It is a way of life and life is at its centre. It is concerned with life and how to protect it and augment it. Hence the remark such as: For the African, religion is literally life and life is religion”. Anyone who wishes to observe or study African Traditional Religion has to do it in practical life. It is characterised by rituals, ceremonies and festivals; shrines, sacred places and religious objects; art and symbols; music and dance; proverbs, riddles and wise sayings; names of people and places; myths and legends; beliefs and customs.

The beliefs and practices of African Traditional Religion are based upon the faith of our Ancestors. This is why it is called traditional, from the Latin verb “tradere,” which means to hand down doctrines, customs etc., from generation to generation. According to Mbiti, “Its beliefs are
centered on the monotheistic acknowledgement of God as the invisible Creator of all things, to whom people pray and give praise names. Its ethics and morality regulate the social interrelationships among both the living and in relation with the departed”.

The concept of Peace is also central to African Traditional Religion. In various ways and circumstances, the Religion has addressed itself to this need of peace. One good example is through the offering of prayers to God for peace in our communities. In these prayers, there is a clear acknowledgement of the fact that God is the Author and the Giver of peace. Peace is God's gift to the world, to human beings in particular and to nature at large, and as Mbiti says, “Peace is an expression of divine will towards all creation, humans and nature”. Covenants are sometimes made to cement peace, including “a wide range of relations, such as marriages, agreements, settling of disputes,
adoption of children or other people, admission into 'societies,' employment arrangements, borrowing of property, and various promises. Some of these are drawn more formally than others”. These covenants serve as preventive measures against the potential threat to peace and tranquillity.

In African Traditional Religion there is respect for life, children are treasured, abortion is considered an abomination, the sacredness of human life is guarded by taboos and rituals, there is respect for the dignity of man; each man has his own inalienable chi ("selfhood", "destiny"), fidelity or being faithful in undertakings is considered a good sign of maturity or of becoming a man, sin is perceived in both its personal and communal dimensions, there is moderation, especially in the use of alcohol as only adults may drink. Drunkenness is shameful. Indeed moderation is required in every aspect of human behaviour. Also,
careful attention is given to locating man within his environment and making him comfortable in it, tradition is handed down through stories, poems, hymns, proverbs, riddles and art, the whole community is involved in the training of the young, and education itself has a necessary community and social aspect. It is said in Africa that a child belongs to everyone. Life has a festive dimension and is celebrated in adequate rites. There is high respect and regard for the elderly. The wisdom of the elderly is considered by the community to be prophetic, as able to give direction for living in the circumstances of the present day. Hospitality is considered a sacred duty in African Traditional Religion. A profound sense of sharing, of solidarity and belonging is always cultivated between kith and kin and people of the same clan. Deliberate efforts are made to secure and promote social justice and peace within the community. There is great respect for constituted authority, as sanctioned by the
ancestors. This is strong and represents the common will. The poor and the sick are well taken care of, including widows and orphans. In traditional African society, Social justice, is intended to contribute to social stability, and harmonious relationships within the ethnic group, and the lesser groupings of which it is composed. Each individual is given his due within the scope of his expectations, and in the framework of a hierarchical or highly structured society. Distribution is made to people according to ranks, status or function, and although there is, in the strict economic sense, no class, there are social strata defined by age and achievement. African traditional society is communitarian, though, in some sense, it is not strictly egalitarian.

African Traditional Religion often finds deep expression in the concept of "Ubuntu". This is an ancient African word meaning 'humanity to others'. It also means 'I am what I am because of who we all
are'. With its origins in the Bantu languages of Southern Africa, this traditional African concept is defined in its simplest form as the "art of being human". The word "Ubuntu" itself is Zulu and inspires us to embrace and learn from other people, even as we learn from ourselves. Ubuntu is the humanistic experience of treating all people, irrespective of who they are, or where they come from, as human beings living together in one larger community of beings. Ubuntu is an African view of life and world view.

According to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based from a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed". Ubuntu speaks
particularly about the fact that we can't exist as human beings in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. We can't be human all by ourselves, and when we have this quality—Ubuntu—we are known for our generosity. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas we are connected and what we do affects the whole World. When we do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity. For Nelson Mandela “A traveller through a country would stop at a village and he didn't have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him.” That is one aspect of Ubuntu, but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not enrich themselves. The question therefore is: Are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve? Ubuntu encapsulates a profound understanding of human interconnectedness. It is a statement of
being. *Ubuntu* means that both community and the individual are interdependent and therefore in balance. This bond, observes Muthal Naidoo, “provides the security and sustenance that allow for free development beyond simple survival needs. The shared experiences of individuals in the bond form the basis on which a culture is built. This sharing in which each one takes something from everyone else, means that each one is because they all are. Through sharing they develop affinity with one another and though they are bound by their culture, the culture promotes the growth of the individual identity. And as each one is constantly contributing to the culture, the culture is constantly changing. It is dynamic, constantly expanding to accommodate new developments.”
Chapter Three: Religious Violence in Nigeria

3:1 Examining Religious Violence

Apart from the family unit, religion is said to be the world's oldest institution that governs man's social, spiritual and personal behavior by providing guidelines, laws and principles relating to his interaction with God, his fellow man and the environment. However, religion and violence seem to have shared such close relationship. The history of religion is perhaps a history of violence. All major world religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, etc, are tainted with violence. Violence can be said to be inherent in religion. Particularly, when other social, economic, political and national variables become mixed with religion, violence seems to assume an even greater dimension because, in this case, the struggle is not just to convert individuals and to conform to divine instructions, but also for mundane/worldly needs.
and wants such as social justice, racial equality, human rights, employment, financial upliftment and geographic territories, among others. These needs and wants are however, issues for our respective governments to address. The degree of violence is usually directly correlated with the level of religious involvement in the struggle for these social, political and national wants and needs. It's rather ironic that a system or practice such as religion which so publicly proclaims Unconditional Love, Peace, Forgiveness and Compassion for others, has over the course of history, spawned so much unmitigated hatred, division and violence. Is it simply that religion has failed in inspiring better conduct from otherwise hopelessly evil human beings, or is there some aspect of religion which in fact encourages or promotes some of the ugly, baser aspects of human behavior? Perhaps it is a bit of both, perhaps not. Concerns about rampant violence associated with religion have become more central in public
discussions around the world today, especially where young people are involved. Situations such as this must lead any rational person to consider religion's claim as a solution to our ills - real or perceived - with real skepticism. It seems that religion has in fact done even more to promote base inhumanity when it has become wedded to ruling political powers. It has been a common pattern throughout human history that wherever religious dogmas have gained worldly power, violence was abetted rather than stopped. Even if a person were to successfully argue that none of the violence was caused by religion, the fact would remain that religion not only failed to stop it, but has actually served as a useful instrument for those perpetuating the violence. While religion has been used as a means of rallying support for violence, religious leaders regularly denounce such manipulations as contrary to the teachings of their belief.
In the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, religious violence is defined as 'a term that covers phenomena where religion, in its diversity, is either the subject or object of violent behaviour'. It is violence motivated by or in reaction to religious precepts, texts, doctrines or teachings. This includes violence against religious institutions, persons, objects, or when the violence is motivated to some degree by some religious aspect of the target or precept of the attacker. Religious violence does not refer exclusively to acts committed by religious groups, but also includes acts committed by secular groups against religious groups. Like all other forms of violence, religious violence is an inherently cultural process whose meanings are context-dependent. This form of violence usually would place great emphasis on the symbolic aspect of the act. Overall, religious violence is perpetrated for a very large number of ideological reasons and is generally only one of a very large number of
underlying social and political issues that lead to the unrest in question.

One school of thought sees religion itself, and not the "Practitioners of Religion", (Voice in the Wilderness, Vol.1, Pg. 38) as being the cause of religious violence. Those in this school of thought would point out that religion stereotypes and discriminates between those who believe and those who do not. They would say that religion judges, divides people, motivates people to engage in wars and even kills. There are others who belong to the school of thought which sees the "Practitioners of Religion", and not religion itself, as the source of religiously-motivated violence. For this group religion is a life-giving practice, which provides healing and guidance. It gives many people a sense of purpose and direction. It builds inner peace and outer altruism. It is compassionate to the poor, the orphan, and the needy. This group would display
religion's long track record of promoting peace and human prosperity. Author Scott writes in his book "The Ambivalence of the Sacred:

"The either/or method of analyzing religion--built on the assumption that one must decide whether religion is essentially a creative and 'civilizing' force or a destructive and inhumane specter from a benighted past--is no less prevalent for being patently absurd. Both positions on religion smack of reductionism. The cynics fail to appreciate the profoundly humane and humanizing attributes of religion and the moral constraints it imposes on intolerant and violent behavior".

In addressing this, Dr. Eboo Patel, Founder and Executive Director of the Chicago-based Interfaith Youth Core cautions that we avoid the two pitfalls of logic, namely: either personifying religion or
objectifying religion. Dr. Patel writes further that religion is not a person. It cannot divide, stereotype, judge or kill. By the same token, it does not give charity or serve food at soup kitchens. Therefore, we cannot blame or praise religion as a monolithic and tangible entity responsible for the good or bad in our societies. Religion entails belief and belief motivates action. Religion requires human agency to put its principles into practice, and it is through the filter of human agency that religion takes on its character as "good" or "bad." So, religion in itself is neutral. It is our interpretations of religious texts and traditions and our application of them that give religion its true color. The point here is that religion is a complex experience that should not be objectified, essentialized and confined to the narrow categories of "good" and "bad. For, as Dr. Patel writes:

"Just as religion has undeniably motivated people to commit grave
injustices in the past, from the Atlantic Slave Trade to September 11th, religion has also undeniably mobilized people to uphold justice and give graciously to their fellow humans in need. From Mother Theresa and Mohandas Gandhi to millions of individuals who are moved by their faith to do charitable works every day, the ambassadors of religious compassion are many. (http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/eb0o_pate1/2009/04/religion_violence.html)

However, there have been examples of violent conflicts or wars often labelled as "religious". These include, but not limited to the Mideast conflict between Israel and neighbouring Islamic countries, the Crusades, French Wars of Religion, European wars of religion, the Taiping Rebellion, Islamic
Jihad, the Second Sudanese Civil War, the Indo-Pakistani War of 1947 and Jewish-Roman Wars, to mention a few. However, some of these violent conflicts may not be exclusively religiously-motivated. Some are based on clashes of communities, identities, and interests that are secular-religious or at least very much secular. Examples include The Troubles in Northern Ireland, etc. Around the world, examples of religious violence, sometimes also described as acts of terrorism include the Mormon-led Mountain Meadows massacre, the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Mumbai attacks of 2008, the 2005 London bombings, and the Bali bombings. Some of these attacks were said to be carried out by individuals with very strong religious convictions.

Nelson-Pallmeyer is of the view that "Judaism, Christianity and Islam will continue to contribute to the destruction of the world until and unless each
challenges violence in "sacred texts" and until each affirms nonviolent power of God". Hector Avalos argues that religion's sense of righteousness leads to violence due to conflicting claims to superiority, based on unverifiable appeals to God. This is collaborated by Eric Hickey when he writes, "The history of religious violence in the West is as long as the historical record of its three major religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, with their involved mutual antagonisms and struggles to adapt and survive the secular forces that threaten their continued existence." According to Regina Schwartz, all monotheistic religions are inherently violent due to what she calls their "exclusivism". This she maintains fosters violence against other people who are regarded to be 'outsiders'. For Lawrence Wechsler, the Abrahamic religions particularly, do not only have a legacy of violence, but that the legacy is actually genocidal in nature. Tom O'Golo is however of the opinion that religious
fundamentalists who manipulate religion by promoting violence to further their cause contravene the root truth of all faiths. No true religion, he says, ever encounters anything but love, tolerance and understanding. Not killing is at the heart of all genuine faiths. While dying to protect our faith is acceptable; killing another to promote our faith is unacceptable. God does not require an earthly army of human beings, or of anything for that matter, to fight his battles. God’s government is incontestable. His power and majesty are sufficient to support His Authority. God is more than capable of fighting His own wars and battles.

3:2 An Historical Perspective of Religious Violence

Why is it that religion is constantly being associated with violence? In his book “The Myth of Religious Violence”, William Cavanaugh proposes three important views to demonstrate this. Religion, he
says, is uniquely absolutist, divisive and non-rational, and makes claims of moral value and the ultimate nature of reality. Religious identities, he says, are based on a very strong distinction between “us” and “them”. In “Violence and the Sacred”, the great anthropologist and literary critic, Rene Girard argued that religion arose historically in the form of sacrificial violence and scapegoating. For Rene Girard, the purpose and function of religion has always been to create social harmony by directing the violence of the group toward a single sacrificial victim – either a person or an animal. By either abandoning or misrepresenting the basic teachings and practices, religions have participated in one form of violence or the other throughout human history.

Martin Marty observes that religious people naturally and would normally form separate groups, movements, tribes, or nations, excluded from
others. As they seek to respond to the call of divinity, there is a tendency for them to think and consider themselves better endowed than others. This self-perception sometimes leads them to speak unwell and negatively of others. Mark Juergensmeyer expresses deep concerns over this propensity of religion to divide people into friends and enemies, into "us" and "them." He observes that religion has a tendency to satanize the others as perpetual, eternal enemies. He calls this "Cosmic War." Since religions operate with an eternal, cosmic time scale, their time frame is unlimited and so they can fight without end. For David C. Rapoport, religion’s capacity to create violence is because of its ability to inspire ultimate commitment. Also, religion perpetuates violence because religious language is full of violence. Islam and Christianity especially, have been involved with mass murder over religion, holy sites, and religious
beliefs for centuries. It's little wonder that so many see religion as more a force for violence than peace.

Stalin is reported to have slaughtered millions of his own people during the industrialization of Soviet Russia. 209 million people are said to have died in the name of Communism. About 62 million people died during the Second World War. This number includes civilians and military personnel on all sides. During the same period 809 million; nearly a billion people died in religious wars. It is suggested that more people have died in the name of religion than in the name of Communism or Hitler, or the two combined together. Of course, most wars, even if religion is cited, are fought for primarily political, economic, geographic and other reasons. It is usually difficult to identify the precise causes of some of the conflicts around the world. Most frequent violence and wars are described as being ethnic in origin, even though religion may have
been a main cause. The true causes of unrest are sometimes difficult to determine. There are usually mixtures of political alliances, economic differences, ethnic feuds, religious differences, and among others. The Troubles; the three decades of violence, between the Roman Catholic nationalist community fighting for union with Ireland and the Protestant unionist community desiring to remain part of the United Kingdom, presents us with a good example. This war was largely rooted in discrimination by the Protestant majority against the Catholic minority. In the period between 1969 and 2001, over 3,526 people were killed. The Belfast Agreement of 1998 helped to establish some kind of peace, which many have described as "uneasy".

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina involved three religious or faith Groups, namely, Roman Catholics, Muslims and Serbian Orthodox Christians. This war
became so intense to the extent that it was considered genocidal. Another war that had considerable inter-tribal, racial, language and religious motives is the horrendous Sudanese Civil War. Included in this list is the Rwanda Genocide, which was originally and significantly, a conflict of ethnic proportions between the Hutu majority and the Tutsi minority. Though Religion was not the primary cause, it however played some part in influencing the magnitude of the war. In 100 days the Hutu majority systematically slaughtered and eliminated over 800,000 Tutsis; a rate of killing described as the worst in human history. Armed to the teeth with machetes, knives and guns, the killers were vicious; torturing, murdering and dumping their victims' bodies in mass graves and in most cases international peacekeepers stood and watched helplessly. In just 100 days, the rate at which killing took place far exceeded that of the Nazi death camps. The Second Congo War, commonly referred
to as "Africa's World War" started in 1998 and by 2008, over 5 million human beings were killed, others died from the resulting starvation and disease. It is important to note that most of the world's current "hot spots" have a complex interaction of economic, racial, ethnic, religious, and other factors. The "Encyclopedia of Religion and War" records that from the Byzantine-Muslim War of 645 c.e. to the conflicts in the Middle East, religion has played a powerful and critical role throughout human history. The role of religion in specific historical events, wars and conflicts include those of the Crusades, the Ethiopian wars of 1529-1543. Also religious-based violence and wars in the contemporary human society include those in Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kashmir, Latin America, Israel-Middle East, North Africa, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, etc.

The period between c.1560-1715 has been described
as “The Age of Religious Wars” especially in Europe. Three main factors converged to push Western Europe into a century of brutal religious wars. Prominent among these factors included the Catholic and Protestant Reformations. Both stood starkly and firmly opposed to the other. To worsen this was the prevailing medieval mentality that linked religion with political matters. The dramatic confrontation between Martin Luther and The Emperor Charles at Worms in 1521 resulted in what I choose to call “Lutheranism” being outlawed. In 1546 Emperor Charles eventually attacked a defensive alliance of Lutheran princes who were then known as the “Schmalkaldic League”.

Though Charles won a decisive victory militarily, the complex forces then prevented him from imposing either firm imperial control or his Catholic faith on Germany. In 1555 Charles finally agreed and signed “The Peace of Augsburg” which permitted each
German prince to choose their own realm of religion, provided it was either Catholic or Lutheran. However, Calvinists, Anabaptists, and other non-Lutheran Protestants were outlawed. This Peace of Augsburg rather than resolving the religious tensions and challenges that confronted Germany at the time, it worsened the situation. The spread of Calvinism across Germany created even further tensions. The Emperor Charles also gave up his throne. As his Imperial title was bestowed on his brother Ferdinand, his son Philip II, inherited Spain, the Netherlands, most of Italy, and Spain's American colonies. Religious conflicts in Germany were further aggravated by Philip's passionate hatred for Protestants. Calvinists and Anabaptists, etc, fled Germany and in the process took with them their religious beliefs to the Spanish Netherlands, France and England. As a result, religious conflicts spread to these other countries after 1560. The influx of Protestants in the Netherlands created further
religious unrest. This led to some patterns of repression, riots and protests, further repressions, etc. Rising tensions between Calvinists and Catholics in France generated its own cycle of violence resulting in the weakening of governments, anarchy, series of bitter civil wars, separatism, nobles' rivalries, foreign intervention especially by Spain, raids, revolts, etc.

In the last part of the 1500s, France also witnessed the devastating consequences of religious wars between the Catholic majority and the strong Calvinist minority called the Huguenots. Though in the minority, the Huguenots were a well organized group which included enthusiastic nobles with excellent leadership skills. This struggle lasted for over 30 years. Women and children were among those massacred. Between 1562-1571, about 18 Protestants and 5 Catholics were massacred, including more than 30 people who were
assassinated. The wars started and dragged on and on, aggravated by several other factors which rendered them even more fierce and destructive. These other factors included fighting and revolts among nobles, weaknesses of the French State at the time and foreign interventions by Spain and later England, among others. England also had its own share of religious conflicts and wars, especially during the reign of Elizabeth I of England from 1558 -1603. She was called the "Good Queen Bess". In 1588, Elizabeth fought the war with Spain. Religious differences between Spain and England were said to be the cause for this war. Philip II was determined to crush the Protestants in England, Holland, and France by sending the "Spanish Armada" and army northward in 1588. Between 1560 and 1715, Europe witnessed only 30 years of international peace. Europe's 30 years' War lasted between 1618 -1648, and was as a result of the complicated religious and political environment of the period. The 30 Years'
War started in Bohemia, an area which had enjoyed relative peace until Ferdinand II, a zealous Catholic, became King of Bohemia in 1617. The Protestants in Bohemia were concerned that Ferdinand II would re-catholicize Bohemia.

3:3. A Survey of Religious Violence in Nigeria
A former British colony and with a human population of over 150 million, Nigeria has the largest population of Negros (black people) in the world, and the greatest diversity of cultures, cities and terrain. Nigeria’s total land area of 923,768 sq. km. (356,668 sq. mi.) makes it the 14th largest country in Africa. Its coastline, on the Gulf of Guinea, stretches 774 km (480 mi.). Nigeria shares its international borders of 4,470 km (2513 mi.) with Chad, Cameroon, Benin, and Niger. Nigeria lies entirely within the tropics yet there are wide climactic variations. Until 1989 the Federal
Capital was Lagos but is now Abuja in Central Nigeria. Nigeria has a great diversity of culture and people as almost all the native races of Africa are represented in Nigeria. It was in Nigeria that the Bantu and Semi-Bantu, migrating from southern and central Africa, intermingled with the Sudanese. Later, other groups such as Shuwa-Arabs, the Tuaregs, and the Fulanis, who are concentrated in the far north, entered northern Nigeria in migratory waves across the Sahara Desert. The earliest occupants of Nigeria settled in the forest belt and in the Niger Delta region. There are more than 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria. While no single group enjoys an absolute numeric majority, the three major ethnic groups are Hausa-Fulani in the north, Yoruba in the west and Igbo in the east. As far as percentage distribution in terms of religion is concerned, there are no official statistics to demonstrate this. So I would say that whatever figures there are in the public domain are a product
of guess work. There are no official census figures to show, for example, the number of Muslims and Christians in Nigeria.

A common form of conflict that typifies the Nigerian society today is ethno-Religious Conflict, which is clearly a manifestation of lack of harmony resulting from the poor economic conditions under which the citizens live and the susceptibility of the common man to elite manipulation of religion in a multinational state like Nigeria. It has been suggested that the Character of the Nigerian State is partly responsible for our deepening ethno-religious contradictions. There has always been that constant feeling of distrust between the component units and the perpetual fear of one ethnic or religious group dominating the others, even before our independence in 1960, up to the military coup d'état of 1966, the traumatic civil war of 1967 to 1970, the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential elections
and the incessant ethno-religions skirmishes that presently threaten the very foundations of our nascent democracy and our collective social existence. Ethno-religious conflicts are part of the most recurring issues in Nigeria today. This problem has permeated our national landscape since the colonial period. The dominant and minority ethnic groups treat each other with suspicion and so also the different religions clash at the slightest provocation. Religion remains a largely divisive instrument of the politics of regionalization and ethnicity in Nigeria today. Raw appeals to religious persuasions by candidates seeking political offices are a common recurring decimal. The Holy Bible and the Quran; the Sacred Texts of Christians and Muslims, have now become part of the oil that lubricates the wheel of the "Divide and Conquer Machinery" in Nigeria's geopolitics. It has been so long ago and still remains today. Since the amalgamation in 1914 of the Northern and Southern
Regions or Protectorates, the Muslim Community under the leadership of the Sokoto Caliphate and the Christian Community led by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), have had ample leverage on who emerges as leader and governs Nigeria. There are many who argue that the boundaries of what is known today as Nigeria were drawn to serve colonial, commercial interests only, largely without any regard or consideration for the territorial integrity and claims of the indigenous populations. As a consequence, over 250 different ethnic groups now constitute the human population of Nigeria, and the country's unity and development have been consistently under siege and threat of annihilation. Since Nigeria became an independent nation in 1960, it has witnessed more than a million human deaths, with precious animals and property whose value cannot be quantified. Regional, ethnic
and religious differences have contributed tremendously to the country's instability.

The development of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria has its foundations in the activities of the colonial administration. In 1861, the colonial administration annexed Lagos and began an incursion into the Sokoto Caliphate. Following this, the "Land and Native Rights Ordinance" of 1910 was introduced. This Land and Native Rights Ordinance not only began the process of separating the ethnic groups in the North from those in the South, it also discouraged the movement of southerners to the north. Another instrument for the polarization of Nigeria was the division and administration of Nigeria by Britain as two separate colonies. This style of "Divide and Rule" politics instituted by the British, to a large extent, encouraged and promoted religious and cultural differences. So, even before the debut of Nigeria as an independent nation, the
Colonial administration not only laid the foundation for religious conflicts in Nigeria, but also created a permanent platform for mistrust and suspicion, which continues to create conflict situations that often explode into religious violence in Nigeria. Available evidence suggests that the Colonial Administration consciously employed religion as an instrument or tool for pacification. According to Agbaje (1990), the Colonial administration actually “underwrote Islam in the Northern part of colonial Nigeria, and then used it as the basis of political authority in local administration”. This not only kept away Christian Missionaries from the North, but also sought to preserve the Islamic homogeneity of the region, even as it also adopted the Emirate System of Political Administration with its attendant religious character. So while Islam flourishes in the North today, Christianity holds sway in the South.
Religion became even more a front burner issue in 1986. The floodgates of religious antagonism were opened following the decision of the then government to secretly upgrade Nigeria's membership in the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) from that of an Observer to a Substantive Member. The action was perceived by Christians as a strategy to turn Nigeria into an Islamic State in total disregard of the spirit and letter of the Nigeria Constitution. The introduction of the Sharia Legal System or Islamic Law in some states in Northern Nigeria added another dimension into the already charged and complex system. While the Nigerian Muslim Community justify its introduction as part of the democratic dividends, the Christians see it as contrary to the spirit of secularism as provided for in Section 10 of the 1979 and the 1999 Constitutions, which state in very clear terms that "The Government of the Federation or a State shall not adopt any religion as a State Religion".
Today, religion, politics and ethnicity are not separate issues in Nigeria. It is difficult to unravel these strands that are so tightly interwoven. As one Nigerian University Professor rightly observes, “Nigeria’s nascent democracy is witnessing increasing religionisation of politics and politicization of religion due to the resolve of some Northern State’s governor’s to adopt the Islamic legal code---Sharia, as the penal and criminal codes in their states. With Zamfara State blazing the trail, eleven other Northern States have followed suit”. It is also obvious and right to suggest that both politics and religion have been heavily monetized in Nigeria.

Another closer look at the concept and practice of religion in Nigeria reveals some basic common factors and traits that are very deeply rooted and related to the economic capacities of the citizenry. Nigerians have been branded as the most religious people on the surface of the earth. Whether this
kind of branding is practically correct or not, it is not the focus of the present work. Time will not permit for further scrutiny of this at this time. However, the resort to turning to God, not out of reverence and worship of Him who is CREATOR and LORD of the universe, but as a solution to the endemic poverty in the land seems to be on the rise, both in spread and intensity. It has therefore become easier for politicians, those who have huge moneybags, to pitch citizens of different faiths against one another and to further raise the suspicion level among them. Also, competition for access and space has been negatively exploited in further fermenting protracted conflicts during which very large human populations are consumed and property lost.

Nigeria's corporate existence is also being threatened by the rise of religious fundamentalism. Religious fundamentalism was first used in the early
20th century to describe a protestant community in the United States of America. Religious Fundamentalism sets in when religion is seen as absolute. Today in Nigeria, there are very clear signs that religiosity is turning towards fundamentalism. Because religious texts are open to various interpretations, religious leaders and different individuals often use them as justifications for their actions or inactions. What seems to be destroying and gradually eating up Nigeria today is the way men and women who hold power choose to behave without regard to noble and civil values. The greatest threat to Nigeria's territorial integrity today, apart from ethnic conflicts, is religious fundamentalism. In the last 20 years thousands of Nigerians have been killed in senseless riots, most of which have political and religious connotations. Though Nigeria is constitutionally a secular and democratic entity, some disgruntled politicians have continued to instigate trouble, especially between
Muslims and Christians who have lived in harmony for generations.

Since Nigeria's transition from Military to Civilian Rule in 1999, religiously-motivated violence has been a major threat to national security. Religion continues to cast an ominous shadow on the governance of the country. The attempt to secure religious freedom for some infringes on the freedom of others. Unfortunately, our secularism has not been able to find a way out of this, because it seems not deeply rooted in political institutionalization that is capable of generating sustainable social capital and a sense of trust among the citizenry. Consequently in Nigeria, secularism has become a liability, rather than an asset. Secularism is not in conflict with individual practice of religion. It simply means that religion must not be allowed to creep into governance, because if allowed to happen, it would be a recipe for disharmony and
disintegration. What all religious people must try to avoid is religious fundamentalism, the kind we are beginning to see in Nigeria, especially among Muslims and Christians. Extremism in whatever shade or colour; be it religious or ideological is the enemy of mankind. God is the Omnipotent, the All-knowing and the All-wise. He is more than capable of fighting His own battles, be they spiritual or physical. As human beings, we are not in any position to assist God in fighting His battles. A Being that is capable of creating this world with a mere command: "Let it be", is capable of doing anything by himself.

Corruption in Nigeria has reached epidemic proportions. Nigeria is one of the richest countries on the surface of the earth today, and yet her citizens are among the poorest. The effects of poverty lubricated by corruption are everywhere, on our streets and in our homes. Most Nigerians think
poverty, dream poverty and they have poverty starring at them when they wake up from sleep; if they are able to sleep at all. Poverty is now a constant and faithful companion to many Nigerians, while few individuals swim in the ocean of abundant wealth and riches. It has been said that more than 90% of Nigeria's wealth is in the hands of less than 10%. This is not only unfortunate and regrettable, it is absolutely unacceptable. A country is highly vulnerable and open to violence of any form, if its leadership allows her citizens to go hungry and lack the basic necessities of life, even in the midst of plenty. It will be no surprise if Nigeria receives an award as the most consistently corrupt nation. Of all the problems confronting Nigeria today, corruption is the Father and Mother of them all.

The beauty of Democracy is that it guarantees freedom, but this is not an opportunity or privilege to be irresponsible and stupid. Freedom has its own
limitations. In exercising our freedom, we must take cognizance of other people's rights and freedom. However, recent events in Nigeria, since the return of democracy in 1999 have shown very clearly that some of us have abused and not properly utilised our freedom and democratic rights. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees each Nigerian the opportunity to form and hold an opinion, provided such is not inconsistent with the provisions of the same Constitution. This privilege granted to us by our Constitution has been so terribly abused, especially by the political class, for personal gains, at the expense of Nigeria's corporate existence. Certain individuals consider themselves so powerful to the extent that they do anything, including causing injury to others and get away with it. This culture of impunity is so profound and so widespread. There appears to be two categories of Laws in Nigeria- one for the rich and another for the poor. Everywhere
you turn evidence of this habit of impunity stares you in the face. The culture of impunity has spawned the habit of bastardization. Criminality is widespread. By its definition, the word “impunity” derives from the Latin word “impunitas”, and it means “without punishment”. The rich get no sanction for bad behavior and misdeeds, so the vicious cycle of impunity continues, and the result is that schools are not built and equipped for Nigerian children; roads become un-motorable death traps, maternal mortality increases, etc. Because of power, influence, money and other forms of corrupting vices, justice is increasingly selective and not properly and rightly applied as it should be. Politicians, who have held political power and by this corruptly enriched themselves, do not want to give others the chance to lead Nigeria. And those who are now having a taste of political power will do anything to keep it. The poor suffer as a consequence.
The state of Education in Nigeria is very pathetic. Education faces a lot of challenges in Nigeria. The first and perhaps the greatest challenge facing education is inadequate funding. There is also the problem of lack of access due to high costs of schooling (which include the cost of books, uniforms, tuition fees, and transportation), opportunity costs, illness and hunger, etc. Statistics indicate glaring imbalances against girls in enrolment, attendance and completion rates in all levels. It has been said that in order to produce change in the world, the individual citizens that populate the world must first be educated for that change. This sentiment is more crucial today than ever before. We live in a time when the forces that shape our human desires and experience are not always hospitable to the positive development of character or the human qualities of empathy, compassion and stewardship of the environment.
This is to say that we need to think about how to educate for change that will ensure a positive future for humanity. Edmund O'Sullivan (1999) compares this time period to the "major shift that took place from the medieval into the modern world." If so then, like it or not change is upon us, but what kind of change with that be? It is significant that this is also a time when we actually have enough knowledge about the transformation of human beings to have a choice about the future we are creating.

Education is an experience, what happens to us from birth to death. According to Moore (1982), education is the sum total of a person's experiences. For Nduka (1964), it is culture- a way of life and the process of transmitting, advancing and consolidating culture as the process of education. Education is the foundation of any society. It directs the development and maintenance of social and
economic order, and it is the basic instrument for change and alleviation of suffering. Throughout human history, each generation has sought to pass on cultural and social values, traditions, morality, religion and skills to the next generation. The passing on of culture is also known as enculturation and the learning of social values and behaviours is socialization. The history of the curricula of such education reflects human history itself, the history of knowledge, beliefs, skills and cultures of humanity. Throughout pre-history, most education was achieved orally and through observation and imitation. Learning was done informally from parents, grandparents and sometimes, extended family members. At later stages of their lives, learners received instruction of a more structured and formal nature, imparted by people not necessarily related, in the context of religion, initiation or ritual.
In Nigeria, the educational curriculum of the young, especially at the Primary and Secondary levels, focuses on four key learning domains, namely:

a. The *cognitive domain*, which focuses on how individuals think; their intellectual capabilities, level of development and preferred thinking styles. The cognitive domain focuses on intellectual skills and is popular among Nigerian educators.

b. The *psychomotor domain*, which deals with the progressive development and attainment of the learner's skills that involve both mental and muscular activity.

c. The *affective domain*, which is the training of the heart and the cultivation of inner qualities of compassion, love, kindness, etc. The affective domain describes the way people react emotionally and their ability to feel another living thing's pain or joy. Affective objectives typically target the
awareness and growth in attitudes, emotion, and feelings"

d. The **interpersonal domain**, which focuses on people interacting with others. Today, more than ever before, the interpersonal domain takes on greater importance than perhaps in the past.

Over the years, there has been an over-emphasis on the cognitive and psychomotor domains at the expense and neglect of the affective and the interpersonal domains. The affective domain, for example, is critical for learning but is often not specifically addressed. This is the domain that deals with attitudes, motivation, willingness to participate, valuing what is being learned, and ultimately incorporating the values of a discipline into a way of life. Without proper and adequate development of the affective and interpersonal domains, our educational system has continued to
produce graduates, year in and year out, who have certificates but without character and moral integrity. When such individuals get into positions of authority, leadership or public office, they have no idea why they are there, except to accumulate wealth by embezzling and appropriating public funds and property to themselves. "Education coupled with compassion can move mountains," says Mortenson. To address this, our educational curriculum should be redesigned and improved to meet the challenges of the 21st century, by blending values education, with social and scientific research and student project based learning.

The National Curriculum of Education should be such that it will expose learners to a variety of opportunities to discover, reflect and act on positive human values, and view themselves as responsible members of both the local and global community. Learners must be empowered to develop the critical
thinking processes necessary to investigate and interrelate important life issues that are inherent to their immediate surroundings and essential to the sustainability of human kind by cultivating and developing basic human values of compassion, friendship, cooperation, community service, self-discipline, perseverance, honesty, kindness, generosity, justice, courage and respect, etc. The final goal of education is not just literacy (knowledge of letters) but above all, wisdom (applied knowledge). Education should provide us the means to discovering who we are, what we have in the light of this discovery, and empower us to take advantage of what we are to make positive use of what we have, for our personal benefits and the overall well being of our society.
Chapter Four: The Way Forward

4:1 Introduction

It is no doubt that Nigeria is today confronted with a combination of challenges that are so complex such that, any attempt to address anyone of these challenges results in further and even more complex problems for the nation. The current national leadership has been extremely careful in both its decisions and actions in order not to have the country exploding in its hands. These challenges are numerous and they all seem to have some kind of symbiosis and feed constantly upon one another. There is the challenge and evil of corruption, which creates poverty in the land, and more poverty results in further corruption. There is the challenge of increasing religious fundamentalism and fanaticism, which often results wanton destruction of human lives and property at the slightest provocation, including lack of development. This often results in further poverty in the land, especially when normal
economic activities are disrupted; people’s homes and genuine means of survival are reduced to nothing but rubbles. It could be lack of political education, awareness and political maturity, especially on the part of the political class. This has only led to mediocrity, leadership inefficiency and ineffectiveness. For a long time we have had leaders, whether dictators or elected by popular choice through the electoral process, who lack the vision, integrity, political will or courage and wisdom to lead Nigeria and deliver what is now known as the “dividends of democracy” to the common man. The lack of the right kind of leadership has, ultimately resulted in some or all of the challenges that confront us today and threaten our collective social existence.

However, all hope is not lost. It is never too late for the right things to be done, but only if the citizens decide to. Therefore, we need to urgently develop
and begin to implement a holistic strategy of national healing, unification and reconciliation, targeted at all stakeholders and components units that make up this geographical entity called Nigeria. In doing this, everyone, whether young or old, literate or illiterate, rich or poor, students and civil servants, wives and husbands, sons and daughters, bachelors and spinsters, including the international community and our natural environment, must be taken into consideration. The suggestions and recommendations that I make below are by no means exhaustive. However, I do believe that if these suggestions and recommendations are accepted, at least in good faith, and translated into concrete positive actions, they would become indices for authentic national growth, progress and sustainable development of our dear country Nigeria. This is our country, we have no other. We are here today, not by accident but by divine design and choice.
Focus on the Family

What is the role of the family in national development? Discussions on the place of the family, especially considering our 21st Century mentality, is often considered "old school", however I do sincerely believe that herein resides the solutions to our many unanswered questions. In seeking ways to addressing our numerous social challenges, there is need for us to return to our roots, to the family unit. The family is not only the custodian of values, but our society is a reflection of the kind of families that make up that society. So, it would not be out of place to suggest that Nigeria today is a mirror or reflection of our individual Nigerian families.

The “Family” is defined, from its Latin ‘familia’ as a ‘group of people affiliated by consanguinity, affinity, or co-residence’ (Wikipedia 2012). The family is the
oldest human institution on earth and the primary and principal institution and unit for the socialization of children. Among the primary functions of this very important human institution is to biologically produce, train, enculturate and socialize children for the society. The family serves to locate children socially and plays a major role in their enculturation and socialization. In the "Charter of the Rights of the Family" presented by the Holy See on October 22, 1983, the family is considered as a natural society, existing prior to the State or any other community, and possessing inherent rights which are inalienable. In Preamble E of that Charter "the family constitutes, much more than a mere juridical, social and economic unit, a community of love and solidarity, which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values, essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society". The family is therefore the place where different
generations come together and help one another to grow in human wisdom and to harmonize the rights of individuals with other demands of social life. In Preamble L of the Charter, "the Catholic Church, aware that the good of the person, of society and of the Church herself passes by way of the family, has always held it part of her mission to proclaim to all the plan of God instilled in human nature concerning marriage and the family, to promote these two institutions and to defend them against all those who attack them". The need therefore, for the society to recognize and defend the institution of the family so that it can exercise its specific functions, cannot be over-emphasized. Investing in the institution of the family is one of the most important investments and decisions any nation can make.

The Family is usually the "nursery"; the cohesive unit where the basic lessons of life are learnt and nurtured, and where economic, social and
psychological securities are provided. Ontologically, the family becomes the basic cell of social life. Traditionally in Africa, the family unit fulfills the divine mandate of procreation; it is the responsibility of the family to prepare and initiate young members into the fundamental values of human existence. As Lambert Nieme, Ph.D observes, 'from an existential-ontological point of view, human being is not only a being-in-the-world but also a being-with-others'. Considered from this perspective, the real essence of the human being (whether man or woman), is neither his ontological masculinity nor her ontological feminity but the relationship. For Lambert, "No person can deny being a relationship being. Even if the "I" is alone, his aloneness is related to others". In this sense, there exists some form of "reciprocal conditioning" between the family and the global society. The harmony and well being of the global society depends, to a large extent, on the harmony and well
being of the family. The family is both the biological and social producer of the society, and as such the primary school of social living. Though the family can be considered rightly, as the kingpin of society, it is also true that society influences the family in various ways; be this political, religious and economic, etc. In the words of Lambert, "The family as a universal institution is a network of relationships, the first school of socialization. As it turns out, society influences family organization and functioning. But the family cannot escape cultural gravity". He then lists fundamental values, especially for the African family to include, but not limited to: "clannish solidarity and tribal cohesion, solicitude and generosity, hospitality, dialogue and palaver, respect for seniors and elderly, protection of juniors, joy of living, religiosity, etc".

Nigerian families like many other families in Africa and other parts of the world have been greatly
challenged and undermined by violence, rapid demographic and socio-economic changes arising from modernization and increasing urbanization, such that patterns of family formations and life are continuously under intense pressures. As John Lawson Degbey, Director of the Africa Rights of the Child Foundation observes, "Urbanization and modernisation have placed heavy burdens on families who still shoulder socio-economic responsibilities of the extended family. It is not as easy as in the past to provide children with the same amount of care and attention they automatically receive in the extended family set-up". What we are now witnessing is a great influx of men and women, especially young people into cities in search of jobs and "better life" that are not even available. Everyone wants to secure some job and create a niche in the urban economy. Hunger and poverty have become intensified as a consequence, mainly due to increasing population density which has
overwhelmed our production capacity, the scarce employment and job opportunities and the limited social amenities and services available. The tensions and conflicts arising from all of these have far reaching consequences.

Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources, and yet over 80% of the citizens live below the poverty line. The family as a unit of production, consumption, reproduction and accumulation has been so harshly bastardized and so negatively impacted by the prevailing economic downturns which have transformed the environment in which families exist. The situation is such that the income of the man, who is traditionally the Father, the head and breadwinner of the family, is usually not sufficient to take care of the entire household. Alternatively the mothers (women) are then forced into the workplace to assist in uplifting the economic fortunes of the family. As a consequence, disequilibrium sets in,
roles and expectations change in the family. The children, who normally should be in school, often commit longer hours to assisting their parents in efforts to generate more income for the family. Those who manage to attend schools eventually drop-out due to lack of finances to continue. The new challenges and demands unleashed by the forces of globalization present strangely mixed outcomes for Nigerian families. While enhancing and providing great opportunities for families to actively participate in the larger global economic prosperity, this has also heightened their vulnerability to these same forces of globalization. So, we have become completely clouded by what Betty Bigombe and Gilbert Khadiagala refer to as the "competing strains of social regeneration and economic constraints".

The Marriage institution itself, from where families emerged is also being seriously threatened. Divorce
rates and single-parenthood incidences have now increased dramatically as a consequence, and the children continue to suffer; some of them take to the streets and become "children-in-the streets". This trend is dangerous, because as Archbishop Fulgence Rabemahafaly of Fianarantso rightly observes, "Keeping the family together is important, because children who do not live in a family will not have enough of the sense and value of sacrifice and obedience that living in harmony requires". Children learn and internalize all sorts of behaviour so quickly, which makes it even more important for them to stay to watch and learn from their parents from the very early stages of their lives, until they become matured enough to be on their own. Life in the streets, or "Street Life", with all its so-called freedom and excitement, but without family guidance and control has terrible repercussions, for the social, physical and mental well being of the individual and the society at large. This is already a
problem for our nation, and may even worsen unless very urgent and drastic measures to redress the fundamental issues so as to create a supportive family system are taken.

Most religions in Nigeria do believe that the family is ordained of God and that Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are born within the bonds of matrimony, and reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows in love, fidelity, faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. While the fathers do preside as heads over their families in love and righteousness and provide the necessities of life and protection for their families, the Mothers help and support with the nurturing of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Therefore all responsible governments and citizens
in Nigeria and everywhere around the world must deliberately seek to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society. If we fail to do this, we will all perish.

4:3 Interreligious and Interfaith Dialogue

Without doubt, religion plays a significant role in public life, and is increasingly becoming an important identity marker. Due to our increasingly pluralistic 21st century world, the need for interreligious cooperation and interfaith dialogue in addressing conflicts fueled by religion cannot be over-emphasized. As a matter of urgent importance, we must constantly seek new ways of understanding particularity, universality and plurality and also practice our faith with integrity while respecting and accepting each other. In “A New Era of Partnerships: Report of Recommendations to the President”,

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President Obama's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (March 2010), rightly observed that “When religiously affiliated persons, communities, their specialized agencies, and multireligious organizations work together in multistakeholder partnerships, they understand themselves as engaging in “interfaith service,” working for the common good, even while maintaining the unique religious identity of each participating partner. This disciplined approach to multistakeholder partnerships that include these religiously affiliated actors—in addition to advancing concrete projects—can also greatly foster social cohesion and help transform sectarian tensions into habits of collaboration based on mutual respect”.

As religion is so inextricably bound up with identities, experience has shown that, in conflict situations, religion often tends to exacerbate mutual alienation and even compound such conflicts. Yet,
there is no denying the fact that religion has great potential capacity if employed as a force for overcoming social barriers. Most religions (if not all) do emphasize the sanctity of all human life and the inalienability of human dignity. The need for interreligious cooperation, as a means to reducing tension, countering religious militancy and promoting peaceful coexistence in Nigeria is more important now more than ever before. The last 13 years, since the return to democracy in Nigeria has experienced a rise in militancy, part of which has been religiously-motivated. As Charles Adingupu wrote in the Vanguard Newspaper of June 30, 2012, “From the deep cave in Anambra where the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) operates to the creek in the Niger Delta which parades dozens of militant groups battling for resource control, down to the West where the Odua People’s Congress holds sway up to the savannah in the north that has recently witnessed the
insurgence of the Boko Haram group all at one time or the other holds the Nigerian government in arms-lock". Religious militancy is usually characterized by the employment of force and coercion that is justified through ideological rhetoric. It is however common knowledge that no Religion actually expounds violence in any form.

Interfaith dialogue is a term which describes the "cooperative, constructive and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions and/or spiritual or humanistic beliefs, at both the individual and institutional levels" (Wikipedia, 2010). Interfaith dialogue often involves promoting understanding between different religions to increase acceptance of others. According to Dr Hans Küng, Professor of Ecumenical Theology and President of the Foundation for a Global Ethic, "There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace
among the religions without dialogue among the religions. All over the world, particularly in areas where religion is fuelling inter-communal violence and exclusion, "interfaith dialogue, when strategically designed and carefully implemented, can be used alongside other peace- and justice-making techniques to challenge and transform dynamics driving injustice and conflict. Interfaith dialogue can strengthen cultural and institutional commitments to religious, ethnic, racial and communal pluralism".

Interfaith Dialogue is not a debate, neither is it an opportunity to point out the rights or wrongs of others. Rather it is an opportunity for attentive listening, of learning, of openness and cooperative creativity. Interfaith dialogue is as old as the history of the world's religions. Religion has the capacity of facilitating the attainment of appropriate standards of excellence and influencing citizens to become
effective and powerful voices for change, peace and social justice. In a Keynote Address at the 2nd International Conference on Youth and Interfaith Dialogue, organized by New Era Educational and Charitable Support Foundation (www.needcsi.org) in Jos, Nigeria, Dr. Raphael Ogar Oko, International Coordinator of Global Educators for All Initiative, observed that the main challenges confronting the world today has to do with the “interfaith divide in the names of religious denominations, the global divide among the world’s citizenship in the names of tribes, race and nationality as well as the resource utilization through corruption and mismanagement”. He recommended that without “interfaith and interreligious dialogue and activities as well as efforts to bridge the citizenship divides, humanity will continue to face many challenges beyond the present state of suffering caused by the growing lack of faith in the existence of a Supreme Being, a Creator and the disregard for cooperation
among the world's citizens”. Dr. Oko maintains that through Interreligious and Interfaith Dialogue, humanity will overcome the faith divide and the global citizenship divide, to “build the ultimate bridge, which opens the way for all people to travel transcending their faith, nationality or race on earth into heaven”. This ultimate bridge, he states, is the bridge that can link all of humanity on earth to the eternal path of heaven. Each one of us living, and every religion, in whatever shade or colour, has this responsibility of building this bridge, which as Dr. Oko says, will “open the blocked way that prevents the people from accessing God, visiting him in the morning, afternoon and evening as well as living with Him all the time and even spending the Holy days and holidays with Him”. The urgency and significance of Interreligious cooperation and Interfaith Dialogue cannot be over exaggerated, for as Libby and Len Traubman, co-founders of the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group, “People become the
stories they hear and the stories they tell", and in the words of Gene Knudsen Hoffman, "An enemy is one whose story we have not heard". Nigerians must refuse to be enemies and keep on talking. Dialogue is not easy, but it certainly the best way out of trouble. Refusing to talk will create more troubles than when we choose to come together to dialogue. There are several examples of success stories around the world and we can learn from these experiences to move our nation forward on the path of peace, love and social harmony. Dialogue provides us an opportunity to settle our quarrels and disputes. In Dialogue, there is no room for bombings, killings and destruction of lives and property, because dialogue is not done with arms and weapons. We need to all repent and embrace true religion; otherwise there will be no hope for our nation. And true religion requires that we act justly and mercifully, and to walk in humility with God (Micah 6:8). Here, there is no need for complicated dogmas
and philosophies, for as His Holiness, Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama says, our own hearts and minds become the temples, churches and mosques, and the doctrine is compassion. "Love for others and respect for their rights and dignity, no matter who or what they are: ultimately these are all we need". Whether we believe in God or not, whether we practice some religion or none at all, it is important that we practice compassion, love and show kindness and responsibility towards fellow human beings and our natural environment. That for me is a good starting point. As Libby and Len Traubman observe, loyalty, strength and courage are proven not by acts of exclusion and violence, but by the more challenging power of listening-to-learn, telling one's own story, and fulfilling everyone's deep memory of union and longing for reunion, using those basic tools of human experience that give ears to peoples' personal narratives and voices to everyone, while embracing the fact that "an
enemy is one whose story we have not heard”. For Happiness-don Uta, if we were to study the secret histories of those we regard as enemies, we would find in each man’s life, much sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.

4:4 Resource Mobilisation and Application

Nigeria, the “Giant of Africa”, is undergoing a period of accelerated change and understandably, the overall context for resource mobilization is becoming increasingly difficult. New strategies and ways of generating and applying available resources to work for the common good are needed to respond to emerging realities. Resource Mobilization; a sociological theory which emerged in the 1970s deals with the capacity of movements and nations, in the context of our subject matter, to generate resources, and of mobilizing citizens for the purpose of achieving set goals and objectives. Resource Mobilization stresses rationality, including
the significance of adequate funding, leadership, and organization. In academic cycles, Resource Mobilization theory is usually classified into two camps, namely; the classical economic or entrepreneurial model as proposed by John McCarthy and Mayer Zald and the Political Model for Resource Mobilization as popularised by Charles Tilly and Doug McAdam. While the entrepreneurial model focuses on collective actions based on economic factors and organizational theory, the political model theory deals with political struggles rather than economic considerations.

Resource Allocation, on the other hand, is designed to facilitate the distribution of available resources in an economic manner, and so it is an important component of resource management. In project management, resource allocation is the scheduling of activities and the resources required by those activities while taking into consideration both the
resource availability and the project timing. Resource allocation is the distribution of resources—usually financial—among competing groups of people or programs. In strategic planning, it is a strategy of using available resources, which could be human or material resources, to achieve set goals for the future. It is the process of allocating resources among the various projects or business units. Resource Allocation has two basic components, namely; the allocation decisions which concerns the choice of which projects to fund and what funding options are available for such projects. The second is the contingency mechanisms, which basically deals with priority rankings and possible sacrifices that need to be made, in order to move forward.

Nigeria is richly blessed with abundant human and natural resources, which include but not limited to petroleum and associated products, tin, columbite, iron ore, coal, limestone, lead, zinc, natural gas, and
vast agricultural land covered by three types of vegetation, namely: forests, savannahs and montane land. Expert analysis indicates that Nigeria's economy is vibrant. With a GDP estimated at $414.5 billion in 2011, real GDP growth rate of 7.36%, huge external reserves of about $32.62, the economy appears to be doing quite well. Macroeconomic Indicators obtained from the National Planning Commission indicate that the Nigeria economy has performed relatively well in recent times. With such abundance, it is disheartening to note that most Nigerian citizens still live in abject poverty. Unemployment rate stood at 23.9% in 2011 from 21.4% in 2010. Absolute poverty rate rose from 60.9% in 2010 to 61.9% in 2011. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) continues to report on the rising level of poverty in the land. The most recent NBS report indicated that 60.9 per cent of Nigerians, which is approximately 100 million people lived in abject poverty in 2010. The report further stated that
this class of people lives on less than $1 or N160 a day. There is increasing disconnect between the improving macroeconomic indicators and the unfortunate descent into poverty of more than half of our population. This significant divergence between our nation's macro economics variables, economic indicators and the obvious realities should be a great source of concern to us all. More than 80% of Nigerians are said to be poor and live largely at the mercy of fate. Available statistics seem to grossly under-estimate the immensity of poverty in a 'rich country with poor masses'. In the rural areas and slums for instance, several Nigerians die daily just because they cannot afford the cost of medication for simple ailments like malaria. Festus Akanbi reports that "Widening income inequalities and growing poverty in Nigeria are not moving in tandem with the nation's Gross Domestic Product. This has forced economists to conclude that the disparate trend typifies the imperfections in the
country's macroeconomic structure". We do not have to take a plane to the skies to find the reasons for this- corruption and fraud of the highest order, waste and mismanagement of public resources by few privileged individuals at the expense of the overwhelming majority. Also, according to Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, Governor of Nigeria's Central Bank, "...at the heart of the problem is the government's economic policy which needs to change. The economy since SAP (Structural Adjustment Program) is one that supports imported consumption and not local production, perpetuating dependency, non inclusive growth and insecurity". This also explains why the economy continuous to grow at a rate of about 7% annually and yet many more Nigerians are getting poorer and poorer. What an irony; as the country is said to get richer, the citizens are sinking down to abject poverty. Poverty and income inequalities in the country have increased persistently.
There is definitely much money in the system, going into wrong hands. Revelations of the Fuel Subsidy Probe, the Pensions Fund Probe and others at the National Assembly clearly indicate this. Nigerian money meant for Nigerians has been cornered into private pockets. This is corruption which has to stop. Corrupt people must not be allowed to get away with it so easily. Every good effort must be made to block every possible leakages and channels that facilitate corruption. Appointments and promotions in public service must be made based on merit and competence, and not political patronage. Government must commit itself to its primary responsibility of providing for the general welfare and security of Nigerians, wherever they choose to reside. More resources should be directed towards projects that will stimulate local production, power generation and distribution, affordable housing, education, agriculture, health, road construction, employment generation, security of lives and
property and capacity building. This is what ordinary Nigerians want; government initiative that will translate to food on their table and money in their pockets and guarantee their safety. Without all of these, big grammar and rhetoric become meaningless. This is the way government can positively engage the citizens, especially the youth, thereby stemming the tide of violence and other anti-social conducts that threaten our corporate existence.

A situation whereby Nigeria is blessed with a large cotton belt but still import textiles from China must be discouraged. Nigeria is the largest producer of cassava in the world and yet imports starch from Europe. Nigeria has the capacity to produce rice and tomatoes locally and yet we prefer to import these from China and Italy and from Thailand and India respectively. Our land is filled with cattles and cows from North to South, East to West, even in the Middle Belt, and yet we import milk from New
Zealand and use our hard-earned Forex to import petroleum products from Europe and neighbouring African countries, so that our local refineries will not function. This does not in any way generate added value to our economy. We urgently need an industrial revolution in Nigeria and the time is right now; a revolution, which according to Olusegun Aganga, Nigeria’s Minister of Trade and Investment, that will “strategically position and empower the nation’s manufacturing sector as the key driver of economic growth through job creation and increased contribution to Gross Domestic Product”. This proposed Industrial Revolution must be supported by an aggressive and deliberate Power Sector Reforms to provide sustainable uninterrupted power supply to meet domestic and industrial requirements. We must not delay or waste any more time on this, because Nigerians, especially the youth are becoming anxious, worried and impatient.
There is a need to look again, for example, at the process and structure of our national budgeting and how capital resources are prioritised. From the 2012 national budget of over N4.8trn naira, only a miserly N1.5trn was allocated for capital expenditure and over N2.4trn for recurrent expenditure. This kind of investment will not trigger the required industrial revolution and economic growth to put millions of our unemployed youths to work. What justification is there for constituency allowances paid to members of the National Assembly? Members of Parliament are elected periodically for the sole purpose of Legislation and oversight. The Legislature, like the Judiciary, has no business with project execution or implementation. That is the responsibility of the Executive Arm of Government. The Legislature must wake up to its responsibilities of Law making and justify the over N150bn expended on it. Anything outside this is for me an anomaly and an avenue for increased corruption.
It has been argued that governance structure in Nigeria is oversized. I have always been an advocate for downsizing as this will save and redirect funds for capital projects that will have direct bearings on the lives of ordinary Nigerians. Our country currently operates a Legislature that is bicameral. There are 109 senators and 360 members of the House of Representatives, giving us a total of 469 elected members at the National Assembly. Do we really need 360 members in the House of Representatives? Is it not possible to have the same number in the House of Representatives as for the Senate? May be this is time we study and learn from countries that operate a Unicameral Legislature and see if this will apply to our situation. At least 20% of our national budget is required to maintain our current National Assembly annually. In the Executive Arm of Government, we have a minimum of 38 Federal Ministries. Each State of the
Federation provides a Minister (some States currently have more than one Minister). Apart from the President and the Vice President, each Minister has a long list of Senior Special Assistants, Special Assistants, Senior Special Advisers, Special Advisers, drivers, cooks, messengers, house boys and house girls, home keepers, etc. If we currently have about 40 Federal Ministers, with each Minister having at least 20 of these "service providers" around them, this will translate to at least 800 persons directly serving our Federal Ministers. It is 'luminously' evident that this practice puts unnecessary pressures on our annual national budgets.

4:5 Political, Civic and Citizenship Education
There seems to be a constant display of ignorance among Nigerians, including the political class, about what truly constitutes democracy and citizen participation. This ignorance is clearly manifest probably, in the way we think and the way we
conduct ourselves. So the great significance and the urgent need for political, civic and citizenship education cannot be over-exaggerated. Writing on "Political Education and Voting Behaviour in Nigerian Polity", which appeared in the African Journal of Educational Studies, (AJES 1999), Professor Stanley Eke Orobator describes political education as comprising philosophical, psychological and sociological aspects, which could be impacted through formal and informal methods. Political education promotes and encourages civic responsibility through the development of Rights and Responsibilities, Human Dignity, Stewardship, Development, Democracy, Law and Interdependence skills for active participation. Nigeria's democracy is nascent and still evolving and would require that all hands be on deck for us to fully harvest its dividends. Political education is crucial in establishing credible free and fair electoral processes that would change Nigeria's political
fortune. It is one way by which the nation and her citizens can avoid the mistakes of the past. Political Education will equip Nigerian citizens, including actors in the political space with positive attitude that would enable democracy to thrive in the country.

Civic Education prepares and empowers individual citizens, especially the youth, of any given society or nation, to discharge their roles effectively and efficiently as citizens. It is therefore, not different from political education, for "the cultivation of the virtues, knowledge and skills necessary for political participation", (Guttmann 1987), which is the concern of civic education, is what political education is all about. Like Political Education, Civic Education is not limited to the school environment, and so it is not the exclusive preserve of the classroom. In formal settings, it is cultivated in schools and colleges and as part of Political Science
in Universities across Nigeria. Informally, Political, and therefore Civic Education should be seriously encouraged in family units, undertaken by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), by Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in churches, mosques and shrines, in offices, promoted along with political party campaigns as an efficient entry point to political socialization and part of the electoral process, during sporting activities, in the mass media, Town Hall and Community meetings, etc. It has been recommended that the best civic education strategy must integrate the formal and informal components to be successful and most effective.

There are several basic approaches to civic education today; namely, the History-Curricular Approach which stresses the significance of history, of knowledge and respect for social and political history, founding documents such as our nation’s
Constitution and established Laws that regulate conduct and behavior, without which young people become completely disengaged and deficient in matters relating to their country. There is also the Critical-Thinking Pedagogical Approach, which emphasizes the need for deliberate critical thinking and the importance of citizens challenging constituted authorities where and when necessary, as this is a key requirement for a just society. Some scholars have argued that the general decline in civic engagement and voting patterns in Nigeria, and in many countries across the globe is largely due to the failure of the pedagogy of modern education, which it is said creates passivity by having learners just sit in classrooms, read textbooks and listen to lectures galvanised with big vocabularies. This kind of educational pedagogy not only removes the student or learner from the center, but it is also democratically antithetical. Civic Education is best learnt by doing, by practice. A
third approach to Civic Education is the Community Service Method. This method encourages and supports citizens, especially the youth to actively participate in community service so they do not become segregated and removed from the life of the society. There is also the Service-Learning Method for Civic Education, which is very similar to the Community Service Approach. Service-Learning helps students to better understand and appreciate their world and environment and provide certain "frames of reference" for their classroom experience to be more effectual. There is also the Public Achievement Approach, pioneered by Harry Boyte of the Humphrey Institute of the University of Minnesota. This method encourages students to work together in small groups, during which they identify and deal with real public life issues affecting them in personal ways, instead of just working on projects developed by adults. Finally, there is the Voter Training and Mentoring Approach to Civic
Education. In this method, attention and efforts are committed to education and training focused on actual voting processes and other related issues, with the hope that as young people grow they become educated enough to participate in campaigns and elections. Civic Education is one sure way by which we all can ventilate the ideas of Nigeria's founding fathers who worked assiduously to lay the foundations of our democracy and to create the platforms for our corporate social existence.

The need for Nigeria's unity and stability is greater now than ever before, especially as the nation now grapples with rampant issues of ethnic violence, religious crises motivated by religious fundamentalism and terrorism among others, attention is gradually being drawn to the need and urgency for effective citizenship development through education. Globally, Citizenship education
has become an increasingly important means for countries in turmoil and countries in transition to educate their citizens about their rights and responsibilities. Irrespective of the several definitions and approaches, the significance of Citizenship Education in the development, especially, of young people's adaptive capacities for effective living is beyond debate. Citizenship Education is one sure instrument or toll for facilitating Nigeria's unity and stability. In schools programs, citizenship education could include topics in civics, social sciences, social studies, and world studies, study of society, life skills, creative ability development, emotional intelligence, moral education and character education. It has long been held that the ideals intrinsic in citizenship education could go a long way towards ameliorating the problems arising from man's inhumanity to man. Many of our social challenges arising from the forces of religion, ethnic rivalry and competition,
hatred and intolerance, the challenges of systemic inequalities and corruption, the threat to security of human lives and property, etc, urgently requires some form of education whose goal is to instil and inculcate in the citizens the ideals of national consciousness and awareness. In essence citizenship education should be introduced at all levels of our educational system, and not just at the Junior Secondary School Level. Democratic education is the subject of Citizenship and Civic Education. It seeks to impart skills, knowledge, and participatory virtues, including engraining in the youth, a profound sense of identity and connection to community, society or nation. There is now, more than ever before the urgent need to educate our youth to become "civic-minded"; so that, as they plan about their individual and personal well being, they will care also for this country that is theirs today and tomorrow.
The term constitution has been defined as a "set of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which a state or other organization is governed". These set of fundamental principles constitute or make up what the entity is. These principles may be written or unwritten, but in most cases in the modern world, they are written, resulting to what is called a written constitution. A Constitution could be rigid or flexible but not both. From its original Latin root 'constitutio', this term refers to orders, rules and regulations. It was later used widely in the Law of the Church known as Canon Law, specifically in decrees made the Catholic Pontiff. A Constitution, in modern usage, is therefore a binding document that lays out provisions and guidelines for association, confers specific responsibilities and power upon organizations, states, nations, institutions, etc. Scott
Gordon, an authority in Constitutional Law observes that a political organization is constitutional if it "contains institutionalized mechanisms of power control for the protection of the interest and liberties of the citizenry, including those that may be in the minority".

Nigeria is a geo-political entity with its own written constitution called "The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria". Our first Constitution was enacted during the Colonial administration by Order in Council in 1913 but became effective in 1914. Four other Constitutions followed in 1922, 1946, 1951 and 1954, before Nigeria's Independence. These constitutions were not written by Nigerians themselves. So, as a Sovereign nation, the first Nigerian Constitution came in 1960, followed by another in 1963, during the First Republic, then the 1979 Constitution, the next in 1993 which did not
enjoy full implementation and the current one in 1999, which has witnessed two amendments so far.

By “Reform” is meant 'to change into an improved condition or form', either by removal of identified faults or abuses, or reversion to a pure original state. It also means to repair, restore or to correct. Other definitions of Reform include, putting into a new, to restore to a former good state, to bring from bad to good; to change from worse to better; to amend, to reform a profligate man; to reform corrupt manners or morals, amendment of what is defective, vicious, corrupt or depraved, etc. Reform is different from revolution which concerns radical change. Reform is about fine tuning or redressing observed wrongdoing without causing harm to the system itself. Reform will only seek to improve a system and not to throw the system off or destroy it.
By Constitutional Reform therefore, it is expected that Nigerians, through elected representatives in the National and State Houses of Assembly, must as a matter of urgency, take a critical look at the provisions of our Constitution, with inputs from all stakeholders, and make necessary amendments and reviews where and when necessary. It has been observed that some of the social challenges that confront us today are part of our constitution. For example, though most Nigerians agree that our unity and corporate existence are not a matter for debate and negotiation anymore, that Nigeria is and must remain one indivisible entity, recent events clearly indicate that there is the urgent need to very clearly define the basis of our existence. Yes, united we shall remain, but in seeking to remain united, we must insist on doing things rightly. There is the urgent need to consider the challenges of the 3rd Tier of Governance in Nigeria, specifically the autonomy and independence of Local Government.
Administration. This will help to bring democratic dividends and development to the people at the grassroots. There is the need to look carefully at the role of our traditional institutions in nation building. There is the need to take a careful consideration of what secularism means to our nation and the place of religion. Hopefully, we will need to make constitutional provisions that will reduce the heavy concentration of political power and resources in Abuja, by returning to true Federalism. May be this is the time to consider all of these. Tomorrow may be too late. We will have to consider again issues of indigenes and settlers and tell ourselves the truth concerning who, when, where and how one becomes a Nigerian. We will also need to consider the burning issue of Resource Control. Probably, we will need to critically examine our criminal justice system in line with current historical realities. For example, what is the difference between Human Rights and Criminality?
At what point does freedom cease to be freedom? How should Nigerians exercise their freedom?

We may also be interested in knowing why in the same country, there are two separate criminal laws—the Penal Code for the Northern region of Nigeria, and the Criminal Code for the Southern parts of the country. Are our Laws so rigid and so fixed to the extent that there is no room for harmonization? Even iron and metals are malleable, so why can’t human laws, especially when they no longer serve the common good? What Rights, Priviledges, Entitlements and Responsibilities do Nigerians have in their country, a country of which they are citizens, not by accident but by divine choice? For many of us if we had the priviledge to choose our country of birth, it would still be Nigeria. Nothing sounds nice and sweet to my ears like the word Nigeria. But again, is the life of a poor Nigerian worth anything? Look at Israel and the USA as
examples of nations that value their citizens. As tiny as the nation of Israel is, kill one Israeli and you are certain to face the wrath and anger of the whole of Israel. The US Government will not hesitate to roll out tanks and saturate the skies with wars planes just to rescue one American in trouble anywhere. In Nigeria, the life of a chicken or even a cockroach has more value than human life. Without provocation we kill, and when we are provoked, human blood flows like water on our streets. In praying, we kill to pray, in sleeping we kill to sleep, in an effort to get to the top, we kill in order to rise. This to me is worse than the Hobbesian State where man was wolf to fellow man, where man’s life was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”. This is not acceptable. While it is cheering news to know that efforts are currently being made at constitutional amendments, there is the need to take this current exercise seriously, devoid of the usual distractions
and senseless politics that have become our bread and butter.

One of our greatest challenges as a nation is Law Enforcement. We seem to have great laws, made by some of our brightest intellectuals, (some of them among the best legal luminaries in the world), regulating and directing every facet of our lives, but the enforcement mechanisms are dismally poor, weak and porous. By “Law Enforcement” is meant, broadly speaking, “any system by which certain members of a society act in an organized manner to promote adherence to the law by discovering and punishing persons who violate the rules and norms governing that society”. Law Enforcement involves the prevention and punishment of crimes as well having established and efficient mechanisms to check and discourage people from violating laid down rules and norms. It is the official responsibility of Law Enforcement Agencies, especially the Police,
to conduct Law Enforcement activities. Other Agencies that support the Police in Law Enforcement include, but not limited to the SSS, the Military, the Civil Defence Corps, NDLEA, FRSC, the Courts and Prisons, etc.

It is hardly conceivable that the state can exist without law. No society can do without proper policing and Law Enforcement. Writing on the topic “Nigeria: Long In Law Making, Short In Enforcement”, Bode Adewumi observes that, “Most things that constitute laws in many countries, including some African countries are taken for granted in Nigeria. It is not a scarce occurrence to see two or more people engage in street fight to the extent that they will cause traffic jam. This is why an average American or a European who comes into the country for the first time will ponder if there are laws and if there are enforcement agents”.
Nigeria, he says, is in a class of its own. This assertion may be right if the level of disobedience to the laws of the land is taken into consideration. In every facet of the Nigeria life, there are laws that have been enacted to guide the conduct of the people. It is the attitude of the people and the law enforcement agencies that have been the problem. How do we explain for example that, even though there are specific laws prohibiting indiscriminate urinating and defecation on our streets, we still find many Nigerians having their way by urinating and messing up the entire environment? This happens everywhere, even in the so-called big cities of Lagos, Ibadan, in Kano and Kaduna, in Enugu and Onitsha, in Port Harcourt and Benin City and this practice certainly has found its way into Abuja as well. If attention is not paid to very simple laws of cleanliness, which they say is next to Godliness, how on earth will Nigerians observe and obey more complex laws? Behind all of these is lack of law
enforcement on the part of those responsible for enforcements, corruption, indiscipline and ignorance of the existence of such laws on the part of the majority of Nigerians.

While it is true that religion has been the source and the cause for many of the conflicts around the world, that many wars and atrocities have been committed by human beings in the name of religion, that we today find so much hatred and fanaticism in the name of religion, where people tend to lose all sense of humanity; however, it cannot be denied that the real purpose of religion is to make people more loving, tolerant and kind. The goal of true religion is to help man rise above and subdue his lower, animalistic nature and to develop higher social qualities of love and compassion, kindness and mercy, peace and generosity, responsibility towards others and forgiveness, etc. Only through this way, will our society be of higher quality and we
will be better human beings. This will in turn facilitate the creation of a more peaceful and better habitable better world for us all. That for me should be the genuine purpose of religion. The other purpose of religion, as John A. Hardon et al observe, religion is “The moral virtue by which a person is disposed to render to God the worship and service He deserves. It is sometimes identified with the virtue of justice toward God, whose rights are rooted in his complete dominion over all creation. Religion is also a composite of all virtues that arise from a human being's relationship to God as the author of his or her being, even as love is a cluster of all the virtues arising from human response to God as the destiny or his or her being. Religion thus corresponds to the practice of piety toward God as Creator of the universe".
Notes and Suggested Readings

Below is a list of Authors and Resources that I consulted and which I believe will be very helpful for anyone intending to do further research on the Subject matter.


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