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## **Boko Haram and Renascent Clogs in Muslim-Christian Relations in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The paper identified the Boko Haram Islamic sect's ideology and onslaught on the Nigerian state and Christians in particular as set back on the fragile relationship between Muslims and Christians. The sect regenerate clogs of fundamental division, intolerance and fanaticism. Consequently, the Nigerian religious space is engulfed in precarious and apprehensive aura. Rallying on phenomenological approach and data, the essay argues that a war between modernity and tradition on the one hand, and pristine religious practice is better fought through intellectual negotiation, against the backdrop of existential world realities. As Nigerian Muslims and Christians embrace this principle, government should complement it with good service delivery and improved security apparatus to guarantee the rule of law and social order.

**Key words:** Boko Haram, Renascent Clogs, Muslims, Christians, Relations

## Introduction

Religiosity is an indispensable aspect of humans. It is one of the most active factors and impulse in the component and character of humans. Over the centuries, religiosity make humans to ask and grapple with fundamental questions about existence. Yet, it is in the religious horizon of life that people seek answers to such questions and, derive solutions to the predicaments that surround life experience. Religious worldviews and ideology are therefore the function of human effort to fathom the underlying realities of existence and, to overly and tacitly lead live of fulfilment. Given the diversity and variation in human intellectual development and capacity, a plethora of ‘ways’ to approaching the fundamental realities of life flourish across the world. Each with its own distinctive cultural imprints and background. Each religion stuffs the human society with its own prism of understanding the world – distinct belief systems and prerequisite codes of conduct. The corpus of convictions may be presented in a way that appeal to peoples’ conscience and sense of reason. The convictions may also be introduced in the form of aggression and violence, which threaten human liberty and freewill.

No religion however unique exist outside of the world space. All religions are contingent players in the human arena of affairs – complex activities, ideologies, interests and thought patterns. Each polar and character of humans compete for attention, flourish and sustenance at diverse frequencies, tempo and time frames. The co-existence of humans whose personalities and experience differ according to cultural diversity variables is also inevitable. This is more so, as every religious tradition finds its expression in a given cultural background, such that the believers and votaries of such faith are the carriers of such founding culture and worldview, different from those who share other religious convictions. Yet, humans must co-exist, especially in this age of increased cross-cultural contact – a situation in which the barriers between cultures and religious traditions are disappearing. Thus, there is global awareness for interfaith understanding, tolerance and improved human relations. Although, world religious traditions engage in fanatical outbursts and action, “one thing they have in common is the pedagogy of human harmony and vision of peace” (Molloy, 2002, p. 542).

The understanding of the inevitability of human living in the midst of other people and their religious and cultural differences is the fundamental

reason why Muslims and Christians co-exist in Nigeria and elsewhere. Since the sovereign existence of modern Nigeria, the two faiths have been existing as the predominant religions in the country. In spite of their differences, their Abrahamic background and the inevitability of global change and integration make the two religions to repress many of their fundamental differences. The religious conflicts which however ensue between them are always managed, to pave way for co-existence. But in recent time the emergence of the Boko Haram – an Islamic sect carrying out bloody insurgence and wanton destruction of properties in the country has become a clog in the wheel of relations between the two religions. Consequently, the relationship between the two faiths in the country has degenerated from its hitherto epileptic state to paralysis, heading toward permanent damage that obstruct co-existence.

Through the approach of religious phenomenology and data, skewed in qualitative analysis, the essay explored the Boko Haram insurgence and terror operations, as a negation which promote the renaissance of antecedent clogs in Muslim-Christian relations. Also hosted in the report is theological bases of dialogue between Christianity and Muslim. The next segment of the essay crystallizes the necessity of inter religious and cultural understanding, with outline of some strategies to improve and sustain good co-existence relations between the two faiths.

### **The Emergence and Terror of Boko Haram**

The original name of Boko Haram is *Jama atu Ahlis Suuna Liddawati Wal-Jihad*. In Arabic translation it means ‘people committed to the propagation of the prophet’s teachings and Jihad’. Boko Haram is a local name given to the sect by the residents of Maiduguri city, where it was established in 2002. Therefore, in the Hausa language translation, the meaning of ‘*Boko*’ is ‘education’ while ‘*Haram*’ is ‘sin’. Thus, Western education and civilization are sinful. This is why the sect abhor and fight against western education and modern institutions that are founded on western ideology and culture. Boko Haram formation and ideological framework dates back to the 1967, Nigeria civil war. But its maturity and flourish as a notable sect began in 2002, when it was fully inaugurated in the city of Maiduguri, Borno State, as its centre. At the formal inauguration, the then leader – Muhammad Ustaz Yusuf resolved to establish the sect as a politico-religious sect to crystallize and implement its ideology and course in the north eastern part of Nigeria, for a start. The sect

opened a complex which has a Mosque and a school. The facilities at the complex attracted many young people, especially from poor families across northern Nigeria and, some neighbouring pro-Arab countries, like Chad and Niger. This is how the Maiduguri centre developed as a rallying point for recruiting future jihadists to unleash terror and insurgency against the Nigerian state and, to re-orientate Muslims against tolerating people of other faiths, including Muslims with modern and variant ideologies. In 2004, the sect relocated to the town of Kanamma, Yobe State, where it founded the base it called 'Afghanistan'. It was from the 'Afghanistan' base that Boko Haram fired its first terror salvo on the Nigerian state, in 2009. The sect also declared its detest and resentment against the Nigerian state and Christians. The unmitigated onslaught on civilians, state institutions, security apparatus and especially churches and Christian communities in the north brought the sect to international limelight and concern. Boko Haram nurtures and propagate segregative ideology rooted in the philosophy of hate, discrimination and bigotry against other cultures and traditions that are at variance with their 'variety of Islam'.

The target and greater casualties are churches and predominantly Christian communities in the northeast areas. The terror activities are also extended to state security apparatus in attempt to diminish the power of law enforcement institutions that would confront and bring them to order. Christians, security operatives and non-Muslim secular institutions' personnel in the northeast live in fear. Yet, end to the insurgency is not in sight. While government is calling the group for a cease-fire agreement and dialogue the sect, has continued killings and wanton destruction of properties in parts of their stronghold.

### **Boko Haram and Renaissance of Ancient Christian Hospitality Abuse**

As Boko Haram carry on its terror activities toward its religio-political cause, it regenerates and crystallizes sentiments that constitute and reinforce clogs that obstruct genuine dialogue and cordial relationship between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. The sect fans the flame of misunderstanding, ill-feelings and intolerance between Christians and Muslims. It reinforces the ancient antagonism between Muslims and Christians of about 630CE, when, in spite of the hospitality of the Negus, the Christian king of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia), Muslims attacked the Ghassanite Christians and annexed their city,

(Brown 1962:60). After the defeat of the Ghassanites, Islam rapidly expanded its territory stretching to a large expanse, from Arabia to India, as far as the fringes of China and, even parts of Europe. Consequently, “Medieval Christianity responded with armed crusaders against the belligerent efforts of Islam... more through an instinct for self-preservation than by a purely evangelical vision”, (Ron 2009). The legacy of the crusades is an endemic misunderstanding between the two faiths.

### **Boko Haram and Renaissance of Theological Divide**

The Boko Haram ideology and onslaught reinforce the theological gulf between Christianity and Islam. The sect has renewed the Muslim conception of the Christian belief of Jesus Christ as God and the Trinity as ‘apostasy and sinful’. Although Muslims acknowledge Jesus as a prophet of God, but they hold strongly to the teachings of the Qur’an which they believe comes directly from God. Boko Haram tenaciously believe that only the Islamic tradition and its practices are focused toward salvation of humanity. All other faiths and secular social structures are on the threshold of divine damnation. While not waiting for this purported punishment to be determined by Allah, they are on a project of getting rid of the human and cultural obstacles to the divine cause.

### **Boko Haram and Renaissance of Global Terrorism Network and Apprehension**

On the side of Christians, the Boko Haram onslaught of terror on the Nigerian state and Christians in particular is viewed from the prism of suspicion that reinforce issues of disagreement and unhealthy relationship. Nigerian Christians see Boko Haram as the link that has finally launched the country into the global network of religious fundamentalism and terrorism. The sect has found allies in the terrorism network of the modern world – hiding under the cover of returning Islam to its archetypal form and time to unleash terror on Nigeria. Although Christians recall in bewilderment mood the collusion cause of Islamic fundamentalist sects across the globe, the emergence and onslaught of the Boko Haram is an unprecedented strain on Muslim-Christian relations. There is therefore a strong sense of resentment of the sect among Christians.

Muslims and Christian youth are witnesses to some Muslim leaders’ use of violence and support for terrorism as a way of propagating and defending the faith across the world. Boko Haram insurgency make Nigerian Christians recall with bitterness, suspicion and apprehension the fundamentalist ‘purge’ of

Ayatola Khomeini and the former president of Iran, Ahmedineja in the late 1970's. Another case in point is the rise to political prominence of Egypt's Ikwam Muslimun (the Muslim Brotherhood), after many years of terrorist activities. The Boko Haram rekindles Christians' apprehensive recall of how al-Qaeda has recruited thousands of Muslim youth all over the world, (including Nigeria), for the purpose of fighting the cause of Islam. They have terror cells for their attacks which came into clearer global picture, with the September 11, 2001 attack of USA. Christians therefore view Boko Haram menace as the new phase and, Nigerian paradigm of Islamic sect terrorism and unfriendly relations. Consequently, Nigerian Christians' detest for Islam and Muslims has increased. Hate sermons are now becoming prominent features in church services. Christians fear that terrorism by Islamic sects, like the Boko Haram have come to stay in Nigeria. Christians, especially in the northern parts of the country are mindful of their interaction and relations with Muslims. The impression right now is that both faiths are fierce foes. Apprehension of Christians is underscored by the Boko Haram affiliation with *al-Qaeda* in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Somalia's *al-shabab*, (Orode, 2014; Abidoye, 2014). The number of lives taken by Boko Haram since it started its onslaught in 2009 is over 15,000 people. Some Christian youth in the North now organize themselves for self-defence and sometimes reprisal attacks.

### **Boko Haram and Renaissance of Suspicion for Jihad Completion and Islamic State**

Given the character of the sect, it is viewed as a political ideology contrary to its earlier purported impression and claim of being a purely religious movement, focused at promoting Islamic ideas and values. Drawing support from their activities, Christians argue that the aim of the sect is to establish an Islamic state and reintroduce the pristine practices of Islam in the multi-cultural Nigerian state, founded on secular principles, rule of law and fundamental human rights. Christian's precarious grip over the onslaught is further highlighted by the finding that the sect recruit and breed future Jihadists, with bloody revolutionary zeal to coarsen all other cultures and traditions into Islam. They argue that Boko Haram emerged to complete the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jihad of Uthman Danfodio – the total islamization of Nigeria and wiping out Christianity. Some of the cases spotlighted in support of their position is the discrete enrolment of Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), in 1986. This was strongly criticized as an action too many against a

secular state with multi religious traditions. Consequently, increased religious tension and suspicion loomed large. Christians continued to nurse a cloud of suspicion and injustice over the issue and, worry as to what agenda is being pursued in disregard for the plight of other faiths and religious freedom of non-Muslims in the country. In 1998 a government spokesman informed the press that moves were being made to register Nigeria as a member of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) – the most active institution of the OIC. Again, Alhaji Muhammad Maccido, the then Sultan of Sokoto was bold to tell the Pope (John Paul II), during his visit in 1998 that Nigeria's membership of the OIC had been reactivated. The public statements made it clear to the entire Nigerian populace that the country was actually registered as an Islamic state in OIC, in spite of public and Christian outcry.

### **Boko Haram and Renaissance of Unfair Treatment of Christians by Past Muslim-led Governments**

Christians see the Boko Haram onslaught as a rising profile of unmitigated assault which over the years draw strength from the leadership of the Nigerian state, dominated by Muslims. Odey (2000:33), underscore this renascent conception by Christians that it was to supplant Christianity and make room for Islam's takeover of the country that General Babangida the then military Head of State embarked upon rapid removal of Christians from important and sensitive positions in his administration. (see Adeyanju, 2014). For Christians, the Boko Haram is another facet of the frame work to diminish Christianity and its faithfuls in Nigeria. Consequently, the gulf in between Christian and Muslim relations has widened and deepened.

Furthermore, antecedents of the past make Christians to conceive the frequent ethno-religious crisis in Jos as a consequence of the Muslim expansionist agenda initiated by the Babangida military junta – the creating of Jos North Local Government, without considering the cultural lineage and need of the aborigines who are predominantly Christians, (Kalu Eme, 2012:198). The Boko Haram insurgency is also placed in renascent alignment with the Islamization agenda which led to the introduction of Sharia law in 12 Muslim states of the northern area of the Nigeria's federal government. Christians argue that the religiously based legal system was far from the purported aim of promoting law and order, curtail crime and vices in society; nor was it to wage

war against western influence and culture. Rather, it was one of the attempts to undermine Christian flourish and freedom.

Christians also view with suspicion the rationale behind former president Umaru Musa Yar'adua's gift of 90 million naira from Federal coffers to 15 northern states for promoting Qur'anic education. The fund drawn from Nigeria's common wealth was to be used to train thousands of young Muslims in fundamental Islamic traditions. For Christians these are no longer mere theoretical frameworks or purport inferences, but have found their concerted effort of implementation and finishing touch in the Boko Haram insurgency.

### **Boko Haram and Renascence of Unfriendly Utterances by Muslim Votaries**

Christians also associate the Boko Haram onslaught with antecedent pro-fanaticism and intolerant religio-political utterances of prominent Muslim clerics and politicians. Some of the inciting statements are traced to the emergence and terror of the Boko Haram. Maier recalls Ahmadu Bello's assertion, after Nigeria's political independence on 10 October, 1960: "The new nation called Nigeria should be an estate from our great-grandfather Othman Danfodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We must use the minorities of the north as willing tools, and the south as conquered territories and never allow them to have control of their future", (Maier, 2001, p. xx). Also on spotlight as an antecedent link to the Boko Haram insurgency is a 1987 statement of Sheikh Abubakar, a prominent Muslim cleric. In an interview, the cleric made it clear that Muslims would prefer division of the country to a Christian president and, that the best option is to convert non-Muslims to make sure other religions are in silent minority. Christians therefore conclude that the Boko Haram insurgency is a deliberate effort by Muslims to permanently claim what they assume to be their 'birth right and heritage', temporarily taken away by Christian presidents – Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan, (see Odey 2012, pp. 56-58).

### **Boko Haram and Renascence of Incessant Religious Violence and Bloodshed**

Boko Haram onslaught make Christians to easily recall the incessant religious violence in the country. This include the Maitatsin Islamic Movement massacre of 4177 people, several thousands maimed and, churches burnt. Still in the Boko Haram renescent effect, Christians make easy reference to the 6



March 1986 religious uprising at the Federal College of Education, Kafanchan in which Muslim Students Society (MSS), attacked the Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS), in the same college. The riot spread from the college premises to some other northern cities and lasted for about two weeks. At the end, the life of 19 people, mostly Christians were lost and, 152 churches and five mosques were burnt, (see Iheanacho 2008:186-190). Boko Haram also make Christians easily recall the 1999 religious violence in Shagamu. Others include the February 2000 Sharia law clashes and uprising in Kaduna. The loss of so many Christians who were mostly southerners' resident in the North sparked off reprisal attacks in the eastern city of Aba, in which additional blood shed of about 450 lives were recorded. Kaduna was yet thrown into another religious uprising championed by rampaging Muslims who were angered by a newspaper reference to Prophet Mohammad, in the context of an analysis of the Miss World Beauty Pageant, scheduled to hold in Nigeria that week. Consequently, "sponsored riots that led to the death of 217 people broke out in the cities of Abuja and Kaduna. The extremists didn't want the pageantry because it would violate the holy month but they didn't think their killing spree would", (See Awoyokun, 2014:20; Kalu Ogbu 2012, Odey 2012, Ibeleme 2014, May 26), Christians argue. There are yet many other Islam inspired religious violence in which so many lives and property are lost. Christians are therefore apprehensive of the continuous onslaught. This is further underscored by the Kano State Governor's order for the unconditional release of 30 Boko Haram members arrested for their complicity in the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Abuja, as part of activities to mark the end of the holy month of fasting.

### **Boko Haram in Conquer and Takeover Operation of Christian Communities and Church Buildings**

In all these violence – wanton destruction of property and blood shed, Christians are seriously worried over their safety, freedom and security of the Nigerian state. This is the case in Chibok, from where they kidnapped over 250 school girls. Boko Haram kill and exterminate Christian families, sack 'lucky ones' and take over possession of the churches and private properties. The case of Madagali Catholic Parish of Adamawa, under Maiduguri Diocese, underscore the terror activity. According to Punch report, the Diocesan Social Communications Director, laments thus:

The whole town and the parish rectory have been occupied by the terrorists; so many structures and items have been vandalized. Dozens killed and a lot of church structures have been burnt down. Christian men are caught and beheaded; the women are forced to become Muslims and are taken as wives to the terrorists. The houses of Christians that have fled are now occupied by the insurgents. Their cars are used by the terrorists. Some Muslims around identify Christian homes to be occupied, and the Christians in hiding were also identified and killed, (Olugbode, 2014 August 29).

### **Boko Haram and Muslims' Stigmatization and Stereotype**

The atmosphere of disunity and segregation is on the rise. Hitherto innocent and friendly Muslims are stigmatized as blood violence thirsty. With the involvement of women in the Boko Haram suicide bombings all Muslims are perceived by Christians as terrorist suspects. Women who wear hijab are the worst affected. Many Christians now associates the attire with suicide bombing and as symbolic renaissance of previous onslaughts. This is unwholesome and dangerous for Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria. Again, northern politicians and business men are stigmatized as sponsors of terrorism.

### **Theological Rational for Interfaith Relations in Christianity and Islam**

Both Christianity and Islam have substantial evidence on the importance of dialogue, co-existence and relationship with people outside the fold of their faiths. In the very beginning of the world God initiated dialogue and understanding with mankind. Dialogue underlies the statement: "Come let us make man in our own image and likeness" (Gen. 1:27). It is on the platform of dialogue that Israel's covenant with God was founded. The trend of God's dialogue continued with the Christ-event – "he used his son to dialogue with the world", (Ebosele, 2005, p. 30). Paul identified Jesus as the wisdom of God who relate and negotiates with God and, break the gulf which separate Jews and Greek and, make them one (1 Cor. 1:24-30).

Jesus bequeathed to the world the legacy of respecting and listening to one another. The episodes of healing and miracles in his ministry underscore his appealing negotiation with humanity and nature, (see Mtt. 8:6-12; Lk. 17:11-19). The connotation is that Christ's salvific episode in the annals of history

knows no bound – it is not restricted to specific cultures or race. It extends to all ends of the world, even to non-followers of the faith (see Mtt. 28, Lk. 4:16; Acts 10:34-43). “For they all may be one” (Jn. 17:21). Interfaith dialogue and relationship therefore find impetus in God’s salvific framework. It was against the background of the diverse cultural encounters of Christians that Paul admonished thus: “conduct yourself wisely towards outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one” (Col. 4:5ff).

Co-existence and cordial relationship with other people outside Christianity also loomed large in the writings of the early church fathers. Prominent among them were Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD); Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274); Jerome (347-420AD). This legacy of the church fathers was carried on by the modern church. It is a cardinal teaching of the Magisterium – the numerous Encyclicals of the Popes emphasize better relationship with people of other faith and the secular world. In lucid expression, the *Lumen Gentium* number 16, states that the salvific structure include all who acknowledge the creator, and that Muslims are prime in the plan, because they are convicted by the faith of Abraham. Together with Christians they adore God, the judge of mankind.

The first group of followers Muhammad gathered for his course cut across cultures and tribal backgrounds, meaning that he was involved in negotiation and intercultural relations. At the formative period of the Islamic faith when Muhammad’s followers were persecuted in Mecca, it was to Christians at Abyssinia that they fled, to find refuge and protection among Christian communities. The first contact between Muslims and Christians in Africa as seen in Abyssinia (present Ethiopia), was nothing but cordial. The Christian emperor of Abyssinia allowed them to practice their faith, hence Christianity and Islam flourished in the state, side-by-side, (Kenny 2005:28). Such instances of relationship with people of other religions and culture are also expressed in the Qur’an. “The Believers, the Jews, the Christians and the Sabians, those who believe in God and the last day and do good, will have their reward with their Lord. They will not have to fear or come to shame” (Q2:62). The emphasis in this pedagogy is God’s gift of salvation based on the individual’s love of God and, neighbours. The Qur’an also teach that: “There is to be no compulsion in religion” (Q2:256); “Forgive and overlook until God accomplishes his purpose, for God has power over all things” (Q. 2:109).

As in Christianity, the search for co-existence and good relationship with other faiths and culture is also a feature of modern Islam. One effort made to reach an understanding on how to pave way for sustaining religious freedom, human rights and co-existence in Islamic world is the 1972 meeting of Saudi's and some European jurists in Riyadh. The highlight of the Resolution is contained in what is called the Saudi Memorandum. Further discussions on religious freedom were subsequently held in Paris, the Vatican, Geneva, and at Strasbourg, between October and November, 1974. In 1980 there was a seminar on Human Rights, jointly championed by the University of Kuwait, the Association of Arab Lawyers and the International Commission of Jurists. This climaxed to the third meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), at Ta'if in January, 1981, where a Universal Islamic Declaration was produced. The Declaration provides for religious freedom for everybody, and condemns discrimination of people based on religious difference. In support for cordial relationship with Christianity, the Declaration trace the instances of Muslim respect for Christians in the Holy Qur'an and in the annals of Muslim history, hence its emphasis on respecting the right of Christians to their faith and conviction, (Kenny 2005:36).

Though periodic reinterpretation and unfriendly reception of the pedagogy of good neighbourliness is experienced among some Muslims and sects across the world, the Nigerian Muslim-Christian relations has never been as bad as it is today. The Boko Haram sect is the catalyst of the present sour relations. Hitherto, in spite of differences both faiths have co-existed for decades. The Saduana of Sokoto tolerated Christians and even became a knight of the church. Muslims and Christians have always come together under one entity to address national issues of common concern.

### **Discussion: The Imperative of Dialogue between Faith and Change**

The phenomenon of a changing world order permeates all spheres of life such that almost all world religious traditions are threatened. Material improvement, demographic changes and migration, globalization and strides in scientific discoveries and technology are factors which make crucial demand for adjustment, from traditions in the world. The friction and ideological conflict over and about attitude toward change forces are ambivalent. Some religious faithfuls are managing the phenomenon as unfolding experience of mankind. The underpinning factor is to understand religious diversity as a manifestation

of the universal society. Religious fundamentalism, fanaticism and terrorism are global trends. It is experience of chain reaction and contradiction, involving building and destruction of frontiers and delineation of given identities and transferring to the next, (O'Mahony 2004:63).

Christians and Muslims in Nigeria must consider the unfolding events of global change as structural threshold which requires critical reflection and retreat, for new and deep understanding of religious identities that flourish in the world, against the backdrop and juxtaposition of 'own faith', fundamental doctrines, pedagogy and, unavoidable human co-existence indices, in a world of plurality of people and cultures. Knowledge of God does not withdraw believers from the human world. Rather such knowledge of God is a call to plan for common good, meaningful response and rational attachment to divine will. "The light of transcendent illumination is a piercing beam from beyond, but it does not illuminate the surrounding area", (Walsh 1999, 98-99). Illuminating the social environment of humans is a task for humans, guided by the personal discovery of the divine. This is an ideological and phenomenal bargain and negotiation Muslims and Christians must understand. Change is a universal feature of the world. Seeking reversal and re-enactment of the action and features of the archetypal age seem to be a fight in futility. With the hitherto simple societies of the old, it was relatively possible to carry out successful religious persecution and insurgence. Yes, that was the case in the battle of Badr (624); the battle of Uhud (625) with the slogan and battle cry, '*Allah Akbar*' – Allah is great! (this is adopted by the Boko Haram); the war of Trench (627); the war against the Jewish forts of Kheybar (629); the subduing of Mecca under the leadership of Abu Sutyah etc., (Richter 2011, p. 198-201). Issues raised by intellectual and technological achievements and socio-economic globalization indices of the century require objective negotiation against the background of faith and reality. The Boko Haram Islamic sect must compare the prevailing conditions in the Muhammad's time and space against the present. To what extent has similar sects succeed in parts of Middle East and Arab countries. All that we experience is the rise and clash of sects and conflicts all the time. Ideology and material changes affecting Islam or Christianity cannot be overrun through violent confrontation. The former Defence and, Finance Minister of post war Iraq, Ali Allawi put it succinctly clear that Islamic paradigm of civilization has been diminished by global conditions and standards such as

material advancement, improved human development index and standards and, the passion and faith in science and technology. In Allawi's words:

If Muslims want the very things that modern technological civilization promises and in some cases has delivered, they have to acknowledge the roots of this civilization in order to become an active and creative part of it. Otherwise they will simply be a parasitic attachment to it. It is difficult to see how Islam can contribute to this civilization while rejecting or questioning its premises, (Allawi 2009, p.273).

Apart from the binding unity of Islam and Christianity which takes root from the Abrahamic heritage and legacy, both religions are calls for mankind's unity in the salvation and plan of God. Such understanding looms large in the Bible and the Qu'ran, (Richter 2011). The unity of all mankind is the will of God. Each of the faiths make reference to the delight of God over reconciled relationships, both at the individual and intergroup levels. Human unity is the will of God, (Ehusani, 2014).

Christians and Muslims must continue to explore and crystallize areas of their common conviction and teaching, as they negotiate the phenomenon of change. It seems that Nigerian Christians are ahead of their Muslim counterparts in the negotiation with contemporary realities. Christians must not renege from the divine call and mystery of human relations and interfaith co-existence and co-operation. After all, many devout Muslims (Imams and Shiekhs), have come out openly to condemn the Boko Haram onslaught as un-Islamic. Anyway, it is a poser to ask: between Boko Haram and the rest Muslims in Nigeria who are the renegades to Islamic faith? Nigerian Christians may not bother to fathom this, rather they should build on the pronouncement of other Muslims that the group is prosecuting a sect's ideology which could be erroneous and misleading, if used to refer and associate the entire Muslim *Umma*. The Nigerian experience is underscored by Viotti and Kauppi, (2013, p. 111), that: "it is not religion or religious teaching per se, but rather the use of them by people to serve their own purposes that has been so corrosive of the human condition worldwide".

Christians should remain steadfast to the words of Saint Paul: "Do all, you can to live in peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18). Government should improve the quality of governance and service delivery to the people. This should be complemented with improved security apparatus and strategies to

promote religious freedom and co-existence. Muslims and Christians must recognize and understand the mission of Jesus Christ and Prophet Muhammad in the context of divine dialogue with humans. The ways of God and the divine order are not similar to those of humans. The central thrust of both faiths is the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God.

### **Conclusion**

The emergence of the Boko Haram and its ceaseless terror in Nigeria is not only a threat to the security of the state and security of the citizenry. It is a setback on the progress made in interfaith understanding, cooperation and relationship between Muslims and Christians. The effort of such interfaith organizations as the Nigerian Association for Religious Tolerance (NARETO) and the Nigeria Muslim-Christian Dialogue are negated and smeared. The Islamic sect has killed thousands of people and destroyed properties worth billions of dollars. The greater casualties of the insurgency are non-Muslims, especially Christians. The onslaught is a threat to global quest for improved human relations and peace. To the Nigerian religious space, the menace reinforces and fans the flame of animosity and pathological harm to peace.

Boko Haram and other Muslim faithfuls must reflect on the changing world order and its intrigues. Reverse to the pristine age of Islam against the phenomenon of change may be a difficult task. Perhaps, at the end what may be recorded is unprecedented genocide, without commensurate and conscientious acceptance of the sect's ideology and worldview, or the rise of another sect. Islam is not the only religion being challenged by modern culture and influence. Muslims and Christians must acknowledge the imperative of negotiating the inevitable forces of change to chart a new horizon for their faiths. In such way, improved human relations, dignity and co-existence would be sustained. This is the equilibrium necessary to balance the tradition of pristine Islam and the Boko Haram on the one hand and, changing global structures and values. Nigeria's Federal Government should step-up its constitutional neutral disposition to religions, while the quality of governance and human development initiatives should be improved.

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