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# FUNDAMENTALISM FROM INTRA AND INTER-RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES IN NIGERIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL QUEST FOR SOLUTION

Akiti Glory Alamu, PhD

## Abstract

Fundamentalism is thus the product of the modernising process, it is anti-modernist. Fundamentalism is originally coined by its supporters to describe a specific tonality of theological beliefs as well as religious connotation indicating straight-jacketed attachments to a set of irreducible beliefs. Meanwhile, these inaccurate, insufficient and irrational stereotypes have brought doctrinal misunderstanding within conservative or liberal Christians or Muslims as well as religious clashes between Muslims and Christians based on their fundamental principles and beliefs. As a result, thousands of lives and billions worth of property have been lost to these unprecedented crises in the past five decades. This paper, therefore, adopts historical, comparative and systematic approach leading to the fact that the ever-with-us religious crisis can be surmounted when all and sundry rediscovers separate religious values, ancient language of the holy writs, spiritual cultures and mutual respect of various traditions, which are embedded in all religions. Again, the paper postulates that Comtean social creed of love is the principle, order is the basis and progress is the end would suffice. The paper, therefore, concludes that this deeper reality would create a solid base for a humane and germane Nigerian society that acts just by respecting individual difference.

**Key words:** Religion, Fundamentalism, Intra, Inter, Nigeria, Sociology.

## Introduction

Howard Thurman was interviewed in the late 1970s for a BBC feature on Religion. He told the interviewer among others:

I say that creeds, dogmas, and theologies are inventions of the mind. It is the nature of the mind to make sense out of experience: to reduce the conglomerates of experience to units of comprehension which we call principles, or ideologies or concepts. Religious experience is dynamic, fluid, effervescent, yeasty. But the mind can't handle these

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so it has to imprison religious experience in some way, get it bottled up. Then, when the experience quiets down, the mind draws a bead on it and extracts concepts, notions, dogmas, so that religious experience can make sense to the mind. Meanwhile, religious experience goes on experiencing, so that by the time i get my dogma stated so that i can think about it, the religious experience becomes an object of thought. (*Theology Today*, 1981)

The above addresses the benchmark of fundamentalism as the nitty-gritty of this piece and its criticism. Thus, fundamentalism is originally coined by its supporters to depict a specific package of theological beliefs as well as religious connotation indicating unbending attachments to a set of irreducible beliefs. This term is often used as pejoratively and disparagingly derogatory consequent upon its abuses and extremities. Fundamentalism is against modernism, secularism, liberalism and with wide variety of intolerance, exclusivist, violence and authoritarianism. With this fundamentalism, tradition, theology, literal interpretation of the holy writ and ideologies get mixed up and religion becomes the weeping child. The result would be breakdown of order thus undermining the peaceful, pristine state of nature. Today, Nigeria is experiencing turbulent times in her chequered history as a result of the handiwork of religious fundamentalists. If it is not Maitatsine Militants today, it will be Boko Haram tomorrow. However, functionalist interpretation of religious peace means social progress, development, integration and order. Therefore, it is the intention of this paper to cursorily look at intra and inter-religious fundamentalism with a sociological eye bird's view in contemporary Nigerian society.

## The Centrality of Religion in Human Existence

In all ages, religion has come to grips with the existence of all human endeavours. Religion at all times plays pivotal role in shaping the thought, perception, approach, feeling and history of humankind. Thus, religion embraces all aspects of life and it represents wholeness of all existence and as well is life itself. Apparently, religion is the keystone or cornerstone of the people's lives and cultures. Religion is far more than a believing way of life in the Nigerian context, where a distinction or separation is not made between religion and other areas of human existence. No doubt, with its consciousness and sensitivity, there is no known society exists without religion. Dopamu (2005:1) states that there is no known society without the existence of religion. In line with the above position of Dopamu, (Abe 2004:1) argues that religion is the provenance and consummation of all things. According to him "in the beginning, it was religion."

In Nigeria, there is the practice of tripartite religions of African Religion (Afrel), Islam and Christianity. Thus, the history of African Religion or Indigenous Religion is as old as the people themselves. It is a religion handed down by our forbears from the yore, and it is orally transmitted from one generation to another. It does not possess sacred scriptures, yet, it is thus written in memory of the very world we live and transmit orally as the occasion demands. This is not proselytizing religion, nor does it have a drive for membership, yet it is tolerant, it accommodates and remains autochthonous. Therefore, we are born into it, live in it and die in it (Awolalu and Dopamu 2005:6). Commenting on the overview of African Religion, Dopamu (2005:3) has this to say:

This is clearly seen in African Religion (Afrel), which encompasses all aspects of life. Africans do not know how to live without religion. They celebrate life religiously and they never embark on anything without bringing in religion. Thus at birth, marriage, death, warfare, healing, the foundation of any project, planting, harvesting, enthronement of chiefs and kings and other areas of human endeavour, Afrel plays important roles.

Islam and Christianity are the proselytizing religions, which had been imported into Nigeria. Thus, Islam was introduced into Nigeria in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by the Timbuktu traders who had contact or encounter with the Northerners. It was in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that Islam spread to the south-west. While Christianity penetrated into Nigeria in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, this attempt to Christianize Nigeria failed due to many factors. Be that as it may, Christianity came to be planted permanently in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They have had disproportionate size. Interestingly therefore, Nigeria is secular and pluralistic state without any particular religion being a state religion. There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria is a country of diverse cultures, traditions and beliefs. But of the entire diverse elements, religion has proved to be most sensitive in the society. Idowu (1996:4) he states that religion is the keynote of the people's lives:

Religion forms the foundation and all-governing principle of life for them. As far as they are concerned, the full responsibility of all the affairs of life belongs to the Deity; their own part in the matter is to do as they are ordered through the priests and diviners whom they believe to be interpreters of the will of the deity. Through all the circumstances of life, through all its changing scenes, its joys and troubles, it is the Deity who is in control.

Without fuss, Religion has all-governing principles of life and infuses discipline and social order. Thus, religion is a cord that binds people

together in order to promote social cohesion and communal well-being. Besides, religion is a divine law or mechanism that regulates human conduct and as well institutionalises social norms in human society. Religion has the knack of bringing people together where they can experience presently what it means to live the full human life. It is also a major instrument of transforming any human society into a community that acts justly.

### Fundamentalism: A Clarification

According to *Encarta Dictionary Microsoft* (2009), Fundamentalism connotes a religious or political movement based on a literal interpretation of and strict adherence to doctrine, especially as return to former principle. (*Wikipedia*) defines Fundamentalism as the demand for a strict adherence to special theological doctrines usually understood as a reaction against Modernist theology, primarily to promote continuity and accuracy. The term Fundamentalism was originally coined by its supporters to describe a specific package of theological beliefs that developed into a movement within the Protestant community of the United States in the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century and that had its root in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of that time. The term usually has a religious connotation indicating unwavering attachment to a set of irreducible beliefs. Fundamentalism is sometimes used as a pejorative term, particularly when combined with other epithets 'right-wing' fundamentalists.

Charles Ryerson (2005:32) described fundamentalism as a "bastard child." Igboin in (Isiramen *et al* 2010:419) tries to unearth the undercurrent of a bastard child in the context Ryerson related it. According to him, "naturally, a bastard child is always demanding to know his father. He creates troubles out of peace, problem out of solution, disorder from order, sadness from happiness, and fear from security in search of his father. He is emotive and easily provoked." Fundamentalism is thus the product of the modernising process, it is anti-modernist. Marsden (1996:338) describes it as "a militantly anti-modernist Protestantism made up of a loose organization of different groups united by their fierce opposition to modernist attempts to bring Christianity in line with modern thought." In addition, fundamentalism is characterised by five elements:

- i. Religious texts are central, interpreted literally and held factually;
- ii. The ancient leaders and founders of religions, even mythical ones are regarded as historical personae. Myth automatically becomes history. However, Moses Oke (2002:357) argues that in conflictual moment, there is the tendency to have recourse to mythical nature to shield them from being perceptibly grasped;

- iii. The world is strictly divided into two: believers and infidels;
- iv. Uncompromising opposition to secularism; and
- v. A passionate appeal for newly or poorly educated persons with which to carry out its operations (Blaufuss 2000:27).

As it is grasped by fundamentalists, the feeling is that there is always a challenge to the accepted ultimate authority. To them, the perceived challenge cannot be compromised. They are suitable to re-affirm, even virulently the arrogance of the challenged authority. In the process of time, those who are believed to have stood against the truth or compromised it are singled out. All these elements may lead to the use of political means to achieve their goals. Jeff Haynes (2000:170-171) affirms the essence of religious fundamentalism to "connote a set of strategies by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinct identity as a people or group in response to a real or imagined attack from those who apparently threaten to draw away into a syncretistic religious, or irreligious cultural milieu.

#### **Intra-Religious Fundamentalism: A Global Overview**

Karl Muller, *et al* (1997:167) assert that Fundamentalism is a twentieth-century development within American evangelical Protestantism. Its most distinguishing feature is its militant opposition to modernist, liberal theology and the cultural change associated with it. In particular, fundamentalism opposes biblical criticism, the social gospel movement, and secularization of social and political institutions. Fundamentalism was also a response to a profound spiritual and cultural crisis that many evangelicals experienced at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Christian fundamentalists are individualist, soul-saving evangelists whose main target is the regenerating work of Christ that saves the souls. This attack was launched against the orthodox churches by the Protestants. The Christian Fundamentalists spurned liberalism and modernism, which they saw as misguided attempts to adapt religious ideas to secular humanist values. The theory of evolution appeared to provide a scientific basis for liberalist belief in the myth of human progress. Also, Christian fundamentalists saw the theory of evolution as contradicting biblical teaching in the Book of Genesis. It is important to note that fundamentalism did not emerge as a rural, southern phenomenon. It was the result of philosophical and theological debates that occurred within mainline churches in major urban areas (Muller, *et al*, p.168). Fundamentalists see themselves as a misunderstood and persecuted minority. They also believe that this world carries the seeds of its own destruction and are horrified by what they considered the secularization of American culture.

The fundamentalists' impulse is not satisfied with a nostalgic gaze at the past. Every fundamentalism is committed to the restoration of its golden age. Fundamentalists are ready to take militant action to accomplish that restoration. Forms of militancy vary from the bombing of an abortion clinic in the United States to the stoning of cars being driven on the Sabbath in Israel. Political assassinations and armed battles have also been tools of some fundamentalisms. Fundamentalism's most characteristic and dangerous feature is its militancy in its program of religious restoration (p.170).

In the United States, the militancy of Protestant Fundamentalism expresses its primarily in energetic proselytizing. Converts are sought not only among non-Christians but also from orthodox churches. Fundamentalists have been so successful that in the last twenty years the only Protestant denominations that have experienced growth are those with a conservative or fundamentalist bent. Fundamentalist congregations also engage in missionary endeavours outside the United States; in those places their aggressive proselytizing and the simplicity of their message combine with great success (p. 170). To this end, it is clear that Christian fundamentalists are averse to biblical criticism, modernism, dispensationalism, secularism, liberalism and among others.

Islamic Fundamentalism according to Karl Muller, *et al*, (1997:170) is a reaffirmation of the foundational principles of Islam and an effort to reshape society in terms of those principles. This movement is marked by a literalist interpretation of Islam and a rigid and even violent pursuit of social and moral reconstruction. Islamic fundamentalism is the group of religious ideologies seen as advocating a return to the fundamentals of Islam; the Qur'an and Sunnah. The movement started in the post-1920s with the Muslim Brotherhood, because these movements are seen to practice 'unprecedented extremism', thus not qualifying as return to historic fundamentals (Wikipedia). By and large, Islamic fundamentalism is an umbrella designed for a very wide variety of movements, some intolerant and exclusivist, some pluralistic; some favourable to science, some anti-scientific, some primarily devotional and some political, some democratic, some authoritarian, some pacific, some violent. Islamic fundamentalist is in search of a more original Islam.

#### **Fundamentalism in Nigeria**

To start with, religious fundamentalism is a religious movement based on literal interpretation of and strict adherence to doctrine especially as a return to former principles. In other words, it is the belief that religious doctrine should be implemented literally, not interpreted or adapted (Encarta Dictionary Microsoft 2009). Similarly, religious

fundamentalism is a usually religious movement or point of view characterised by a return to fundamental principles by rigid adherence to those principles often by intolerance of other views and opposition to secularism. In addition, it also describes the practice of following very strictly the basic rules and teachings of any religion; the belief that everything that is written in the Bible and the Quran is completely true.

The paradox of fundamentalism is its extant crisis between Christians and Muslims as an artificial creation of the military ruling class with its moral deficit (Kukah 1996:37). It is also apparent that religious fundamentalism has created or portrayed the evidence of the review of Sharia law in some of the North, which also shows that the problems obviously go much deeper as fundamentalism than just a matter of differences in belief. Religious fundamentalism has ironically produced many contradictions that have shaken the confidence of Nigerians in democracy. As I observed elsewhere that both Muslims and Christians are guilty of this phenomenon of fundamentalism. It is believed by them that adherents of a particular faith cannot sit on the fence, it is either he belongs to a particular religion with all sensitivity or not.

### Muslim Fundamentalism in Nigeria

Muslim fundamentalism is pioneered by the ideal of jihad in 19th century conventionally translated as 'holy war' in the mould of the 1804 holy war waged by Uthman Dan Fodio in the pre-colonial Northern Nigeria (Shiner 1950:67). Jeff Haynes (2000:215-216) observes immensely that Nigerian Islamic reformists are usually influenced by Muslim Idealists such as Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. For them, it is essential to effect a sharp return to the holy writ beyond the tradition (that is Sufism) which has dulled and deformed them. Thus, the enemy is not modernity but tradition; or rather in the Muslim context all that which is not in the tradition of the Prophet (Gaiya 2004:41). The Nigerian Islamic fundamentalists claim Sharia to be the paradigm for running a modern society. However, this ranges from two political poles, the conservative and liberal believers. According to Gaiya, (2004:41) the conservatives or core have general hostility to any innovations since Prophet Mohammed's era; contacts with the West; strong opposition to women's rights; the imposition of Islamic education; and discrimination against religious or ethnic minorities. In addition, their vision involves the establishment of an egalitarian society, even redistribution of wealth and land, honest corrupt-free government and the reform of the Islamic organisation. The conservatives are the radicals who see Iran's theocratic state as a model for Nigeria. The liberal or

rightist are the members of the pro-Saudi, conservative Izala who see Sharia as the first stage in a gradual process of building a more virile Nigerian Islamic state (Gaiya 2004:42).

Jeff Haynes (2000:217) is apposite when he again asserts that the impact of tapping into a wider Islamic network was reflected in 1978 by the establishment of a Saudi-Arabian-influenced government, Izalatul-Bida wa Iqamat al Sunna Izala (those who reject innovation) a loosely incorporated reformist organisation with headquarters in Kaduna led by Sheik Abubakar Gumi, a former Grand Khadi of Northern Nigeria during the first Republic (1960-1966). This movement is geared towards eradicating innovation and promoting an Islam based on the Qu'ran and Sunnah. And again, this movement is sharply against the Iranian style of Islamic state.

The compatriots of the Iranian style of Islamic state led by Mallam Ibrahim El-Zak-Zaky are more radical than the Izala group. El-Zak-Zaky rejects the idea of a secular state constitution for Nigeria, and further argues that the battle for an Islamic state must start with the destruction of the secular state, and claims that a jihad is imminent until Sharia becomes Nigerian national law (Haynes 2000:42). As earlier observed, El-Zak-Zaky contends that anonymous Muslims cannot operate an Islamic law and legal system. In which case, non-Muslims cannot operate the Sharia in an Islamic state. He avers that Sharia is the law of God and it has to be above the law of man. Thus, the whole laws of Nigeria constitution inclusive must be subjected to the Sharia (TELL Magazine 1999:22-23).

Besides, the Muslim Students Society (MSS) established in 1954 is patterned along the Iranian lines. Thus, their leaders are fond of sharing Iranian propaganda against the Nigerian secular state. The members have always been antagonistic of other religions and they mastermind the various religious clashes in Nigerian higher institutions of learning. Abubakar Umar as quoted by Gaiya (2004:216) attests to the fact that:

The conflict between Iran and the United States, which was purely political, became a war between Islam and Christianity all over the world. This was because religion was employed by the new Iranian Islamic revolutionaries intent on revising Western influence to topple Shah Mohammad Rezas United States backed government. Having succeeded in establishing what they regarded as an ideal Islamic State structure they decided to export their models to countries with large Muslim populations. Nigeria was one of the countries that received such Iranian influence in the early 1980s. A new wave of Islamic fundamentalism swept into the country.

With this background, Muslim militants put other Muslim sects and Christians on the defensive thereby leading to violence that has resulted

in the loss of thousands of lives and properties worth billions of naira in the past five decades. This informs why Nigerian Christians have been suspicious of Muslim activities.

Gaiya (2004:216) again posits that in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, the Centre for Islamic Studies was established in 1990 to work out Islamic political programme for the country. The centre therefore came up with the following: Disallowing prostitution, gambling and the sales and consumption of alcohol beverages, a Zakat (poor tax) to be institutionalised and made mandatory; the confiscation of land from multinational corporations to be given back to the peasants; economy reform for an appropriately Islamic variety; and Islamic based courses of instruction in Economics and Banking, Political Science in the country's higher education establishments. All these fundamentalists' programmes are meant to explain the recent developments by the declaration of Sharia law in the states. This development explains why Kukah (2001:37) opines that the introduction of the political Sharia law "has brought the country to the brink of self destruction than at any time in our history.

The consequence of the political Sharia law introduced in some northern states was the mass exodus of Christians and their business empires. Gaiya (2004:44) buttresses further that a handful of Christians had to leave Kano as a result of the attacks on their people following the so-called retaliation of the Jos crises which saw many Christians massacred. Many Christians in their thousands were executed after receiving the blessings of the Governor of Kano the previous day. This informs the fact that some leaders are religious fanatics instead of being Chief Security Officers of the state. Gaiya (2004:44) is sincere in saying that:

Governor Shekarau no doubt invited the riot in Kano when he visited both Yelwa and Bauchi and brought some of the refugees to Kano. The Muslims came to him for a demonstration of their support the previous day despite warning from well meaning Citizens, and instead of him to disallowed (sic) it, he gave his approval and the result was mass massacre of Christians. What kind of leaders do we have?

Since, July, 2009 to date, it is the sudden insurgence of Boko Haram that has been in the forefront of Islamic fundamentalism. They have suddenly turned terrorists killing and bombing innocent souls with state-of-the-art weaponry that can cow any armed regiment in the world. This group is against modernism, innovation, secularism, and western civilization. They are using their energy and foreign might to enthrone Islamic state in Nigeria.

### Christian Fundamentalism

In the words of Haynes (2000:217), the general increase in bad feeling between many Muslims and Christians in the 1980's and 1990's, conflict between the religious communities led to the emergence of an organizational body for the country's fundamentalist Christians. Along this line, Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria was established with sole aim of commenting on both religious and political issues in the country. The Pentecostal evangelisation of "outside the church, no salvation" and "Jesus is the only way syndrome" has brought about religious riots in the Muslims dominated areas in the North. For example, the invitation of a renowned German evangelist Reinhard Bonke to Kano for a crusade provoked Muslim fundamentalists to react, and this of course resulted in indiscriminate massive killings of Christians in the dominant Muslim city (Gaiya 2004:45). Also, in 2004 the same Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke was also invited to Ilorin, Kwara state and he spent barely two days when Muslim fundamentalists coupled with the government's approval abruptly stopped the crusade.

Evidently, Christian fundamentalists in their evangelisation drive to convert Muslims to the faith by arguing that Christianity brought medicine, education and wealth to the country, so it is quite sensible for those who wished to benefit from those to join the Christian faith (Gaiya 2004:45). The Christian fundamentalists do not only have a problem with Muslims, but also with mainstream Christians whom they believed are apostates for having boycotted the fundamentals of the Christian belief while their leaders set themselves up as individuals whose power challenges that of God. However, their claims of born-again within the Christian milieu have not resulted in violence like the case with Muslims.

### Inter-Religious Fundamentalism in Nigeria

The above disquisition is a clear testimony of the avalanche of fundamental extremism in Nigeria in particular and the world all over. Obviously speaking, religious fundamentalists are selective in what they believe and they are not holistic in their approach to scriptural texts. Again, there is no perfect understanding of the scriptures by the fundamentalists. Dorff (1988:24) argues that in order to carry out the fundamentalist programme in practice, one would need a perfect understanding of the ancient language of the original text, if indeed the true text can be discerned from among variants. He further avers that

Human beings are the ones who transmit this understanding between generations. Even if one wanted to follow the literal word of God, the need for people first to understand that word necessitates human interpretation. Through that process human fallibility is

inextricably mixed into the very meaning of the divine word. As a result, it is impossible to follow the indisputable word of God; one can only achieve a human understanding of God's will (p.26).

This is in line with the fact that human literary understanding is different from human spiritual insight in the indisputable word of God.

The term Fundamentalism is established and must be accepted, but it remains unfortunate and can be misleading because it is one-sided and conservative in its approach. In this fundamentalists oppose the liberal and modernist theologians, who lend to a more critical historical view of scripture.

Bernard Lewis (1988) a leading historian of Islam, had this to say against it:

Among Muslim theologians there is as yet no such liberal or modernist approach to the Qu'ran, and all Muslims, in their attitude to the text of the Qu'ran, are in principle at least fundamentalists where the so-called Muslim fundamentalists differ from other Muslims and indeed from Christian fundamentalists is in their scholasticism and their legalism. They base themselves not only on the Qu'ran, but also on the traditions of the Prophet, and on the corpus of transmitted theological and legal learning. (117)

### A Sociological Quest for Solution

The scientific study of the society is the pre-occupation of sociologists of all times. Claude Henri de Saint- Simon, Auguste Comte, among others taxed themselves of the responsibility of inventing science of society geared towards eliminating societal problems in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Auguste Comte was joined by Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Fernand Tonnies, Marx Weber and Herbert Spencer- all foundation sociologists. Sociologists such as Auguste Comte, Talcott Parson, Tex Temple and Durkheim studied systems of ideas such as functionalism which later helped the mainstream of religion. For instance, Auguste Comte articulated his social creed which is the necessary recipe in a religious society. According to him, "Love is the principle, Order is the basis, Progress is the end" (Haralambos et al 1980:460). Thus, Auguste Comte believed that for a people to achieve social progress, love should replace hatred, bitterness and violence, while order replaces disorder, lawlessness and anarchy (Dzurgba 2003:48). In a religious society such as ours where fundamentalism is a common place rehearsal, peace and love are required to put the society in the pedestal of social progress. Peace sociologically refers to a condition of social harmony in which there is no social antagonisms. It is interesting to note that sociological

response as styled by structural-functionalists unequivocally assert that it is the tradition of the society to experience social progress and human development. Shedrack Best (2009:6) notes that structural-functionalism is a condition of social analysis that sees society as a mosaic of functions and structures that perform them. For example, in order to survive; a society needs to educate its children, produce goods, govern its affairs and provide security for its members. These are functions and they necessitate a number of structures such as schools, industries, parliaments, courts, armed forces, and so on.

Thus, structure means a set of interrelated roles necessary for performing a specific function. When structures perform their functions properly, there is order in society and in fact, society inherently moves in the direction of order and stability. As a result, from the structural-functionalist perspective, peace is achieved where existing social structures perform their functions adequately, supported by the requisite culture, norms and values (Shedrack Best 2009:7).

To this end, religious functionalists such as Irfan Omar (2007), Oliver Mcterman (2003), Paul Knitter (1995) and Hans Kung (1993) have collectively leaned their voices on the need for peaceful society by using religions as recipe. Irfan Omar (2007:66) takes a critical look at the extent to which spiritual value, mutual respect and acceptance of the legitimacy and authenticity of the religious tradition can go. As an attitude of scientific study of religion, he argues that "mutual acceptance must not stop at recognising and even, accepting, the existence of the other as a fellow human being and a good neighbour. Rather, Muslims and Christians must accept each other as friends and partners (pilgrims) in the quest for social and political justice, theological harmony, and spiritual progress on the way of God, who is their Ultimate goal."

Oliver Mcterman (2003:53) on the other hand assesses the real trend of religion by exploring the Talmud law of "Seek peace and pursue it." He leans his voice with the understanding that the rabbinic traditions focus mainly on the importance of mercy and condemn of all wanton destruction. The Jewish rabbis acknowledged the interconnectedness or essentially unity of humans and conclude from that fact that peace is God's original intent for all human beings. The obligation to promote peace is universal, which is constitutive peace with paradigm.

Paul Knitter (1995:33) uses correlational model as a prerequisite to overcome religious fundamentalism in contemporary society. In its dynamic relatedness, the model holds vision of togetherness, common ground or basic unity with the understanding of other traditions and their uniqueness as well as the same common essence that radiates like a hidden diamond with the heart of every religion. In essence, both

Christians and Muslims should see themselves as one with same correlative rights and obligations to enjoy togetherness and as well foster unity as a strength that exists between adherents of both faiths.

Hans Kung (1993) sees intra-ecumenical and inter-ecumenical dialogue as a 'ratio fundamental' to avoid religious extremism and violence. He asserts that:

Intra and inter-ecumenical dialogue is today anything but the speciality of a few starry-eyed religious peaceniks. For the first time in history, it has now taken on the character of an urgent desideratum for Christian and Islamic politics. It can help to make our earth more liveable, by making it more peaceful and more reconciled... Ecumenism *ad intra*, concentrated on the Christian world, and ecumenism *ad extra*, oriented toward the world inhabited earth, are independent. Peace is indivisible; it begins with us. (xii)

### Conclusion

The foregoing reveals that religious fundamentalism is the hallmark of irrationality and insufficient knowledge of different religious values and doctrines. These inaccurate stereotypes have brought religious clashes between Muslims and Christians based on their fundamental principles and beliefs. Therefore, the churches and Mosques should avoid using abusive and offensive language, vitriolic statement, inciting advertisement and unguided sermons, while maintaining the integrity of their rituals, doctrines, ethics and vision in a way that will promote humanity of each individual. To achieve a just and peaceful society, all and sundry needs a rediscovery of the values, ancient language of the texts, spiritual cultures and mutual respect of various traditions which are basic and embedded in all religions. Religion can serve to remind us that the most vital elements of life are inveterately linked up to something greater than this world. Irrespective of the nomenclatures given to the Supreme Being, whether God or Allah, there is something we share in common that transcends us. It is worthy of note that this deeper reality would create a solid base for a humane and germane Nigerian society that acts justly by respecting individual difference. Religion is an epitome of peace, order, right values and norms such as tolerance, patience and love. All these prerequisites would enhance peaceful society and human life. The believers of all religions must go back to rediscover their basic tenets of faith of their founders' teachings and start all over again for the sake of sanctity of human life and orderliness.

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