



## EXEMPLIFYING THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN (LUKE 10:25-37) IN FOSTERING PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AMONG CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *In the last three decades, most of the major conflicts in Nigeria are centered on ethnicity and religion. Fundamental Muslims and Christians or moderate (liberal) Muslims and adherents of African Indigenous Religions have wrecked a lot of havoc in Nigeria. In many cases, religious leaders and politicians have manipulated these conflicts for political and economic gains. These conflicts have resulted in the death of several thousands of people and loss of unquantifiable amount of money and property. Various attempts by government, individuals, religious and other interest groups on resolving the lingering and hydra-headed crisis have not yielded hoped for and desirable result. Some scholarly articles have been written to proffer solutions to Nigeria's ethno-religious crisis; these include research on interfaith dialogue, social integration, sustainable communal developments, the impact of ethno-religious crisis on the security, economy and sociopolitical stability of the country. However, the exemplary nature of loving, empathizing, accepting, accommodating and living with one's known or perceived enemies have not been adequately explored with religious hindsight. This paper therefore considers the exemplary character of the "Good Samaritan" in the parable of Jesus Christ (Luke 10:25-37) as a spring board for peaceful co-existence between Christians and people of other faiths in Nigerian multicultural contexts, particularly the Muslims. Exegetical and historical methods are used; the Theoretical Framework is premised on Eisenberg Pro-social Behaviour theory, which is defined as voluntary behaviour intended to benefit another (Eisenberg, 1986). Findings reveal that Nigeria has been wracked by periodic violent clashes between political, ethnic and religious groups since the second half of the 20th century. Reasons for these clashes vary from one locality to another but they are mostly motivated by religious, social, economic and political disputes. Conclusively, exemplifying the teaching of Jesus Christ on love for one's neighbour in the parable of the "Good Samaritan" here proposed first to the Christian community gives a new hope on the quest for peace in Nigeria and re-orientation for Christians and their Muslim neighbours. It is recommended therefore that both Christians and Muslims in Nigeria should leverage on the "Good Samaritan's" peace accord to one's neighbour proposed by Jesus Christ without prejudicing or stereotyping one another.*

**KEYWORDS:** Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, Ethno-religious crisis, Exegesis of Luke 10:25-37, Parable of the Good Samaritan, Peaceful Co-existence.



## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi religious nation, the three major religions being Christianity, Islam and African Indigenous Religion. Adherence to Christianity, Islam, or indigenous African religions is central to how Nigerians identify themselves. In the late 19th century, Christianity became established in southern Nigeria. In the Yoruba southwest, it was propagated by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), while in Igbo, southeast, the Roman Catholic Church dominated.<sup>1</sup> Today, more than half of the southern peoples are Christians of various denominations. Christianity is also wide spread in the middle belt, with very few Christians in the northern part of the country, where Islam is the dominant religion, and it continues to spread to the middle belt and southern Nigerian, particularly the southwest.<sup>2</sup>

In Nigeria, inter faith dialogue has a long history; scholars and experts have written many papers in the field of inter faith dialogue. These include Wessels who accepts Muhammad as a prophet and takes the Qur'an along with the Old and New Testaments as Holy Scriptures without giving up his Christians conviction. He argues that, respectively, reading the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an together is of crucial importance to faith. However, our world often sees these religious books as the cause of conflict rather than the solution to them<sup>3</sup>. Another scholar of note is Musa who brilliantly articulated the challenges of Christian-Muslim relationship. He highlighted the role of authentic dialogue in managing diversity in this age of suspicions and mistrusts both at the global, national and local levels.<sup>4</sup>

### Historical Context of Lucan Narratives of the Parable of the Good Samaritan

The Gospel of Luke appears to have been written primarily for use among the Gentiles. The writer's aim clearly is to be universal, for Luke, more than Matthew and Mark, attempts to set the person and ministry of Jesus against the backdrop of world history by tracing the ancestry of Jesus all the way to Adam, the first man and progenitor of all humans. Through this, Luke underscores the universality of Christ's mission.<sup>5</sup> Luke was consistent in his narratives by keeping this motif of the universality of Christ and his mission to the world. Luke alone records that soldiers (who must have been Gentiles) came to be baptized by John the Baptist (3:14); no other evangelists displays such concern for the Samaritans who are grossly despised by the Jews (9:51-56; 10:30-37; 17:11-19), and his Gospel look forward to the day when the word of the Lord will be heard and will prevail in "all nations" (24:47). Another characteristic of Luke is the establishment of just social relationship, particularly for the proper relationship between the rich and the poor; his concern for sinners and social outcasts; and a sympathetic concern, unique among the evangelists, for women (7:11-17; 36-50; 8:1-3), children and destitute.<sup>6</sup>

The Church tradition dating from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. attributed this Gospel to "Luke the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14) one of the *fellow workers* (Philem. 1:24) mentioned by

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<sup>1</sup> Jhingan, L.M., *The Economics of Development and Planning*: 40<sup>th</sup> edition, Delhi: Vrinda Publications (P) Ltd., 2012, 33.

<sup>2</sup> G.M. Musa (mammannusa 2001 @ yahoo.com) Let the Dialogue of Actium continue

<sup>3</sup> G.M. Musa, (mammannusa 2001@yahoo.com) Let the Dialogue of Action Continue

<sup>4</sup> A. Wessels, *Dialogue of Action: Christian Muslim Relationship*, accessed on 28-04-2023

<sup>5</sup> J. Idowu-Fearon, "*Relationship Between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria*", *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998*, Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1998, 280-281.

<sup>6</sup> R.T. France, *Luke, Teach the Text*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013, 69.



Paul.<sup>7</sup> Jesus often used spiritually significant fictional narratives called parables to illustrate his teachings. Some biblical scholars believe that these parables are often stories about simple, everyday events, which constitute a distinct literary form.<sup>8</sup>

The world today is characterized by two opposing forces: The first is an increasing process of fragmentation of the world, a testing of human community everywhere through the struggles for particular religious, ethnic or cultural identities. The second is a process of globalization. This suggests a need for Christians to continue to examine their identity in the community in which they find themselves, to see where they resonate with the Gospel and where the Gospel is their critique. Conversely, Christians also need to examine the way the Gospel is being proclaimed, to see whether it is disabling or fruitfully challenging its cultural contexts.<sup>9</sup>

The quest for religious identity among all ethno-religious groups frequently leads to violent separatist tendencies and conflicts. At times this process is manifested in forms of militant religious particularism, bias and suspicion. When different religious communities coexist in a simple state, relations between them are often strained, sometimes leading to ethno-religious conflicts. An ethno-religious group is a grouping of people who are unified by a common religious and ethnic background. Furthermore, the term ethno-religious group, along with the ethno regional and ethno-linguistic groups, is a sub-category of ethnicity and is used as evidence of belief in a common culture and ancestry.

## **CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONSHIP IN NIGERIA**

In Nigeria, the Christian relations with Muslims are part of daily life. There has been close interaction in family ties, social life, the workplace, business cycle and within the educational system. Christians and Muslims attend each other's wedding ceremonies and funerals, there is inter marriage on some occasions, and, within the extended family, there are often Christians and Muslims. Politically, all state functions are preceded with prayers by leaders of both religious communities.

Islam arrived in Nigeria in the 10th century from North Africa, via the trade routes to the old Kanem Bornu Empire. From there, it spread culminating in the emergence of the Sokoto Caliphate in the 19th century. Christianity, on the other hand, first came through the early efforts of the capuchin Fathers from Portugal in the 15th century, but it made little or no impact on the Old Benin kingdom where it was launched. Nevertheless, the missionaries who accompanied the British merchants and the released slaves eventually introduced the Christian faith to Nigeria successfully in the 19th century, starting in the Western part of Nigeria via Badagry, Abeokuta and Lagos. From there, the Christian faith began its advancement across

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<sup>7</sup> M.M. Bruce, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development and Significance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, 305

<sup>8</sup> Edmond L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, 31-32; Andrew J. Kostenberger, Leonard Scott Kellum and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*, Nashville, TN: B&H Press, 2009, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Dyer, J.M. et al. (eds), *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998*, Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1999, 186.



the country resulting in different encounters with Islamic faiths. However, the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates facilitated the incorporation and integration of the two religions within a single political entity.

In the "far north," comprising the following states (Kebbi, Sokoto, Katsina, Kano, Adamawa, Yobe, Jigawa, Bornu, and Dutse), Islam comprises about 80% of the population, compared with 10% Christians<sup>1</sup>. Islam and its culture dominate the entire society. Christians do not have the same rights as their Muslim neighbours; no provision is made for Christian state education; public propagation of Christianity is prohibited; leaders of the Christian community are ignored; converts from Islam are threatened and attacked; and inter-marriage is prohibited unless between a Muslim man and a Christian's woman, with the hope that he would convert her. It is difficult for Christians' business interests to get government approval and patronages. Burial grounds are denied Christians, and in most cases, it is extremely difficult to get approval for the erection of places of worship (church).<sup>1</sup> The situation in the "Middle belt" is very different; there are more Christians in this area made up of the following States: Kwara, Kogi, Plateau, Kaduna, Bauchi, Bornu, Niger, Gombe, Benue and Jalingo. The Christian population is three-fifth of the citizenry.<sup>1</sup> It is not unusual to have mixed marriages, social engagements, and Christians and Muslims celebrating either Muslim or Christian festivals together. Generally, there is an outstanding religious tolerance and almost equal treatment for all, irrespective of religious affiliation.

However, hostility between pastoralists (herdsmen) and farmers has continued for decades in Nigeria's middle belt states of the federal capital territory (Abuja), Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Kogi, Nassarawa, Plateau and Taraba. These disputes arose from tensions over land. Drought and desertification have forced the Fulani herdsmen in northern and central Nigeria to migrate southward to access grazing land and water for their cattle. Meanwhile, rapid population growth has increased demands for land and led farmers to settle on tracts of land that the herders seasonally use as grazing routes. Furthermore, there have been reports about village raids, cattle rustling and attacks on farmers overlapping with violence from criminal gangs. Many families have been affected and displaced from their ancestral homes due to violence, with over 581,000 people displaced and 2,161,000 people in critical needs.<sup>1</sup><sup>3</sup>

In the southern part of the country, Christians and Muslims enjoy a cordial relationship. Apart from some occasional misunderstandings in places like Ibadan, Oyo and Ile-Ife, there has never been any major Christian-Muslim crisis in southern Nigeria, where Christians are in the majority, making up about 80% of the population.<sup>1</sup><sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kent, M.M. and C.Carl, : *The Demographic Divide: What it is and why it matters*, Population reference bureau, Accessed, on 03/05/2023

<sup>1</sup> Idowu-Fearon, J., "*Relationship Between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria*", *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998*, Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1998, pp. 280-281.

<sup>1</sup> Jephthah, S.G. and D.H.U. Danfulani, , *A Brief History of the Coming of Christianity to Regional Church Council (RCC)*, Jing, Jos: Fobur Millennium, 2021, 48.

<sup>1</sup> Blench. Roger "Research on the Plateau language of central Nigeria, Hamburg: University Press, 93, 2021 Nigeria's Farmers and herder fight a deadly battle for scarce resources retrieved on 1/5/2023.

<sup>1</sup> M.E., Ifeanyi, *A Dangerous Awakening: the Politicization of Religion in Nigeria*, IFRA Nigeria, Open Edition Books, Accessed on 1/5/2023



## SOME MAJOR RELIGIOUS CRISES IN NIGERIA

Religious crisis in Nigeria has been going on for decades; one of the earliest reported devastating occurrences was in Tafawa Balewa in 1948.<sup>1</sup> In the 1980s, there were serious outbreaks of violent crises between Christians and Muslims in Kafanchan, Kaduna State. These crises were propagated by extreme leaders who were able to rally a young, educated group of individuals who feared that they would not be able to protect their religious group.<sup>1</sup> The leaders were able to polarize the youths through speeches and public demonstration of firearms, promises of wealth and entrance into paradise in case of death, and marriage to seven virgins in (al jannah) heaven.<sup>1</sup> A few of the major religious crises experienced in Nigeria are enumerated below:

- December 1980: Maitatsine religious riot in Kano leading to the death of 4,177 people, 30,000 homeless and several millions of naira worth of property destroyed.
- December 1982: Followers of Maitatsine in Bulukutu, Kaduna where over 100 people died.
- February 1984: Followers of Maitatsine in Jimeta, Yola where 763 people died and 5,913 people were displaced.
- April 1985: Followers of Maitatsine in Gombe where more than 100 people died.
- May 1986: Religious fanatics attacked the wooden sculpture of Jesus Christ in the University of Ibadan, Chapel of the Resurrection and set it ablaze, though badly burnt but not consumed by the fire.
- March 1987: Religious riots in Kafanchan, Kaduna and Zaria where over 100 people died.
- March 1991: Shiite Muslims rioted in Katsina and Daura.
- April 1991: An ethnic misunderstanding in Bauchi degenerated into a full-blown religious war between Muslims and Christians, and thousands of people died.
- October 1991: Religious riots in Kano in protest against the Crusade of Reinhard Bonnke where over 1,000 people died.
- March 1992: Muslim and Christian students rioted in Jalingo; over 100 people died.
- May 1992: Another ethnic misunderstanding in Zangon-Kataf degenerated into a full-blown war between Muslims and their Christian neighbours, which spread to Kaduna and Zaria; over 3000 people died.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Michael Holman, "Nigeria, politics, religious differences intensify" Financial Time, Retrieved 1/5/2023

<sup>1</sup> Jiberin Ibrahim, "Politics of Religion in Nigeria: The Parameters of the 1987 crisis in Kaduna State." Review of African Political Economy, 45, 1989, 65-82.

<sup>1</sup> Clayton Jonathan and Gledhill Ruth, "500 Butchered in Nigeria Killing Fields" The Times of London, Accessed on 1/5/2023.

<sup>1</sup> Idowu-Fearon, J., "Relationship Between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria", *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference* 1998, Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1998, pp. 280-281.





- February 2008: Religious riot in Kano. The origin of the crisis was innocuous enough. A student of Government College, Sumaila who was suspended by the school authority for allegedly sketching a caricature portrait of prophet Mohammed was sighted in the school premises by a group of Muslim youths. The youths, who had earlier protested what they considered a soft punishment for the Christian student, an indigene of Sumaila, chased him into the town. He ran into a police station. Eventually, the youths attacked the station, killed one inspector of police and set the station ablaze, with the vehicles packed beside it.<sup>1</sup>
- March 2008: Bishop Zakka Nyam of the Anglican Diocese of Kano was battered and he narrowly escaped.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from the ones listed above, there have been other crises leading to the death of many people and wanton destruction of both public and private properties.

Most of the recent ethno-religious crises are perpetrated by the Boko-Haram insurgents, who aim to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> These ethno-religious crises have brought about an increase in gun battles between the members of these religious groups and security forces, leading to loss of lives on both sides and wanton destruction of properties worth billions of naira. Today, most deaths resulting from the Christian side are occurring in the Middle-Belt, where there are overlapping quarrels over land and water use, ethnicity and religion, and where Christians are in the majority.<sup>2</sup>

## SOME EFFORTS AT FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THE CRISES

In 1987, the Federal Government set up a body called the Advisory Council on Religious Affairs (ACRA). The committee was made up of an equal number of Christians and Muslims, representing all the states in the "far north" and "middle belt." The council met and deliberated on three occasions and then faded out because the Christian representatives felt the Muslims were not sincere. In the same year (1987), a group of intellectuals formed the National Association for Religious and Ethnic Tolerance (NARETO) with the aim of "launching intellectual battles against odds for a new society, based on religious harmony and ethnic equity."<sup>2</sup>

In 1991, the federal government gathered together 30 leaders from the "far north and the "middle belt" through the Directorate for Social Mobilization (MAMSER), to investigate the causes of the frequent crises. Some of their recommendations were not implemented due to a change in government leadership.

<sup>1</sup> Nmeribeh, M.J., "Still Killing Over Religion", The News, February 25, 2008, Vol. 30, No. 07. p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Nmeribeh, M.J., "A Clergyman Battered", The News, March 17, 2008, Vol. 30, No. 10, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Adah Augustine "Will relocation of Tafawa Balewa LG headquarters guarantee peace?" Hallmark, Retrieved on 1/5/2023.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Ngwodo, "Understanding Boko Haram- A theology of Chaos, Retrieved on 1/5/2023.

<sup>2</sup> Ifeanyi, M.E., *A Dangerous Awakening: the Politicization of Religion in Nigeria*, IFRA Nigeria, Open Edition Books, Accessed on 1/5/2023



In July 1992, NARETO held a seminar in the city of Abuja, after which the Federal Government announced that a new body called "Centre for Propagation of Religious and Ethnic Tolerance" (CENPRETO) was to be set up. It was the plan of the government that this body would take up the challenge of propagating those things that unite the Christians and Muslims, and sensitize the citizenry to the positive value of ethnic and religious tolerance." Josiah Idowu-Fearon observed that nothing came out of this."<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, retired General Olusegun Obasanjo set up a programme called the "Farm House Dialogue" on issues of national and international interests before his incarceration. They had three programmes on the theme of Religious Pluralism and Democracy. This could have fostered a relative peaceful coexistence in the country but the organization died as soon as Obasanjo was imprisoned in 1995 during Gen. Sanni Abacha's regime.

Apparently, the Nigerian state has experienced a lot of religious crises and the government has played a major role at accentuating them. The surreptitious manner in which the nation was registered as a member of the Organization of Islamic Congress (OIC) and some other Islamic religious organizations without the consent of all Nigerians has led to suspicion of government motives and fear of Muslim domination. Josiah Idowu Fearon observed that Christians have become more aggressive and courageous in their confrontations with Muslims; examples of these open confrontations are seen in Kafanchan and Zangon-Kataf conflicts. Furthermore, constant violent attacks by Muslims in the North have led to campaigns among Christians to stand their ground and, if possible, fight back, especially in cases where the destruction of Christian livelihoods and property is not punished by the government of the area<sup>2</sup>.

The statement above is a faithful submission of a stakeholder and one who has been affected and traumatized emotionally, psychologically, socially and economically by the incessant crisis. Nevertheless, the suggestions made seem to give hope for the continuity of attacks and counter-attacks. For how long are we likely to witness this? One more solution might be for Christians to take the initiative at addressing the issue the Christ-way. Jesus Christ used many stories and parables to teach about the importance of love and the kind of love relationship that should exist among humans. One of such stories is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). This value challenges paradigms that advocate for destroying the lives of some for the benefit of others. The essence of the stories of Jesus on "love" is to show that all lives are sacred, irrespective of race, sex, background or creed.

### **THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN (Luke 10:25-37)**

Luke explained why Jesus told this story. A man identified as "Lawyer" (that is, a teacher of the Law and Doctrine of God as it is found in the Old Testament). He was one of the Jewish leaders. This lawyer came to ask a question on what to do in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus answered him in a very different manner from what he expected, with one of the

<sup>2</sup> Felmony, O., *Outbreak of Ribting in Yola was Caused by a Banned Extremist Islamic Religious Sect Known as Maitatsine*. This sect was viewed as heretical by most Nigerian Muslims, 1984

<sup>2</sup> Idowu-Fearon, J. "Relationship Between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria", *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998*, Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1998, pp. 280-281.



most tender and affectionate narratives to be found in the gospels; he made the lawyer his own judge in the case, and constrained him to admit what at first he would probably have denied. He compelled him to acknowledge that a Samaritan. A race most hated of all people by the Jews had shown the unexpected kindness to a neighbour, while a priest and a Levite who were Jewish religious leaders had denied it to their own countrymen.

The man fell among thieves (Jericho was situated about 15 miles to the northeast of Jerusalem, and about 8 miles west of the river Jordan); these were highway robbers, who did not merely take the property but also endangered the lives of their victims. From Jerusalem to Jericho, the country was rocky and mountainous and, in some parts, scarcely inhabited. It afforded, therefore, the operation of thieves among the rocks. It is a convenient place for highwaymen; this is also a much frequented road for merchants. Jericho was a large place, and there was much traveling to Jerusalem from there. Josephus says that at one time Herod the Great dismissed forty thousand men who had been employed in building the temple; a large number of them eventually became highway robbers after losing their jobs (Josephus' *Antiquities*, xv. 7). The following remarks of Professor Hackett, who visited Palestine in 1852, is a good illustration of the scene of this parable. It is remarkable that a parable uttered more than eighteen hundred years ago might still be appropriately located in this region. Professor Hackett (*Illustrations of Scripture*, p. 215, 216) says of this region:

It is famous at the present day as the haunt of thieves and robbers. No part of the traveler's journey is so dangerous as the expedition to Jericho and the Dead Sea. The Oriental pilgrims who travel to the Jordan have the protection of an escort of Turkish soldiers, and others who would make the same journey must either go in company with them, or provide for their safety by procuring a special guard. I was so fortunate as to be able to accompany the great caravan at the time of the annual pilgrimage. Yet, in spite of every precaution, hardly a season passes in which some luckless wayfarer is not killed or robbed in 'going down from Jerusalem to Jericho.' The place derives its hostile character from its terrible wildness and desolation. If we might conceive of the ocean as being suddenly congealed and petrified when its waves are tossed mountain high, and dashing in wild confusion against each other, we should then have some idea of the aspect of the desert in which the Saviour has placed so truthfully the parable of the 'Good Samaritan.' The ravines, the almost inaccessible cliffs, the caverns, furnish admirable lurking-places for robbers. They can rush forth unexpectedly upon their victims, and escape as soon as possible beyond the possibility of pursuit<sup>2</sup>.

## **APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE FOR CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS RELATIONSHIP IN NIGERIA**

Christian and Muslim scriptures advocate love, peace and concord among their adherents and their neighbours irrespective of their background, faith, sex, ideology and status. The love which the law of God requires, leads those who have it to do good, not merely to their friends or countrymen, but, as they have opportunity, to all, in imitation of the Supreme God or Allah who makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends His rain on the just and on

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<sup>2</sup> Hargreaves, J. *A Guide to Parables*, London: SPCK, 2001, pp. 71-74.





the unjust, and "who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich" (Quran 5:54; 57:1-10; 93:5 cf. 1 John 4:9-10; Romans 8:39).

**Jesus talks of a certain Samaritan in his parable.** Samaritans are hereditary enemies of the Jews, despised and hated by the latter. "The Jews and Samaritans have no dealings" (John 4:9). If any man should have any excuse for passing the wounded Jew by without rendering any assistance, this should be the Samaritan. But unlike the Priest and Levite, he had compassion. His compassion led to action, to self-denial, and inconvenience. He dressed the man's wounds, set him on his own horse and took him to the inn, and when he left, he gave money for his care<sup>2</sup>. He poured oil and wine on the victim, which were often used in medicine to heal wounds. Probably the oil and wine were mixed together, and had a highly sanative quality for wound dressing. How strikingly is his conduct when contrasted with the Priest and the Levite? And how beautiful was his action when compared to the sacrificial nature of Christ's life and death on the cross. He did not merely show him kindness; he showed him love with empathy. He placed him on his own horse and took him to a medical facility for immediate attention with a promise to pay off any outstanding bill incurred on his treatment, without desiring or expecting any reward. If this had been by a Jew, it would have been signal kindness; if it had been by a Gentile, it would also have been great kindness. But it was by a Samaritan—a man of a nation most despised by the Jews. Therefore, his action shows what we are to do to friends and foes when they are in distress. The Samaritans paid two pence, this is equal to two day's wages of a labourer, and enough for several days' support.<sup>2</sup> 8

### Who Was His Neighbour?

This is a most dexterous way of putting the question: (1) Turning the question from, "Whom am I to love as my neighbour?" to "Who is the man that shows that love?" (2) Compelling the lawyer to give a reply very different from what he would likely want without condemning his own nation, but those of them who should be the most exemplary. (3) Making him commend one of a deeply hated race. And he did it, but it was almost extorted. For he did not answer by saying, "The Samaritan" that would have sounded heterodox and heretical; he said, "He that showed mercy on him." It comes to the same thing, no doubt, but the circumlocution is significant. By saying, "He that showed mercy on him," the lawyer avoided the name "Samaritan" which was so distasteful to his lips. Jesus gave countenance to no such racial prejudice, even though the Samaritans had earlier rejected him. Jesus encouraged the Jews to go, and do likewise. All the laws and teachings of God are to be conscientiously obeyed and articulately interpreted (Mt. 5:43,44), and they are to be embodied in the life of Christians (Mt 7:24-27).<sup>2</sup> Christians and Muslims in Nigeria no doubt have experienced a lot of turbulent attacks, deprivations and persecutions from violent extremists in the two religions, which could encourage a permanent enmity and aggravated retaliations, but the message of the parable is a commandment to do good to all people.

<sup>2</sup> Evans, C.A., *Luke*, London: Baker Books, 2011, 78

<sup>2</sup> Boring M.E., *An Introduction to the New Testament: History, Literature, Theology*, Westminster: John Knox Press, 2012, 133

<sup>2</sup> Carroll, J.T., *Luke: A Commentary*, Westminster: John Knox Press, 2012, 215



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

You cannot love God unless you love people, although some of those who believe in God are sometimes tempted to think that they can love and serve God without loving and serving some selected people on earth who are classified evil. Amos told his contemporaries among the Jews that they spent much time worshipping God but forgot to treat poor people with justice; "God hates this worship" (Amos 5:21-24). In John's epistle, this is said several times: "If a man does not love the brother whom he has seen, it cannot be that he loves God whom he has not seen" (1Jn. 4:20 N.E.B). The Priest and Levite did not think they had done any wrong; their focus was to keep ritual purity. In this parable, the Samaritan showed his love and care by the way in which he gave love. It is possible also to give without loving. One country may give ten million pounds to another country, but the chief reason may be to persuade that country to buy certain manufactured goods.

Muslims in Nigeria should continuously advocate and promote peace among their members and their non-Muslim neighbours, particularly, in the northern part of Nigeria. In southern Nigeria, the coherence, integration and interaction among Muslims and Christians are remarkable. Christians in Nigeria more importantly should exemplify the teaching of Christ in the parable of the "Good Samaritan." Putting the concern for agape and peace at the centre of their mind will no doubt sound impracticable due to the pains and agony of religious and political imbalances in this country, but to do otherwise is to continue the crisis from generation to generation. If anybody must take the first painful step into genuine reconciliation, why should it not be the Christians?

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