

# **Faith under Fire**

**A Collection of Presentations and Reflections  
Related to Peace and Violence in Nigeria**

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## **Preface**

I have lived in Nigeria since 1988 and in Jos since 1991. That means that I have been present for all of the *wahalla* that Jos has experienced in that period which has included everything from ethnic/political/religious clashes and Boko Hara bombings to armed robbers and kidnappings. I have seen the black smoke and heard the sirens and gunfire and smelled the dead bodies. I have hosted a temporary shelter for displaced persons at my house where dozens of people slept on my floor and in my vehicles and been fed by food cooked in my kitchen. I have heard the horrible stories about my neighbors and colleagues and students and others who have lost their lives in various conflicts. I have tried to provide basic first-aid to those who have been shot and wounded with cutlasses. In a more personal way, I have been attacked by armed robbers, kicked in the face, and experienced the violation of armed men in my home on two different occasions. So, I have a fair understanding of the reality of conflict and violence.

On the other hand, I have had a number of opportunities to engage in peace making. I have helped to sponsor and coordinate dialogue sessions between opposing camps. I have also participated in rallies and sports activities that have brought youth together from opposing groups to help restore relationships and prevent further violence. I have participated in ecumenical prayers meetings where Christians came together to plead with God to intervene and even spoken at meetings sponsored by Muslims in support of peace. In recent years I have served as the director of the Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies at the University of Jos. So, I have been involved in a small way in trying to prevent violence and restore peace.

Perhaps the way I have felt most prepared to help and most comfortable in doing is addressing the issues of violence and peace from the perspective of a pastor and theologian. As a teacher of pastors and church leaders, I have preached sermons, given lectures, presented papers, and conducted workshops on peace and violence related topics. All of these have been prepared and presented based upon invitations from various bodies, most often, including the specific titles of the presentations. My presentations have at times stimulated very diverse responses, from those who thought I was a prophet sent by God to those who thought I was the junior brother to the devil.

It is a collection of these presentations that I have used to create this book. At the beginning of each chapter, I have explained when and where I first made this presentation and given a few additional details about the presentation. Hopefully, this information will help give the reader a better understanding of why I approached the topic the way I did. I have decided to leave in many of the specific details of the various presentations so that the reader will be able to understand the original context. However, in other cases I have attempted to generalize the presentation to make it more appropriate for a wider audience.

All of these presentations were presented in Nigeria except one. The chapter entitled "Making Peace Between Christians and Muslims: Christ and Culture in the Midst of Religious Conflict and Violence" was presented in the US at the annual conference of the organization that sponsors me to Nigeria, then known as International Institute for Christian Studies (now known as Global Scholars). There is some repetition in that presentation but I have left that in there to show how I have tried to present our crises in Nigeria in the international community.

The chapter entitled “Interacting with Muslims” was the only presentation that was given in a classroom setting. The presentation simply entitled “Making Peace in Jos” was presented to about 1000 youth in Bukuru, shortly after a major crisis in which half of the audience were Muslims and half were Christians. Several of the presentations contain a theological focus but the one entitled “Violence and Peace Understood in Light of Biblical Progressive Revelation” is my attempt to explain the difference between the Old Testament and New Testament responses to violence.

For all the years I have lived in Nigeria, I have kept something of an “event journal.” In this journal, I have tried to record very specific details about things so that I will have a good record of that event. During our first crisis in Jos, which started on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2001, I used that technic to record the events I witnessed and experienced. I would sit at my computer several times a day and write what I was seeing, hearing, and feeling. Thus, this journal is an evolving hour-by-hour record of the crisis. I must stress that these were my experiences which may have been much different from what others experienced in other parts of the city and in other crises. In addition, I recorded various things I was hearing at the time and it later turned out that some of those things were not true. However, by reading through this collection of memories, it may help the reader to not only learn about what was happening but feel some of the emotions we had and decisions we had to make during the crisis. I have included an edited form of that journal at the end of this book for that purpose.

In its present form, there is some repetition and overlap in the documents contained in this book. Obviously, there were times when I would use the same story to illustrate a similar point in a later presentation. In addition, there are some sections that are repeated almost word-for-word in different presentations. I have attempted to remove these but there is probably still more repetition in the book than there should be.

For example, in going preparing this book for publication, I discovered that I had told the story of Rev. Dr. Sunday Gomna in five of these presentations. It is a story worth repeating but I have left it only in the first chapter. I also noticed that I stressed the Jerusalem Council as a model for solving problems and building consensus among Christians several times. I also repeated the story in Joshua 22 about the civil war that almost started over the misunderstanding about the altar that was built by the two and a half tribes on the east side of the Jordan River. Obviously, I repeated a lot of the same verses in the Bible because, as a theologian, that is always the foundation upon which I try to understand any truth.

One problem I struggled with was names. Because the question-and-answer and journal sections are historical in nature, I wanted to leave all of the real names of the characters in the book. However, to do so may embarrass or potentially expose a person to danger, I finally decided to use initials in the Q&A sections and change a handful of names in my journal. As a general rule, the names of public figures were left in the book.

It is my prayer that those who read these presentations and reflections will commit themselves to responding to conflict and violence as Jesus did. If that happens with only one reader then my labor in writing this book will not have been in vain.

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September 2022

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## **Chapter One**

### **Peace: Its Challenges and Benefits**

This address was originally presented to the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual District Conference (Rotary International District 9125 Nigeria) at the Crest Hotel, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2015. The title of the presentation was chosen by the organizers. The audience included both Christians and Muslims.

#### **Introduction**

Peace is one of those things that you do not think so much about it until it is taken away from you. It is like a sore throat. You do not know how to appreciate a normal functioning throat that does not hurt when you swallow until you develop a sore throat.

Peace is the normal situation. It is what should be. And we often do not appreciate the state of normality until it is gone. It is extremely sad when the “normal” becomes violence. For example, all the people in the Mid-East have known all their lives are violence and bombs and hatred and retaliation. These things have become normal to them. Many of the people who live in that part of the world have never experienced real peace.

Another sad thing is that though we have made some progress recently, all of the children that have been born in Jos since about 1996 or 1997 can never remember a time of genuine peace. They can only remember times of tension and violence and suspicion and in the city of Jos. To them these things are normal. They do not remember when there were no military checkpoints in Jos. They do not remember a time when Christians visited Muslims during Salah and Muslims visited Christians at Christmas or Easter. They have only heard about those things and, at this time, those practices seem strange and really impossible.

What that suggests to us is that since 2001, the people of Jos have not experienced a “normal” that includes genuine and lasting peace. Our “new normal” includes tension and suspicion and rumors about “them.” We have grown accustomed to the wail of sirens and the long waits at the checkpoints and the sharp crackle of gunfire and the heavy explosions of bombs and the growing feeling in the pit of our stomachs when we see black smoke coming up out of some part of the city. The common place sight of buildings with collapsed roofs and broken-down walls and no-go parts of the city all are part of our lives that we think little of. These sights are joined by the growing number of funerals we have attended of family members and friends who have lost their lives in our various ethno-religious eruptions in Jos and Kaduna and other parts of Nigeria.

To many of us the word “crisis” no longer refers to the painful experiences our friends and their children periodically experience who struggle with the dreaded sickle cell disease. The word “crisis” now refers to those times in 2001 and 2008 and 2010 and practically every year since when we have experienced all of the things that represent violence.

We are grateful that we have made progress recently. However, every one of us recognizes that the peace we now experience is not like the peace that some of us remember from the past. Hence, this is a good time to take a look at the concept of peace. I have lived in Jos since 1991 which means I have witnessed and participated in some way in all of these

crises that have rocked this city. I am certainly not an expert on the issue of either peacemaking or maintaining the peace but I am happy to share some thoughts about the challenges and benefits of peace, from the limited experiences that I have had.<sup>1</sup>

I am a theologian. I have spent many years of my life studying the Bible and teaching others how to do so, from primary school all the way up through the PhD level. Therefore, it should not be surprising that I would start this presentation with a story from the Bible. Although the story occupies one entire chapter of the Bible with 34 verses, it is really not one of the popular stories. It is a story about a war that was avoided and peace that was preserved and enhanced. It will provide the foundation I will use to address the issue of peace.

## **The Story of Joshua 22**

After Moses died, Joshua led the 12 tribes of Israel into the land of Canaan and drove out the people occupying the land at that time. Interestingly, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh decided they liked the land east of the Jordan River, which was not part of Canaan. They requested from Moses that they be allowed to permanently occupy that land rather than part of Canaan and he had granted their request. However, they did join with the other nine and a half tribes in driving out the current occupants from the land of Canaan. After a while, Joshua judged that the land was sufficiently pacified and was safe enough for the various tribes to go occupy the individual portions of land they had requested or had been assigned. Joshua summoned Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh and said to them:

*Now that the LORD your God has given them rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan. But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul . . . Return to your homes with your great wealth—with large herds of livestock, with silver, gold, bronze and iron, and a great quantity of clothing—and divide the plunder from your enemies with your fellow Israelites (22:4-5, 8).*

Here is the next part of the story:

*So the men of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the rest of Israel at Shiloh in the land of Canaan. They started the journey back to their own land of Gilead, the territory that belonged to them according to the LORD's command through Moses. But while they were still in Canaan, and when they came to a place called Geliloth near the Jordan River, the men of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh stopped to build a large and imposing altar (22:9-10).*

We must wait until later in the story to understand their reason for wanting to build this altar.

- Was this something that would be part of their worship?
- Was this something of a memorial to the war?
- Was this an indication that they were going to worship the local gods?

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<sup>1</sup> The best way to achieve peace is a controversial issue. People tend to feel strongly about such things. It is likely I may make comments with which people disagree. I do not apologize for my strongly held convictions but I do apologize in advance if I come across as confrontational or unwilling to consider the opinions of others. If I do, then you will have an immediate opportunity to practice your peacemaking skills.

The story continues:

*The rest of Israel **heard** that the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had built an altar at Geliloth at the edge of the land of Canaan, on the west side of the Jordan River. So the whole community of Israel gathered at Shiloh and **prepared to go to war** against them (22:11-12).*

When the rest of Israel heard they were building an altar by the river, they assumed it was some kind of pagan shrine or at least something that should not be. This so upset the Israelites that they got ready to go to war. They had been fighting to drive the pagans out of their land. They were certainly not going to allow their own relatives to fall into evil practice of idolatry.

The way they had conquered the Canaanites was through war. This seemed to them to be the best way to deal with this problem also. The story continues:

*First, however, they **sent a delegation** led by Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, **to talk** with the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. In this delegation were ten leaders of Israel, one from each of the ten tribes, and each the head of his family within the clans of Israel. When they arrived in the land of Gilead, they said to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, "The whole community of the LORD demands to know **why you are betraying the God of Israel**. How could you **turn away from the LORD** and build an altar for yourselves **in rebellion** against him? Was our sin at Peor not enough? To this day we are not fully cleansed of it, even after the plague that struck the entire community of the LORD. And yet today **you are turning away from following the LORD**. If you **rebel against the LORD** today, he will be angry with all of us tomorrow. "If you need the altar because the land you possess is defiled, then join us in the LORD's land, where the Tabernacle of the LORD is situated, and share our land with us. But **do not rebel** against the LORD or against us by building an altar other than the one true altar of the LORD our God (22:13-19).*

Fortunately, someone had enough wisdom to stop the war preparation and urge the Israelite elders to go directly to their brothers to find out why they were building this altar.

However, if you listened closely to their speech, you heard that they did not come asking the two and a half tribes what they were doing. From what they said, they were already convinced that these people were guilty of idolatry. They used statements like:

- "betraying the God of Israel"
- "turn away from the Lord"
- "turning away from following the Lord"
- "rebel against the Lord"

They had already tried and found these distant relatives guilty and were now preparing to give them their penalty. Finally, the representatives from the two and a half tribes had a chance to respond and explained their side of the story:

*Then the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered the heads of the clans of Israel: "The LORD, the Mighty One, is God! The LORD, the Mighty One, is God! He knows the truth, and may Israel know it, too! **We have not built the altar in treacherous rebellion** against the LORD. If we have done so, do not spare our lives this day. If we have built an altar for ourselves **to turn away from the LORD** or to*

*offer burnt offerings or grain offerings or peace offerings, may the LORD himself punish us. "The truth is, we have built this altar because we fear that in the future your descendants will say to ours, 'What right do you have to worship the LORD, the God of Israel? The LORD has placed the Jordan River as a barrier between our people and you people of Reuben and Gad. You have no claim to the LORD.' So your descendants may prevent our descendants from worshiping the LORD. "So we **decided to build the altar, not for burnt offerings or sacrifices, but as a memorial.** It will remind our descendants and your descendants that we, too, have the right to worship the LORD at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices, and peace offerings. Then your descendants will not be able to say to ours, 'You have no claim to the LORD.' "If they say this, our descendants can reply, 'Look at this copy of the LORD's altar that our ancestors made. **It is not for burnt offerings or sacrifices; it is a reminder of the relationship both of us have with the LORD** (22:21-28).*

This was completely different from what the Israelites had thought. Now, how would they respond? Would they be willing to recognize their mistake or would they go ahead with the punishment they felt these people deserved? Here is the end of the story:

*Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, replied to them, "Today we know the LORD is among us because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD **as we thought.** Instead, you have rescued Israel from being destroyed by the hand of the LORD." Then Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, and the other leaders left the tribes of Reuben and Gad in Gilead and returned to the land of Canaan to tell the Israelites what had happened. And **all the Israelites were satisfied and praised God and spoke no more of war against Reuben and Gad.** The people of Reuben and Gad named the altar "**Witness,**" for they said, "It is a witness between us and them that the LORD is our God, too (22:31-34)*

This is not a story about rebuilding the peace. It is a story about maintaining the peace and preventing war.

- This is not a story about failure but about success.
- This is not a story that ends in violence but one that ends in peace.
- This is not a story in which emotions and rumors win but a story where wisdom and dialogue triumph.

I believe that there are some lessons that we can learn from this story that will apply equally as well to us here in the Jos area as well as Nigeria as a whole. Therefore, I will use this story to draw out lessons and applications that can be useful to us in rebuilding and maintaining the peace in Jos and other parts of Nigeria.

## **The Challenges**

The people on both sides of this issue faced several challenges—challenges that would have compromised the peace.

### **The Challenge of Misinformation**

We do not know exactly how it happened but perhaps some of the Israelites who had settled on the west side of the Jordan River decided to go fishing one day in the river. When they got to the river, they saw people working on what clearly looked like an altar. They were



able to learn that these were members of the two and a half tribes who had settled on the east side of the Jordan River. When these fishermen returned to their communities, they told some of their friends about what they saw. The word soon spread.

Perhaps some of the elders in the community sent a delegation to observe what they were doing. They saw for themselves what the others had described and were convinced that their distant relatives were indeed building some kind of altar. They could not think of any legitimate reason these people would be building an altar near the Jordan River so they reported the matter to their leaders in their particular tribe. This upset the leaders of the tribe who sent word to the leaders of the other nine tribes.

Everyone was angry at what they heard these people were doing. They had just driven the Canaanites from the land and all of their weapons were still available. So, they got out their weapons and started preparing to go punish these straying Israelites. The more they talked about this, the more they speculated about what these foolish people were doing and why they were doing it. And the more they talked about what they had heard, the more they remembered little things that these Gadites and Reubenites and Manassites had done when they were earlier fighting together. The whole nation was soon stirred up and was more than ready to go to war to deal with these people.

Jesus said, “*You will know the truth and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32). This is not just a spiritual truth. This is a truth that applies to all people anywhere in the world in every circumstance.

- The truth about the principles of agriculture frees us from lack of food and allows us to eat healthy food.
- The truth about aerodynamics frees us from the pothole-filled roads and allows us to travel from Abuja to Lagos in less than an hour.
- The truth about electronics and airwaves frees us from the hours it might take to get information from one person to another and allows us to deliver that information immediately by phone or email or text or some other electronic means.

Truth is that which ultimate is best for everyone in society. The lack of truthful information in this situation almost led to civil war. Fortunately, there was someone who thought that finding out the truth was more important than going to war and punishing these law breakers.

There are several things that logically grow out of misinformation.

***Misinformation leads to rumor.***

Rumor is the vehicle through which misinformation is spread. Rumor sounds exactly like the truth so when you hear a specific story, at first you cannot tell whether it is truth or rumor. Many people have been killed in Nigeria and many buildings destroyed based upon rumors that later turned out to be false.

***Rumor sparks emotions.***

When you hear a rumor long enough and from enough different people, it tends to raise the emotions of people. The Israelites heard the rumor about these two and a half tribes building a pagan shrine and they quickly got angry.

***Rumor and emotions lead to foolish decisions.***

Had there not been some wise person who stopped them, the rumors that stirred up the emotions of people would have driven the people to go to war against their brothers and dozens or even hundreds of people could have been killed. The rumors that stirred up the emotions of people in Jos, on both sides of the conflict, often did not go unchecked and therefore much property was destroyed and innocent people died as a result of these false rumors that stirred up the emotions of people.

***Rumor and emotions are all corrected by truth.***

Whenever Phinehas and the ten representatives met with the representatives of the two and a half tribes and learned the truth, immediately the emotions died down. They were able to go back and report these matters to their people and the rumors died a natural death and the emotions changed from anger to rejoicing.

This principle is not just something that took place in the Bible.

- This principle will work in Jos.
- This principle will work in Kaduna.
- This principle will work anywhere in the world.

Just like light drives out darkness, truth drives out the false information of rumors. Stop the rumors and emotions of people will die down. Reduce the emotions and the tension reduces and violence is averted.

***The truth that stops rumors is most often discovered through deliberate effort.***

Someone in Israel had enough wisdom to realize that it would be better to have a direct face-to-face discussion with the two and a half tribes to see if there was some truth they had missed. It was this deliberate effort that stopped the rumor and reduced the emotions and extinguished the possibility of violence. I pray that whenever there are rumors, that there will be people who have enough wisdom and courage to seek out the truth and not just believe and spread the rumors.

**The Challenge of Prejudice**

The Oxford Dictionary says that prejudice is a “preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.”<sup>2</sup>

- Prejudice is a lack of objectivity.
- Prejudice is a failure to wait for the facts before deciding whether something is true.
- Prejudice means someone has already developed a position or an attitude before learning the truth.

I think you will agree that the Israelites who were preparing to go to war were prejudiced. They had developed preconceived opinions not based upon reason or actual experience. They had their minds made up. Had there not been wise people among them, this would have led to a disaster.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/prejudice>. Accessed 27 July 2022

Prejudice is a huge challenge to peace in Jos or other mixed communities. Depending upon which side we are on, we already have our minds made up about “them.” Without investigating things ourselves, we accept the rumors that people bring to us that are consistent with our prejudices.

A related word to prejudice is the word *stereotype*. Note this definition: “A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.”<sup>3</sup> Christians tend to look at all Muslims as if they are exactly the same. Muslims tend to do the same thing toward Christians.

- We have tribal stereotypes of Igbos and Yorubas and Hausas.
- We have national stereotypes of Americans and Chinese.
- We have occupational stereotype of farmers and plumbers and lawyers.

Our stereotypes convince us they will act in a certain way and when we hear a rumor that sounds like what we expect, it is easy to believe.

If we are going to have peace in Jos and peace in Nigeria, one of the important things we are going to have to do is to get rid of our prejudices and overcome our stereotypes. We are going to have to do this like the Israelite leaders did—go directly to the source and find out the truth. Prejudice and stereotypes spoil the peace. Seeking truth restores peace.

## **The Challenge of Combat Experience and Weapons of War**

The Israelites had just fought a series of successful wars. Therefore, Israel had thousands of young people who had already participated in a lot of violence. They were experienced fighters. In addition, because of these wars, there were plenty of weapons in the various communities. Therefore, their experiences of violence and the easy availability of weapons helped to determine that whenever there was a misunderstanding that developed, the first response to this situation would be violence—using their experience and weapons.

It is unfortunate we have many of these same conditions in Nigeria. We are grateful for the shaky peace that has returned to the Niger Delta. However, the Nigeria Delta conflict gave thousands of young people experience in violence and also spread thousands of weapons out through the population. This has encouraged many youth to use those weapons and experiences to make their living through robbery and kidnapping.

Some time ago I read about the arrest of a group of four armed robbers who had participated in a bank robbery in Lekki. One 30-year-old suspect admitted that he had driven the speedboat which was used for the robbery. He also said, “*I have not gone for robbery operation before now; I am into oil bunkering in Arepo along Lagos Ibadan expressway, a community in Ogun State.*”<sup>4</sup> This young man spoke of his work in oil bunkering as if it were a normal profession—like he was a fisherman or lawyer. It is almost certain that this young man had been one of the militants in the Niger Delta crisis. He had learned how to use weapons and violence and therefore he made a career out of it.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/stereotype>. Accessed 27 July 2022

<sup>4</sup> Monjola Sotubo, ‘I got N50,000, they forced me,’ arrested suspect confesses,” Pulse.ng, May 13, 2015, <http://pulse.ng/local/lekki-bank-robbery-i-got-n50-000-they-forced-me-arrested-suspect-confesses-id3754769.html>. Accessed 27 July 2022

Violence has encouraged people to seek violent solutions to their problems rather than peaceful solutions. We pray that Boko Haram and ISWAP<sup>5</sup> will soon be defeated. However, once the fighting stops, there will be thousands of young people who have experienced combat and there will still be many thousands of weapons in the community. Even in Jos, many young people have tasted violence. I have no concrete facts but the rumors are that there are many weapons in the Jos area. Can we expect peace in Jos when there are many weapons in the city and many young people with experience using them?

Unfortunately, recent violence and the availability of weapons provide a challenge for peace in Jos or anywhere else that has experienced violence. People often ask me about guns. My family were all hunters so I was raised around guns. I know how to use them but do not think getting more guns in private hands is the solution to violence. The more we can remove guns from the society, the less likely we will be in turning to violence to solve our problems.

These are not the only challenges we face to peace in Jos and in Nigeria. Time does not permit me to talk about challenges such as:

- Unrelenting poverty
- Youth unemployment
- The indigene-settler issue
- Ethnic perceptions and tensions
- Religious intolerance and stereotypes
- Political manipulations and exploitations
- Growing gap between the haves and have not's.

However, I think that most people will agree that the problems I have pointed out are some of the significant challenges we face in Nigeria.

- The challenge of prejudice
- The challenge of misinformation
- The challenge of violence experience and weapons

Fortunately, there are positive things we can learn from the responses of the Israelites.

## **The Response**

When the nine and a half tribes learned the two and a half tribes were building this altar which they interpreted to be a pagan shrine, they had two things they could have done.

### **They Could Have Attacked.**

This was obviously the most natural reaction.

- They had the weapons of war.
- They had the combat experience.
- They had the numbers on their side.
- They had precedence. They had already destroyed many shrines in their recent wars.
- They believed they had the blessing of God. Surely God would not want people worshipping at pagan shrines, which was obviously what these people were doing.

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<sup>5</sup> ISWAP stands for Islamic State West Africa Province and is a rival group to Boko Haram

I am sure that the leaders heard many statements from the pro-war group like:

- “We have all the facts we need. Why are we waiting?”
- “That is just the way those people are. You can never trust them.”
- “We don’t need to talk. We need to act.”
- “If we allow them to do this now, they will soon bring their idols into our areas and affect our tribes.”
- “If we don’t stop them now, our children will have to fight them in the future.”
- “We can’t allow them to blaspheme. We must defend God’s honor.”

Fortunately, there was another option they could take.

### **They Could Have Sought More Information.**

We do not know all the details but it is likely that while the people were getting their weapons together, someone suggested to the high priest, “Sir, before we go to war, don’t you think it would be a good idea to go and talk to these people about what they are doing?” This thought eventually led to the second option:

- Perhaps we should go see these people directly.
- Perhaps we should seek more information from them.
- Perhaps we should ask them what they were doing and why.
- Perhaps we should find out the specific facts before going to war.

Fortunately, this was the decision they eventually made and the outcome was peace not violence. What were the results of their peaceful solution of this problem?

## **Benefits of Peace**

### **No One Died.**

As a result of taking the dialogue solution rather than the violence solution, not a single person died or was even injured. Life is our most important asset.

- If you steal my computer, I can get another one.
- If you steal my vehicle, I can get another one.

However, if you take my life, no one can give it back.

I am afraid that we do not have a high enough appreciation for life. Too often our first reaction to a difficult person is death—we think the person needs to be killed. Remember when you kill a person, you not only take away the rest of that person’s life. You also kill all the future generations of people that person would have produced. Is it not possible that some of us had parents or grandparents or great grandparents who committed crimes that were worthy of death? If that ancestor would have been killed for his or her crimes, you would not be here nor any of your brothers or sisters nor any of your children.

I am not a pacifist. I believe there are times when a criminal forfeits the right to life. However, we should take many more steps in solving our problems before resorting to violence and death.

How many people have died in Jos as a result of similar problems: misunderstandings and prejudice leading to innocent people dying? I can tell you about my experiences:

- My painter was killed.
- My auto mechanic was killed.
- One of my past night guards was killed.
- My next-door neighbor of 19 years was killed.
- A pastor who travelled with me to workshops was killed.
- One of my students who sat two meters from me in class was killed.

I can also tell you about the experiences of my workers:

- One of my workers lost a cousin.
- My driver lost three nephews and later an uncle, aunt, and another cousin.
- My security guard lost three nephews.
- The lady who helps my wife cook lost her brother, her brother-in-law, and her cousin. Her father was ripped open. Another relative was involved in a bombing in Jos.

Most of these people had nothing to do with this crisis. Yet, their lives are over; all the good things that they could have done will be left undone. Death has robbed them and society of their lives and their good deeds and the children they may have produced.

Life is ultimately the reward of peace. If we had not developed some level of peace, is it possible that some who are reading this book would be dead? Let us work for peace so that people will live and not die.

### **No Property was Destroyed.**

As a result of the personal interaction of the two sides rather than a violent confrontation, there was no destruction.

- No house was burned down.
- No business was looted.
- No farm was destroyed.
- No one's animals were slaughtered.

The Jordan River was not polluted due to the war. No one had to rebuild what he had already built. There was no black smoke, no rattle of weapons, and no circling vultures.

We recognize that property is not as sacred as lives. However, God preserved serious sanctions in both the Bible and the Qur'an for those who destroyed property. Do you realize that one of the guidelines for warfare in the Old Testament and Islam, was that a conquering army could not destroy the fruit trees in a place.<sup>6</sup> One of the sad things about conflict is that people work hard all their lives to build up a small home or a business and a 16-year-old foolish teenager can destroy all of that with 50 Naira worth of petrol. However, if we will learn the lesson from the civil war that was averted among the Israelites in Joshua's day, we will have seen our last broken-down structure and burned-out vehicle.

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<sup>6</sup> See Deuteronomy 20:19-20; see also Aboul-Enein, H. Yousuf and Zuhur, Sherifa, *Islamic Rulings on Warfare*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Diane Publishing Co., Darby PA, p. 22

## **The Relationship Between the Two Groups Was Strengthened.**

The two and a half tribes were already related to the nine and a half tribes by all being descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In addition, they had developed a better relationship while traveling from Egypt. They had also developed a very close relationship during the wars to drive out the Canaanites from the land. However, this experience besides the Jordan River also helped them to have a more positive appreciation for one another.

- The nine and a half tribes respected and complemented the two and a half tribes for the memorial that they were creating.
- The two and a half tribes appreciated the fact that the nine and a half tribes came to check out the rumors rather than just going to war against them.

Had they gone to war, there might have been conflict for hundreds of years. However, by resolving this issue peacefully, they not only avoided death and destruction but they strengthened their relationship with those who were part of the same nation.

I have often told my children, “I do not have enough friends.” I always have room for another friend. All of us should be grateful when God give us friends or strengthens the relationships we have between ourselves and them. Thank God that the positive way this issue was resolved resulted in greater trust and greater appreciation for one another.

## **God was glorified.**

The text of the story says: “*And all the Israelites were satisfied and praised God and spoke no more of war against Reuben and Gad.*” The fact that this matter was resolved satisfactorily brought about praise to God and no doubt gladdened the heart of God. God is the author of life; the enemy of God is the one who comes to kill and steal and destroy (John 10:10). Therefore, when truth and life are preserved, God is glorified and praised.

## **Important Lessons Were Learned.**

We are all life-long learners. In everything we experience, whether positive or negative, there are things that we can learn. It is certain that both sides of the conflict learned valuable lessons.

### **Lessons Learned**

The Israelites learned some important lessons from this experience. These are the same lessons we would be wise to learn.

## **Things are not always what they appear to be.**

The fishermen who first observed the building of the altar were absolutely convinced of what they had seen. They were sure that this was an altar that was being built. And they were right. However, they were wrong in the way they interpreted what they had seen. They assumed that this was an altar that was being built to have pagan sacrifices made on it. However, it was an altar that was to be used as a memorial. I am not sure that anyone had ever built an altar as a memorial before. Therefore, it is easy to understand why they made this assumption. We must always recognize that things are not always what they appear to be.

**It is better to talk than to fight.**

Both sides in this conflict learned that it is better to dialogue with each other than fight with each other. Had they chosen the option of violence, it is hard to predict how that could affect the rest of the history of Israel. Perhaps one of the ancestors of King David or Daniel or Elijah or some other person would have been killed and therefore, those persons would not have been born to do the good things that they did. Therefore, these discussions preserved the future of Israel as it has been revealed to us.

During our first crisis in Jos, in September 2001, we met daily at the Deputy Vice Chancellor's hour house in our UNIJOS Senior Staff Quarters. On the second day of the crisis, someone reported seeing suspicious people on the back side of our campus, with arms. There is a village called Yelwa there occupied mostly by Fulanis. There is a river between us with a cable walkway stretching from one side to the other. It was put there almost 100 years ago by the tin miners. Many residents were angry and wanted to cut that bridge down so that the people could not come over on our side. I argued strongly against doing that and suggested that we should send a delegation to the people of Yelwa to see what was going on. This went on for about two or three days and finally some of our residents volunteered to go to Yelwa. They met the chief of the village. They discovered that our residents had been right. There had indeed been armed people on their side of the river. However, the chief said that they were afraid that we were going to come and attack their village so they had sent out two or three scouts just to watch us and be able to alert the village if we came to attack them. Both sides were very relieved at this news and both sides agreed that they would notify the other if there were any attacks coming their way. In fact, the chief said, "Tomorrow we are going to kill a cow. Send somebody over and we will send some of the meat back to you."

The point is that things were not as they appeared to be and, in this case, it was certainly much better to talk than to fight. If we want to enjoy the dividends of peace, we will need to learn to talk and not fight.

**Peace is always better than violence.**

We all recognize that sometimes it is almost impossible to avoid going to war to protect one's citizens. Most of us would agree that this was the only option that the Nigerian government had in protecting innocent people from Boko Haram. However, where possible, peace always had better results than violence.

- Peace is always positive.
- Peace preserves lives and protects property.
- Peace enables people to build a positive and happier future.
- Peace creates a normal atmosphere than enables youth to follow their dreams.

On the other hand, violence is nearly always negative.

- Violence destroys property, snatches away lives and leaves grieving families.
- Violence plants the seeds of hatred and future retaliation and conflict.
- Violence is costly and creates poverty and privation.

If we have a choice to make between peace or violence, God's people must always choose peace.



## **Conclusion**

I will conclude this chapter by telling a story about a pastor in Jos who lived by the principles of peacemaking I have tried to articulate in this presentation.

This is the story about Rev. Dr. Sunday Gomna, former pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Anguwar Rimi.<sup>7</sup> This church is one of the closest churches to my house and Sunday has been my student in the university both at the diploma level and the MA level. He was a student at the Baptist Seminary, Ogbomoso when the events related to this story occurred.

From 2001 to 2008, Immanuel Baptist Church was burned three times and a temporary shelter that was put up after the November 2008 crisis was also torn down. During each crisis, an average of six church families lost their homes, including the parsonage which contained all of Rev. Sunday's belongings. During the second crisis, his office which he had moved to a safer location was destroyed along with his almost completed MA thesis. Therefore, he and his church have really suffered as a result of these crises.

A couple of years after our first crisis, the Plateau State governor was suspended and an acting governor was installed. This acting governor invited leaders from various communities to come to meet him and share their observations about the crisis, including the community leaders of the Anguwar Rimi area. Two pastors along with several Muslim elders made up the delegation. When it was Pastor Sunday's turn to speak he said,

Your Excellency, I could tell you about the time my church was burned the first time but I am not going to do that. I could tell you about the time my church was burned the second time but I will not do that either. I will tell you about the time they came to burn my church the third time. When they arrived that time, my Muslim neighbor who lives across the street stopped the boys and said, "You cannot burn this church. This is a house of prayer." When the boys insisted, the old man said, "If you need to burn something, you can burn my house but you cannot burn this church again."

As soon as Rev. Gomna said that the acting governor stopped him and said, "Who was that man? I want to know his name." His name was supplied.

After the meeting was over and the delegation was outside, one of the Muslim elders said to Pastor Gomna, "Pastor, why did you do that? We know what you could have said about the loss of your church and your home but why did you choose to say something good about one of our people instead?" Sunday said,

We are the elders of our community. We do have some problems in our community but do we really need to disturb the governor with those small things? For example, some of your boys keep coming over to our church, breaking in and stealing our sound equipment. In addition, some of the youth defecate on our church property. However, I think we are wise enough to handle those small problems.

The elders quickly agreed.

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<sup>7</sup> This story was told to me personally by Sunday Gomna who has also read this account to confirm its accuracy.

The following Sunday, Pastor Gomna invited the Muslim elders to come at 2:00 in the afternoon. They came to the church and accepted the food that the pastor offered and even removed their hats when they went inside the church. The pastor showed them the holes where the boys had been breaking in and the place where they had been using the church grounds as a toilet. The elders promised him that this would not happen again.

A few months later, during a church service, while playing, a Muslim child threw a stone over the fence of the church. The stone broke out the wind screen of the only vehicle in the car park. A security guard who saw the incident, arrested the child, and took him to the police station at Anguwar Rogo. When the service was over and Pastor Sunday was informed about this, he went immediately to the police station. He told the DPO, "We are removing this case from you. This is not a police case." The DPO said, "If you remove this case from us, we cannot guarantee you compensation for the wind screen." The pastor said, "That does not matter. These are children of our neighbors and we will sort that out with them."

The parents of the child involved were very apologetic but also very poor. To repair the vehicle cost 20,000 Naira. The owner of the car agreed to contribute 7,000 Naira herself. While the Muslim neighbor was trying to borrow money, Pastor Gomna was able to raise 13,000 Naira from among his members. They presented the money to the Muslim neighbor who in turned gave it to the o0wner of the vehicle. A few days later the Muslim elders heard about this and came to Pastor Gomna. One of them said, "Pastor, we have never experienced anything like this before." Another said, "This is the kind of Christianity we heard about when Mohammed was driven from Mecca and received by Christians."

Obviously, there has been more tension in the area but the tension is not from people in the local community. In fact, Pastor Gomna testified that after this when he walked through that area, the Muslims often bought him suya. They have even called him to solve marriage problems. And, when a rumor went around that Pastor Gomna was going to be moved to a bigger church, a delegation of Muslims came to see him and said, "Pastor, you cannot go."

Rev. Dr. Sunday Gomna is a leader. He is committed to responding to things the way Jesus taught us to respond and he is also committed to teaching his people to do the same. He is a person who has decided to stop talking and do something practical. Sunday Gomna is a pastor who serves as a great challenge to the rest of us.

The principles of peace making that I have talked about, like choosing dialogue over violence, and going directly to your perceived enemies rather than believing rumors, are not artificial unreachable theories. They are things that have been practiced right here in Jos.

The question is: Will you practice them?

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Ministry of Reconciliation: The Kingdom Antidote to Violence**

This address was originally presented to the Integral Mission Consultation at the Carter Conlon Conference Center, Jos, Nigeria on 27 April 2021 with the commissioned title “Breaking the Cycle of Violence and Poverty in Nigeria: Pathways to Overcoming Terrorism and Banditry.” This was a sub-theme of the conference theme which was “Addressing Poverty, Terrorism and Banditry.” Though I have changed the title, to give the presentation context and specific application, I have left in the presentation other issues related to the original title and the conference theme. This conference was sponsored by Micah Nigeria which is the country representation of Micah Global. This organization is leading a global movement of Christian aid, development, emergency, and advocacy organizations along with churches, theological institutions and mission agencies committed to transforming the travesty of poverty and other evils through integral mission. The conference was primarily designed for leaders and workers of the various denominations and peace organizations working for peace in Nigeria.

#### **Introduction**

There are few things if any that are more important in this world than to establish and maintain peace. This can only be done in Nigeria if we break the cycle of violence and poverty. Although I am the director of the Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies at the University of Jos, the area of peacemaking is not a part of my professional training and expertise. Therefore, I am not an expert on things like violence, terrorism, or banditry.

I am a theologian. I learned very early in my career that God calls people to be specialists in various things and gives to those people special insights and abilities in those areas. Since that is true, I will not attempt to approach the topic of violence and peace from the viewpoint of an expert. I will leave this up to people like my colleagues at the Centre. I will attempt to address this topic from the viewpoint of one who has spent a lifetime studying the Bible.

#### **Preliminary Observations**

Four key words are used in the theme of this conference: Violence, Poverty, Terrorism and Banditry. They are all related and overlap.

- Violence is negative aggressive activity, usually involving a weapon where bodily harm is done or threatened to another person or group of persons.
- Poverty is lacking the basic necessities of life to live a meaningful life.
- Terrorism is using violence to intimidate innocent people and force them to conform to a particular ideology. Terrorism uses violence to promote a specific cause.
- Banditry is the practice of illegally and forcefully taking the possessions from other people. It may be done with or without the use of weapons.

Violence, terrorism, and banditry often lead to poverty but poverty can exist without those things. Poverty, caused by other issues, often pushes people toward banditry and violence.

Many combatants fighting for Boko Haram and ISWAP (Islamic State of West Africa Province) come from poverty. These organizations often guarantee these young men food which satisfies their physical needs and offer them important positions that satisfy their need for meaning and success. So, poverty fuels violence, terrorism, and banditry.<sup>8</sup>

A world filled with violence, poverty, terrorism, and violence is not the kind of world God created. In fact, God's original world was the exact opposite of these things.

- ***It was a world filled with beauty.*** There was nothing in this world to disturb the splendor and attraction of that place.
- ***It was a world filled with abundance.*** Adam and Eve had all kinds of fruit and other foods and there was no hunger or poverty in Eden.
- ***It was a world filled with peace.*** There was no violence or terrorism or banditry or even the kinds of disagreement that lead to such things because everyone there and everything there was in perfect harmony with God. Everything was perfectly submissive to the will of God. The Garden of Eden was the perfect picture of peace.

## **The Impact of Sin**

Unfortunately, we know that sin entered into that world and generated big problems. In fact, it created at least three kinds of problems.

### ***First sin created a breach between humans and God.***

The first hint of this is when Adam and Eve heard God in the Garden, they hid themselves from him (Genesis 3:8). They knew they had disobeyed and that he would be disappointed with them. This is further illustrated when God asked Adam and Eve what they had done. Their disobedience created a breach between God and the humans which is dramatically illustrated when Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden (3:23) and thus out of the presence of God.

### ***Second, sin created a breach in the human race.***

At first, we see only a small hint of this. When God asked Adam whether he had eaten the forbidden fruit, Adam said "*The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it*" (Genesis 3:12). Here Adam is justifying his actions by blaming others. And the hardship that produced poverty and the sinful way of thinking led to the first example of violence in the world. Cain was not happy his brother's gifts were accepted by God better than his own so, in a fit of anger and jealousy, he killed his brother (Genesis 4:8).

### ***Third, sin created chaos in the whole world.***

As a result of this breach with God, the earth, including its environment was spoiled. God said, "*Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field*" (Genesis 3:17-18). This is the kind of earth that the rest of humanity inherited from our parents. It is a world filled with misunderstanding and disagreement which often leads to jealousy, conflict, and violence. Adam and Eve and their descendants had to learn to live in an atmosphere that was completely different from what God had originally

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<sup>8</sup> Although poverty is related to the other issues, I will say little more in this presentation about poverty.

planned for them. When they were driven from Eden, not only did that create hardship and poverty in the world but it encouraged violence that laid the foundation for banditry and terrorism. Thus, poverty and banditry and violence and terrorism have spread all over the world and many of us have experienced these things. This is the theological explanation of how poverty and violence and terrorism and banditry entered the world.

All of us have experienced the disruptions and distortions that took place as a result of humanity turning its back on God. In addition, many have experienced banditry, violence, and terrorism.

## **Personal Experiences**

I attended a boarding school during my secondary school years. One night we saw the flashing lights of an emergency vehicle outside our hostel. We soon learned that a teenager had come on campus to steal a part from a vehicle. He had jacked up the vehicle and was working under it to remove the part when the jack collapsed and the vehicle fell on him, crushing the life out of him. All of the students in that hostel received a sad and shocking demonstration of the serious consequences of banditry.

About 15 years ago, the university sponsored a party across the street from my house for a group of 15 students from the US who had been visiting for three weeks. The electricity was off when we returned home. We had taken some chairs from our house so several young people helped us carry them back. I was the last one to enter the house. When I did, a young man came in behind me with a gun. He first of all shot at me and then he told me to get down on the floor and kicked me in the face when I was bending down to get on the floor. There were at least four thieves that came into my house and several more that remained outside. So, I know what it is like to experience the violence of armed robbery.

I have lived in Jos since 1991 which covers the period of the five major episodes of violence that the city has experienced between 2001 and 2021. Some of these were a result of ethnic and political tensions but some of the bombs that exploded were placed there by religious extremist Boko Haram insurgents. So, we have also experienced terrorism first-hand as well.

I do not need to convince most people that there is banditry, violence and terrorism in Nigeria nor do I need to convince them that this often leads to poverty.

I will now look at violence and terrorism from a Biblical and theological perspective.

## **Theological Perspective**

### **Similarities between Biblical Days and Now**

Human nature does not change. The kinds of violence and terrorism and banditry that existed in the Bible days continue with us today.

### ***Religious Fanatics***

The people behind the killing of Jesus were religious fanatics. They were Pharisees and “*teachers of the law.*” They were the most educated and respected leaders in society. Yet, they turned against Jesus and succeeded in convincing the Roman government to crucify

him. Do we have any religious fanatics in the world today? Do we have any religious fanatics in Nigeria? Most of us will agree that Boko Haram and the break-away organization ISWAP are fanatical religious organizations.

### ***Armed Thieves***

Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan which illustrates that armed robbery happened often in that society (Luke 10:30-37). Nigeria is filled with such people. These are the bandits in Katsina, Niger and Zamfara who have become professional thieves. They specialize in livestock rustling. There is probably some link between them and Boko Haram, if nothing else but a common source of getting arms. However, they are not motivated by religion but greed, though they may use religion as an excuse to do some of the things they do.

### ***Ethnic Insurgents***

The fight to capture Canaan for Israel was primarily an ethnic war. *“These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan (he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience)”* (Judges 3:1-2). At the end of Judges there was a genocide. The other tribes fought against the tribe of Benjamin and almost annihilated them. Today this is similar to the traditional conflict between farmers and herders. It is primarily an ethnic conflict.

### ***Opportunistic Kidnappers***

There is no specific example of kidnapping in the Bible. However, it must have been occasionally practiced because there is legislation about it: *“If someone is caught kidnapping a fellow Israelite and treating or selling them as a slave, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among you”* (Deuteronomy 24:7). Most of our Nigerian kidnappers are people who have no ideological philosophy they are trying to promote. They are just common thieves trying to get easy money. They are motivated by greed. It has been estimated by former Nigerian senator, Shehu Sani, that in the last five years, over 100 million US dollars have been paid in ransom in Nigeria.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Corrupt Government Agents***

Roman officials left Paul in prison in Caesarea because they were hoping for money (Acts 24:26). Do I need to point out specific examples to prove to you that there are corrupt police officers or army troops or other corrupt government agents in Nigeria today?

### ***Common Thieves***

Rachael stole the household gods that belonged to her father (Genesis 31:19). We read this sad statement in the book of Judges: *“In opposition to him these citizens of Shechem set men on the hilltops to ambush and rob everyone who passed by”* (Judges 9:25). The fact that

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen Busari, “Armed men stormed her school in a kidnapping raid. Then she found her family in her captors' hideout.” CNN, April 26, 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/04/26/africa/kidnapping-zamfara-family-cmd-intl/index.html>. Accessed 27 April 2021

we spend so much money on burglar bars and security lights in Nigeria reminds us that this problem is with us as well.

The point is that the conditions that we experience today are similar to what were experienced in the Bible. Therefore, if the Bible has anything to say about solving these problems, we should listen very well.

## **Lessons from Theology**

God was obviously disappointed with the rebellious decisions of Adam and Eve. No doubt he wanted to be merciful to them but, based upon his own system of justice, he sent them out of the Garden and allowed them and their descendants to experience the consequences of rebellion against God. However, God will not be defeated by his enemy. God allows the human race to suffer because of their sin but he is not prepared to allow the human race to perpetually remain in that sinful condition. Therefore, God created a plan to stop the sin and rebellion against God and reverse the conditions that sin brought into the world.

What was the strategy? It can be described in one word “**reconciliation.**” Note these verses:

*All this is from God, who **reconciled** us to himself through Christ and gave us the **ministry of reconciliation**: that God was **reconciling** the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the **message of reconciliation** . . . We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: **Be reconciled to God.** (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).*

*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him **to reconcile to himself all things**, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But **now he has reconciled you** by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation (Colossians 1:19-22).*

What can we learn from these two passages about reconciliation?

- **We were alienated from God because of sin.** “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior” (Colossians 1:21).
- **God initiated the reconciliation process.** This is stated at least three different times in these verses (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19; Colossians 1:19, 22).
- **Reconciliation to God comes through Jesus Christ.** God has chosen Jesus as the agent to provide this reconciliation—“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:19).
- **God has given us the ministry of reconciliation.** This is stated in 2 Corinthians 5:18 and 19. We are God’s agents and “ambassadors” of reconciliation.
- **God desires to reconcile all things to himself.** “...and through him **to reconcile to himself all things**, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Colossians 1:19). God is not interested only in reconciling humanity back to himself but everything that was touched by the fall. This even includes the polluted environment we humans have created.

God desires and has planned to remove sin and all its consequences from this world so that the world will be restored to the perfect and pristine condition that existed before. Sin created many problems but nearly all of them can be solved through reconciliation.

- **Reconciliation with God.** Sin causes a rift between God and humanity so God desires us to be reconciled to himself. *“God was reconciling the world to himself.”*
- **Reconciliation with an offended brother.** Sin caused divisions between human beings so God wants to reconcile people to one another. *“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift”* (Matthew 5:23-24).
- **Reconciliation with one’s neighbor.** After describing the greatest command was to love God, Jesus said, *“And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”* (Matthew 22:39). The word “love” certainly implies reconciliation.
- **Reconciliation with your enemy.** Jesus made this or similar demand repeatedly: *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”* (Matthew 5:43-44; Luke 6:27). This is the part we are particularly interested in understanding better.

How is going God going to bring reconciliation to this world? There are two key principles that God uses to do his work on this earth.

- Whenever God works on this earth, he always works through humans.
- Whenever God works on this earth, he always works the hard way, the slow way, the difficult way, the progressive way, which means he starts very small, moves slowly but eventually succeeds.

A key scripture found early in the Bible gives a hint about the tools God was going to use to bring about reconciliation.

*The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”* (Genesis 12:1-3).

There are two promises in this section that relate to everything else in the Bible.

- Promise One: *“I will make you into a great nation.”* (Genesis 12:2a)
- Promise Two: There are several related statements but they are summarized in the statement: *“all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”* (12:3b).

The creation of the nation Israel followed the two principles described earlier. All events that were part of the process of building the nation were done by human beings. In addition...

- At the end of Abraham’s life there was no nation.
- At the end of Genesis 200 years later there was still no nation.
- At the end of the Pentateuch 600 years later, there was no nation.
- At the end of Joshua and Judges there was still no nation.



It took at least 1000 years before the promise to build a nation was fulfilled. However, God did indeed fulfill his promise to make a great nation out of the children of Abraham. And he did so by using human beings and he did so in the hard, slow, difficult, progressive way. The building of the nation and its unfortunate decline are the story of the Old Testament.

What about the second promise? This is what Jesus came to earth to do. The nation was designed for one particular group of people, the descendants of Abraham. However, when Jesus came to this world, he came to reconcile the whole world back to God. This fulfilled the promise that “*all peoples on earth will be blessed through you*” (Genesis 12:3).

Perhaps the most well-known scripture in the New Testament is John 3:16 which says, “*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” The everlasting life is another way of saying that one has been reconciled permanently to God. Reconciling all people back to God is the story of the New Testament. This is a long, slow, voluntary process that requires human cooperation.

The four key variables in this presentation are violence, terrorism, banditry, and poverty. All of these are consequences of humanity’s rebellion against God. Therefore, a part of the reconciliation process that God has created is solving those problems.

How do we do this? What is the solution to these things? God has actually given two models for dealing with these issues. These are hinted at in the Genesis 1:1-3 where God promised to build a great nation and also be a blessing to all the peoples in the earth.

## **God’s Two Major Models for Dealing with Social Evils**

### **Old Testament Model**

What was the purpose of Israel? We can summarize that purpose in three things.

- First, the sacrificial system, which was part of Israel’s religious life, helped to lay the foundation for understanding the atoning sacrifice of Jesus that would satisfy God’s demands for all the sins of humanity and reconcile us back to him.
- Second, the nation of Israel was to provide a model for how the people of the society should function and be supervised. In other words, its leaders were to demonstrate the principles of justice, compassion, and provide security for its people.
- Third, the nation was to lay the foundation for implementation of the second promise God made to Abraham—making his children a blessing to all the people on the earth.

Let’s expand on the second one—the provision of a model of how societies should function. God created the nation and gave specific details about that nation to show what future nations should be like. Based upon that model, what should nations provide for their people?

***A nation should provide security.***

A standing army was maintained in Israel in order to protect its citizens from external and internal threats. Nearly all of the wars during the Old Testament period were fought to protect the citizens of Israel against foreign threats. (Unfortunately, there were some illegitimate civil wars as well.)

***A nation should provide justice.***

There is much guidance in the Mosaic law for how to punish people for various kinds of social vices. This is the place where God tells us how to deal with bandits, terrorists and those who commit violence.

- *"Anyone who strikes a person with a fatal blow is to be put to death"* (Exodus 21:12).
- *"Anyone who attacks their father or mother is to be put to death"* (21:15).
- *"Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper's possession"* (21:16).
- *"Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death"* (21:17).

There were other punishments for lesser crimes.

- *"Whoever steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep."* (Exodus 22:1)
- *"Anyone who steals must certainly make restitution, but if they have nothing, they must be sold to pay for their theft. If the stolen animal is found alive in their possession—whether ox or donkey or sheep—they must pay back double"* (22:3-4).

***A nation should provide protection for minorities and the needy.***

Specific legislation was given to protect foreigners (Exodus 23:9). In addition, Israel also had specific laws to protect widows and orphans (Deuteronomy 14:29). These laws suggest that God desires for nations to properly care for minorities, the weak and vulnerable.

God has given a model of how he expects nations to care for their people. This is a step toward reconciliation in that it gets rid of chaos. However, that is not the only model God gave for how to deal with bandits and those who commit violence and terrorism.

**New Testament Model**

The New Testament introduces to us a new kind of kingdom. Note the way the preaching of both John the Baptist and Jesus is introduced:

- *"In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'" (Matthew 3:1-2).*
- *"From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near'" (4:17).*

The point is that John and Jesus came preaching about a kingdom. However, if you study the kind of kingdom they were teaching about, it was obviously different from the kingdom that we see in the Old Testament. Note these differences in the kingdom:

- *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment"* (Matthew 5:21-22).
- *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (5:27-28).

- "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.' But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne" (5:33-34).
- "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also" (5:38-39).
- "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (5:43-44).

In each of these cases, Jesus raises the standard of response to various social problems. This obviously suggests a different kind of kingdom than the previous one God had created.

- This is a kingdom without borders.
- This is a kingdom that includes all ethnicities.
- This is a kingdom that does not have a central government.
- This is a kingdom that does not have an army or a judicial system.
- This is a kingdom that is entered on a voluntary basis, one person at a time.
- This is a kingdom that one chooses to become a part of rather than being a citizen because of birth.
- This is a kingdom whose citizens have been reconciled to God and voluntarily live according to God's principles.

This is the kingdom that we are currently experiencing. If you are a follower of Jesus, you are part of his kingdom. This kingdom has a different goal than the nation of Israel. The purpose of this kingdom is to reconcile the whole world to God. Remember these verses:

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).*

Although God's principles of justice do not change, God has a completely different purpose for Jesus' kingdom than he had for the Old Testament kingdom. That is why Jesus said, "You have heard it said . . . but I am saying to you."

### **Application of These Truths**

There are two important truths we must understand to be able to apply the teachings of Jesus in our lives.

When Jesus said, "You have heard it said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' but I am saying to you 'Do not resist an evil person,'" **he was not annulling the principle of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."** He was only saying that that principle would not apply in his kingdom. The principle of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" still applies to and is used by nations. That is a fundamental principle of society. That is what the nation of Israel teaches us—the principle of justice must be applied to all citizens fairly. This is supported by Paul's statement: "For the one in authority is God's servant for your good.

*But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer” (Roman 13:4)*

A second truth is that *the followers of Jesus are citizens of two kingdoms*. We are obviously citizens of the country of our birth and perhaps another country. Thus, Jesus teaches us that we are to pay taxes and be loyal to that country (Matthew 22:21). However, we are also citizens of Jesus' kingdom. And we must be loyal and committed to that kingdom as well. If there is ever a conflict between those two kingdoms, Peter tells us: *“We must obey God rather than human beings!”* (Acts 5:29). We admit that sometimes it is difficult to be citizens of two nations. It is not always easy to figure out what we should do. For example, security agents are government representatives and, when functioning in that capacity, they may do things that ordinary citizens cannot do or even they themselves cannot do as regular citizens.

In this new kingdom, soldiers or other security agents may *“bear the sword.”* They may participate in protective violence if doing so at the government's direction to protect its citizens and insure order in society. However, ordinary citizens who are part of Jesus' kingdom should not take up the sword. There are two reasons for this.

- The first reason is that the responsibility of protecting society and enforcing justice belongs to the civil kingdom and not Jesus' kingdom.
- The second reason is related to the topic of this presentation which will be explained in detail shortly.

What does Jesus teach his followers about responding to terrorists, violent people, and bandits? Jesus' teachings about our responses to these people is one of the strangest and most difficult teachings Jesus ever gave.

*But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. (Luke 6:27-37)*

Why would Jesus make such extreme statements—statements that seem to contradict the system of justice which God created in the Old Testament as well as our common instincts? It only makes sense when someone robs another person, that the robber should be punished. But Jesus says we are not to do anything to punish him. He did not say that government should not punish them. He said that we as individual citizens of his kingdom should not punish them or even demand the punishment that would be just.

It is interesting that Jesus did not just teach these things; he lived them as well. We know how Jesus responded to those who arrested him and convinced Pilate to crucify him. Peter summarizes: “*When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly*” (1 Peter 2:23).

Why did Jesus teach and practice such extreme—such unnatural reactions to violence? The reason is that he was willing to leave justice up to the government, even if it were perverted or was even used against him. Jesus was more interested in reconciling even his enemies to God than insisting on justice to guilty individuals. Therefore, he instructed his followers to treat enemies kindly. They were to do nice things even for those doing wicked things to them.

Why did Jesus demand such radical reactions? Because Jesus knew that people are attracted by kindness and compassion and generosity and blessing. Such things draw people whereas abusing and cursing and punishing people drive people further from us and further from God.

Here is the truth. All of the terrorists and bandits and those who do violence are children of God—alienated children of God. Their very violent activities demonstrate just how alienated they are from God. However, God loves those alienated people. He is broken-hearted over their criminal activities. He wants to see them reconciled to God. How are these people going to be reconciled to God? It is going to happen through human beings. And it is most likely going to happen through those people who are already reconciled to God. Therefore, Jesus is saying something like this: “Treat my wayward children gently. Be kind to them. Do nice things for them. Maybe your kindness will be what it takes to reconcile them to God.”

Once, David’s son Absalom attempted a coup against David and his kingdom. All of David’s soldiers immediately created a plan to crush the rebellion. They were government soldiers who had been given the responsibility of protecting the integrity of the nation. Thus, they saw this coup attempt from purely a government point of view. As the king, David understood and appreciated their convictions and their strategies. After all, he was the king. However, David had an additional perspective on this crisis. He viewed Absalom from a father’s point of view. Therefore, David commanded his military generals, Joab, Abishai and Ittai, “*Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake.*” (2 Samuel 18:5).

From a government’s point of view, Absalom deserved death. And the soldiers, representing the government, eventually ignored David’s sentiment and did what the government should have done. However, from David’s point of view, Absalom was his son, a part of his family. Regardless of what he had done, David was hoping for reconciliation and mercy for his son.

This is the way that I interpret these passages related to Jesus’ teachings about enemies. Yes, these bandits and terrorist and violent people are criminals and from the government’s point of view, they deserve judgment. And the followers of Jesus do not have to interfere when the government fulfills that role. However, as strange as this seems to us, these bandits and terrorists are children of God, in some sense of the word, and he loves them and wants them to be reconciled to himself. Therefore, God’s children who have already responded to him and been reconciled to him—they should treat these bandits and rebels

gently and hopefully that kindness will bring these people to their senses and they will be reconciled to God.

## **Specific Application**

### **Application to the Early Church**

Our immediate reaction is to say this is impossible. This may be a good theoretical model but no human being can respond this way. A good way to see how Jesus' teachings were interpreted and applied is to look at the Book of Acts. This was the period of time when Jesus' apostles were the leaders of the church. How did they interpret and apply these things? There were certainly many examples of violence perpetrated against the followers of Jesus in the Book of Acts. What was the responses of Jesus' followers to these acts of violence?

- ***They prayed and experienced supernatural deliverance.*** Peter experienced two of the most dramatic jailbreaks in history (Acts 5:18-23; 12:5-12).
- ***They prayed and died.*** Stephen and James both died as a result of their faith (7:60; 12:2). I am sure that the church was praying for them but for reasons best known to God, those prayers were not answered.
- ***They ran away.*** When Stephen was killed, the followers of Jesus were involuntarily scattered all over Palestine (8:1). They ran for their lives.
- ***They sought for and took advantage of government protection.*** When Paul heard of a plot to kill him, he had his nephew inform the security forces and then he took full advantage of the massive protection the Roman government provided him (23:17).
- ***They took advantage of the court system.*** When Paul did not think he was getting a fair hearing at the lower court level, he appealed all the way to Rome (25:11). He was eventually released from that imprisonment based upon the government's decision.

It is interesting and challenging to us that there is no single example of the church or any of Jesus' followers responding to violence with violence.

Why did Jesus and his followers do things this way? They were committed to reconciling all things to Jesus.

- When you kill your enemies, they cannot be reconciled to God.
- When you retaliate with hatred against your enemies, that is going to drive them and their families further from the truth of the gospel.

However, whenever you love them and give to them and bless them and say good things to them and about them, they are going to be attracted to the kingdom that you represent and there is a greater chance that they will be reconciled to God.

### **Summary Principles**

How should we citizens of Jesus' kingdom respond to these radical truths?

***Do not confuse what government does regarding peace and justice with what we as individual followers of Jesus must do.***

I have no problem with government agents doing their jobs. I have a junior brother who is a police officer and a daughter in the military. I support both of them. I believe that

they can serve God perfectly well while doing the work of government in protecting its citizens and enforcing justice. In addition, I have no problem with NGOs or private citizens lobbying their governments to insist that they fulfill their God-given and constitutional responsibilities. Those are privileges that come from being citizens of nations.<sup>10</sup>

We in the Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies at the University of Jos work with government agencies. We help make recommendations to government about their policies and strategies. We join them in their interventions. As Christians we have a responsibility to make our voice heard in government. However, we must not confuse our roles as citizens of Jesus's kingdom with the government's role in responding to banditry, violence, and terrorism. We who are part of Jesus' kingdom must resist trying to do the government's role of defense or justice and do what God has called us to do.

***Ensure that your most important goal in life is to reconcile terrorists, bandits, and violent people back to God rather than satisfying your personal sense of justice.***

Paul says that God has reconciled us and given us a ministry of reconciliation. You cannot reconcile the enemies of God while shouting angry rhetoric and perpetuating violent actions. Neither can you reconcile God's enemies to him without showing kindness and patience and grace. If you show the same kind of grace and mercy to your enemies as God has shown to you, there is a possibility they will be reconciled to you and ultimately be reconciled to God.

***Determine that the ethical part of your Christian faith will be to follow the teachings and example of Jesus.***

There is no confusion about what Jesus taught and practiced related to violence committed against him. So, if you follow Jesus, this means you will forgive your enemies and be gracious and kind to them. Do not allow yourself to fall back to the traditional ways of retaliation and revenge that were practiced by your ancestors. Be gentle and generous to those who mistreat you. Pray for your enemies and bless those who abuse you. This is an extremely difficult task but it is what Jesus taught and practiced. And it is what will lead to reconciliation and joy.

## **Conclusion**

None of us ever wants to experience terrorism, violence, or banditry. There are appropriate and legal ways that government deals with such anti-social behavior. If you are a government agent, you may have to use the laws of the land and even legal violence to protect the property and lives and human rights of innocent citizens and ensure that justice is done in society. However, if you are a follower of Jesus you must see these people as distant brothers and sisters who are not yet reconciled to God. We, as followers of Jesus, must use every means possible to reach them and reconcile them to ourselves and ultimately to God. This is the pathway that the citizens of Jesus' kingdom must follow to solve the problem of banditry, violence, and terrorism.

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<sup>10</sup> Theologians differ over whether one can exercise self-defense. The issue revolves around the interpretative question of whether Jesus was speaking literally when he was making these radical statements or whether he was speaking hyperbolically. I will not try to resolve that issue in this presentation but will say that it has been the majority opinion of most Christian theologians that Old Testament practice of self-defense is legitimate for Christian believers.

## Chapter Three

### Taking Control: Rejecting Violence and Embracing Peace

This address was presented to a Scripture Union Peace Building Meeting, at the Nigeria Bible Translation Trust in Jos, Nigeria on 23 March 2011. To provide some context, on 8 January 2011, about 10 weeks earlier, a period of serious unrest sparked off in Jos in which somewhere between 60 and 100 people were killed, including one of my students. Three days before this presentation, on a Sunday morning, there had been a bombing at a church in Anguwar Rukaba, on the north side of Jos. Hence this presentation was given at a tense time in the city of Jos.

#### Introduction

For the last 20 years, the church in Jos has often been a victim of painful events. We have often closed the doors of our churches because of fear of attacks or bombings or other violence. We were not well prepared for the conflict that arose in this city and therefore, we have often responded spontaneously and without really thinking through what we are doing

- We have been angry.
- We have been confused.
- We have become suspicious.
- We have been uncertain about what to do.
- We have often reacted like those who have attacked us.
- We have even been characterized by bitter hatred and retaliation.

This is understandable because we were not properly prepared for such a conflict. When we are not taught from the Bible about what to do in a specific situation, we tend to fall back on our traditional worldviews. Unfortunately, in our various crises here in Jos and other communities suffering violence, our actions and reactions have at times demonstrated more of a traditional African worldview than a Christian worldview. Such responses are normal and natural and even understandable to some extent but they are not Christian.

It is now time for the Church and church leaders to take control of our situation. We must stop being pushed around by negative thinking and shallow theology. We must become proactive rather than reactive. We must develop a Christian response to these crises and find a way to get this Christian response down to the Christian grassroots. It is past time for us to be deliberate and wise in our responses to violence rather than be confused and compromised.

Many of us have seen the smoke and heard the gunfire and seen the bodies. Some of us have lost loved ones and property. Many of our churches have seriously suffered. We have been tempted to wonder where our God has been in these conflicts. Are we not serving an almighty God who should be concerned about us? Why would our loving God allow such terrible things to happen to his people? I will respond to those questions with some brief propositions that will hopefully lead us to take a more thoughtful look at our situation.

#### **Proposition One: God will triumph over all things in the future.**

Several hundred years before the coming of Jesus, the Old Testament prophet looked into the distant future and stated that *“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).* The Jewish world was



convinced that this was going to happen when the Messiah came to the world. Therefore, there developed an extensive literature among the Jewish community about the glorious and prosperous age which would be led by this future great king.

When Jesus asked his disciples who people thought he was, Peter confessed on the part of his fellow apostles that Jesus was indeed that messiah and received a special blessing by Jesus for his words (Matthew 16:16). All Christians now believe that Jesus was indeed the messiah who was predicted in the Old Testament. However, we now know that the fulfillment of the prophecy by Habakkuk and many other Old Testament prophecies did not take place when Jesus came to this earth the first time. We Christians have revised our theology to believe that there is still a time in the future when the earth will be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.

The latter documents in the New Testament add to this conviction of the triumph of Jesus over all things. The Apostle Paul quoted Isaiah saying, “‘*As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.*’” (Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11). Later, Paul applied this directly to Jesus when he said,

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:9-11).

The Christian faith teaches that Jesus is the savior of the world and that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is lord. This will be the time when the glory of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Unfortunately, that has not yet happened. And there is no general agreement about exactly when and how that will happen. However, we believe it will happen. We are in the midst of the global eternal conflict now but we know that in the end, Jesus will win.

### **Proposition Two: The followers of Jesus are God’s representatives on the earth.**

Jesus is the ultimate ruler in this world. John 1:1-2 says Jesus was the creator of the world. “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*” Jesus is declared to be the “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14: 16:19). Jesus said, “*I am the light of the world*” (John 8:12; 9:5). That means that he is the one who gives meaning and fulfillment in this world.

One of the most amazing thoughts in our Christian faith is that Jesus has called us to represent him on this earth.

- ***We are like Jesus.*** Jesus said, “*You are the light of the world*” (Matthew 5:14). Although Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5), he has shared some of that light with us so that we are shining the light of Jesus to a dark world.
- ***We do what Jesus does.*** Jesus said, “*I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven*” (Matthew 18:18). Jesus has granted us the privilege of making decisions that will be honored in heaven.

- ***We are the spokesperson for Jesus.*** Jesus said, “*You will be my witnesses*” (Acts 1:8). We have been made the official spokespersons of Jesus by telling about what we have seen, heard, and witnessed related to Jesus.
- ***We do the work of Jesus.*** “*We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ*” (1 Thessalonians 3:2). Paul states that we are the ones who are doing the work of God on this earth.
- ***We are ambassadors of Jesus.*** Ephesians 6:19-20: “*God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.*” An ambassador is one who represent the head of state in another country. We are God’s ambassadors to our area of influence.

These verses suggest to us we are the ones responsible to implement God’s will on this earth.

These verses also suggest that we have enormous authority. If we are representing the creator of this university and the king of kings and the lord of lords, that means that we have amazing authority. And if we have such authority—the very authority of Christ, why do we not take some authority and deal with this violence situation? After all, we have the backing of God himself who said, “*Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God.*” Jesus is obviously concerned about peace because he is described as the “*prince of peace*” (Isaiah 9:6). And if Jesus is concerned about peace and he has promised to bless us for making peace and has given us his authority to make peace, why should we not boldly engage in peace making?

**Proposition Three: If we are to represent Jesus, we must work within the guidelines he has given us.**

***We must have a proper view of human nature.***

The Bible teaches us that human beings are fallen creatures and have a tendency toward sin and evil. We are also told that humans have a free will. We can choose to serve and obey God or choose not to do so. We cannot force a person to do the right thing. Our observation teaches us that human beings are easily influenced by others. Therefore, we must guard against negative influence and take advantage of positive influence.

***We must represent Jesus properly.***

An ambassador must understand the philosophy and convictions of the head of state he represents very well and never do or say anything that would contradict them. We who are the ambassadors of Jesus must do the same. Jesus was kind and considerate. Jesus was humble and gentle. Jesus was gracious and forgiving. Jesus clearly taught the principles that were to be a part of his kingdom. Therefore, if we are going to represent him, we must understand those principles and we must imitate his actions and attitudes.

- We must teach what Jesus taught.
- We must practice what Jesus practiced.
- We must oppose what Jesus opposed.

We cannot represent Jesus properly if our words and lives and attitudes contradict those of Jesus. The disciples were first called “Christians” at Antioch (Acts 11:26) because they thought and acted and worked like Jesus. They were “little Christs.”

**Proposition Four. If the glory of God is going to fill the earth and every knee is going to bow, we the representatives of Jesus are going to be the ones who make this happen.**

It is one of the most amazing truths in Christianity—that God has chosen weak and imperfect human beings to develop his kingdom and spread his kingdom around the world and make sure that his kingdom principles become a part of every society in the world.

As much as we would like for him to do so, Jesus is not going to swing down out of heaven and enforce his will on this earth. Jesus is not even going to send his angels out of heaven to spread the gospel of Jesus' kingdom around the world. Jesus is not going to use the Holy Spirit to place in the hearts of unbelievers the principles of love and righteousness and holiness and forgiveness without human engagement. God has chosen to use you and me, his representatives on this earth to accomplish these goals.

For the last few years, we have been facing serious ethnic-religious crises that have killed many people and destroyed much property and caused much grief. We have cried and prayed to God that he would somehow supernaturally intervene. We know he is capable of changing the hearts of those on the other side. We have been disappointed God has not done so. However, though it may sound a bit disrespectful, God has been equally as disappointed that we have not done what he expected us to do. We are his only representatives on this earth. He has no other ambassadors other than the members of his church. And, unfortunately, we have been running around in confusion and frustration and anger and sometimes responding with violence to the violence that has been perpetuated against us.

How are we going to take charge of this situation? I will attempt to address this issue by doing three things.

- First, we will look at the undisputed facts.
- Second, we will examine some basic Christian principles that relate to this problem.
- Third, we will suggest some strategies for going back on the offensive and taking control of our situation.

### **Undisputed Facts**

Jesus said, *"You will know the truth and the truth will set you free."* If we are ever going to be set free from violence and destruction and death, we must fight with the truth.

### **Plateau State includes both Christians and Muslims.**

One could solve most of our problems in Plateau State if all of the Muslims would become Christians or all the Christians would become Muslims. However, that is not likely going to happen in our generation. Therefore, we must learn to coexist. To live in isolation and segregation will create more suspicion and will ultimately lead to more strife. Therefore, we must find a way to live in peace and harmony.

### **We have suffered incredible violence and destruction since 2001.**

We have had five major crises since 2002 and are still very much in a crisis situation with all of the kidnapping that is happening in the country. Jesus said, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (John 10:10). That means that whenever we see stealing and killing and destruction, the

enemy of God is at work. We believe that the enemy of God has certainly been at work in Jos during the last ten years. Some say over 10,000 people have been killed in Plateau State. The opportunities and futures of many people have been stolen from them. There has been incredible destruction.

- Destruction of life
- Destruction of property
- Destruction of relationships
- Destruction of opportunities
- Destruction of hope

No one can deny that Jos has suffered terrible destruction. That means then that the enemy of God has been very active in Jos.

### **What we have done so far to bring about peace has not worked.**

Much time and energy and resources have been invested in peace making in Nigeria.

- The soldiers and police have tried to bring about peace. They have kept us from more killing but they have not brought about peace.
- The government has appointed peace commissions and ambassadors for peace and they may have helped a bit but these have not solved the problem.
- There up to 20 organizations doing peace work in Jos, some with international links. These are doing good things. It can certainly be argued that if these had not done the many good things that they have done, things could have been much worse.
- There are peace themes in the primary and secondary school curriculum. These have no doubt helped but not prevented violence.
- The University of Jos has a Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies. It has trained hundreds of professional peace advocates but insecurity continues in Jos.
- The media has promoted jingles and songs and commentaries but violence continues.
- Our churches and mosques have made some attempts to bring about peace but these have not brought about the peace that we all desire.
- The traditional rulers have attempted to mediate but they too have had very limited success.

Since nothing has worked to bring about comprehensive and lasting peace, we have two choices. We can give up and just live with periodic violence. We cannot give up. We must try something else. Jesus pronounced a special blessing on the peacemakers. Therefore, all of the followers of Jesus must be committed to working to establish peace. Therefore, let us look for a new approach to solve our problems.

### **We Christians have not consistently responded with a godly testimony.**

Obviously, there have been some very positive exceptions but we have not consistently followed the teachings of Jesus.

- We have not turned the other cheek.
- We have prayed against our enemies rather than for them.
- We have not taught or practiced forgiveness and reconciliation.
- We have often followed the ways of the unbelievers.

We the followers of Jesus have not created a good image for Christ among our Muslim friends. From the Muslims' point of view, it has been Christians who have burned mosques and destroyed homes and businesses and killed their relatives. Many Muslims no longer feel safe living in Christian communities because they believe that if another crisis comes along, they may be the next ones to be slaughtered by the Christians. Whether we like it or not and whether it is true or not, Christians in many parts of northern Nigeria are viewed as violent and hateful.

### **The Christian faith has the best tools for solving the problem.**

There are many reasons why the Church is the best body to deal with this problem.

- There are churches in every community.
- Pastors and priests and other Christian leaders are normally highly respected in the community who are trained in the art of communication and persuasion.
- Christianity promotes the teachings and practices that would stop the violence like love, gentleness, selflessness, forgiveness, and reconciliation.
- The Christian faith has traditionally worked to solve social and community problems as a part of what is called "holistic faith."
- Our faith is one of the highest motivators in the world. Thus, Christians will do things based upon their faith that they will not do for other reasons.

### **Making Peace is Hard Work.**

The reason that there is not peace in a community is that people tend to see things from different perspectives. In every conflict situation, there are issues of justice that are involved. Both parties believe that they are not being treated with justice. These issues often generate the strongest emotions and emotions cause people to react without thinking. Peacemakers will experience many problems.

- They will be disappointed when their projects do not succeed.
- They will be misunderstood and criticized by their own people.
- Months of hard work can be destroyed by two or three foolish people.

Therefore, anyone who gets involved in peacemaking must do so with the greatest amount of commitment and understanding that it will be painful and stressful and often unsuccessful.

### **You cannot have genuine peace without all parties being involved.**

If you can annihilate or totally dominate an enemy, you can impose conditions for peace. However, I do not think that is going to happen in Nigeria. Therefore, we are going to have to reach out to those on the other side and see if we can establish peace. If you are going to bring people together, you need to have several things.

- You need to have leaders who can make decisions that their followers will accept.
- You need to have leaders who are not looking for some personal benefit.
- You need to have leaders who respect the people on the other side.
- You need to have leaders who are willing to make compromises.

I believe that most of us will accept these as undisputed facts. Therefore, we need to move beyond these things and address the other issues that will help us take control of our situation.

## **Key Christian Principles in Establishing Peace**

We Christians believe that the Bible is the starting place for establishing any belief or practice for Christians. Our various crises in Jos have raised several issues that I think the Bible addresses. I will briefly raise the issues and trust that other Christian leaders will address them in more detail and demonstrate how they apply to our particular situation.<sup>11</sup>

### **Respect for Life**

God places a high value on life. This is illustrated several ways:

- ***God is the author of life including human life*** (Genesis 1:27; 2:7; John 10:10). Anything that God creates should not be thoughtlessly destroyed.
- ***God's enemy is the author of killing, stealing and destruction*** (John 10:10).
- ***God prohibits taking innocent life.*** One of the Ten Commandments says, "*You shall not murder*" (Exodus 20:13).
- ***God prescribes the ultimate penalty for taking human life.*** Exodus 21:12 states: "*Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death.*"

If God is the creator of life and the devil is the destroyer of life, then God's people must always be on the side of saving and preserving and restoring life and not be on the side of destroying it. I believe, as most Christian theologians do, that in certain cases, criminals forfeit their right to life. However, it is government that has the responsibility to take that life and not individuals (Romans 13:4). We Christians must always be on the side of those who are upholding life and not be on the side of those who are wrongfully taking life.

### **Value of Relationships**

God created human beings to be social beings. That means we need one another and that we function best when interact with others. Because we are social beings, there are hundreds of guidelines given in the Bible that relate to our relationship with one another. In fact, six of the Ten Commandments relate to interacting with our fellow human beings. Here are a few scriptures that have a direct bearing on the activities of the Jos Crisis.

- Exodus 22:21: "*Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.*"
- Leviticus 19:18: "*. . . love your neighbor as yourself.*" Jesus repeated this statement three places (Matthew 5:43, 19:19; 22:39).
- Matthew 5:44: "*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you . . .*"
- Romans 12:18: "*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*"

Relationships are important in Africa. Interacting with family, the community and even strangers is a celebrated value. Because of the communal structure of most of Africa, Africans have also traditionally had a lot of experience relating with those from other clans and tribes. Sometimes this has been positive and at other times it has been negative. It is time

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<sup>11</sup> The principles in this section were first articulated in a paper entitled "Reflections on the Christian Responses to Three Jos Crises" that I presented during the Byang Kato Memorial Lecture Series at Jos ECWA Theological Seminary, Jos, Nigeria on 22 February 2010.

for Christian leaders to make sure the relationships we experience and encourage in our communities are consistent with principles about relationships taught in the Bible, particular those related to unbelievers and those who might be considered enemies.

### **Preeminence of Justice**

God is a God of justice. The following sample of verses reflect that truth.

- Psalm 33:5: *“The LORD loves righteousness and justice . . .”*
- Psalm 103:6: *“The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.”*
- Isaiah 30:18: *“Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!”*
- Acts 17:31: *“For he (God) has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed.”*

In addition to God being just, God demands that we also must be just.

- Deuteronomy 16:18-20: *“Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly. Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.”*
- Matthew 23:23: *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.”*

There are several issues in the various Jos crises that relate to justice. First, a crisis period often becomes a crime free zone. People can commit murder and arson and it is often overlooked and excused because it was done during a crisis. Killing an innocent person in a crisis is just as much murder as killing during an armed robbery or other conflict.

I do not have the final answer to the settler-indigene issue. One thing that makes this such a troublesome issue is the perception of injustice. Indigenes are angry that people who were invited to settle in their areas appear to now be taking over the land. Settlers, on the other hand, see it as an injustice that they can live in a place for generations and pay local taxes and build up the local community and still not enjoy the rights of the local citizens.

Justice is not a matter that we take into our own hands. Justice related to legal issues is a responsibility given to government. Paul had no hesitation using his legal rights (Acts 22:25) or appealing to the court system whenever his rights were about to be violated (Acts 25:8). Christians should have nothing to do with “jungle justice” or “mob justice.”

God is a God of justice and demands that his followers be people of justice. I believe that African theologians and Christian leaders must engage in a serious examination of the theology of justice and give the church practical guidelines about how these things apply in times of violence and crisis. That theology is going to include the following:

***We should correct injustice if it is possible and legal.***

Whenever Paul was wrongfully arrested and wrongfully beaten in Philippi, he insisted that those responsible for the actions come and personally release him from prison and, in

essence, apologize for taking the law into their own hands. This was not an issue of evangelism for Paul (Acts 16:37-39). It was a matter of justice, but Paul pursued that justice with almost the same degree of energy and commitment that he did evangelism.

***We should report cases of injustice or potential injustice to appropriate authorities.***

Whenever Paul learned from his nephew about an attempt to kill him, he insisted that this be reported to the authority that could do something about it (Acts 23:17). We sometimes fail to report criminal activities because we believe the authorities will do nothing and may even make things worse. However, the government authorities certainly will do nothing if they know nothing about criminal activities. Paul was willing to cooperate with the Roman military even though it was also filled with corruption and greed because that was the body given the responsibility for security and justice.

***We should not take justice into our own hands.***

We are often tempted to reason, “If the government will not deal with this criminal, we will.” We view our retaliation as being either the instrument of God or a non-responsive government. The Bible is very clear that enforcing justice is not our personal responsibility:

- Matthew 5:38: “*You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.*”
- 1 Peter 3:8-9: “*Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*”

***We should forgive and pray for those who offend us.***

We are tempted to ask God to bring judgment upon our enemies but Jesus teaches us to pray for them—that God will bring them to himself. Though it is very contrary to human nature, Jesus teaches us to forgive those who cause us trouble.

- Matthew 5:43-44: “*You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*”
- Colossians 3:12: “*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.*”

***When justice is beyond our control we should allow God to provide justice.***

God is very capable of defending his honor and protecting the lives and property of his people and punishing those who deserve it. He may do this through many means.

- Proverbs 20:22: “*Do not say, ‘I’ll pay you back for this wrong!’ Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.*” (See also 24:29).
- Romans 12:17-21: “*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your*



*enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

The various Jos crises that have plagued Jos since 2001 were made possible in part because the Biblical ways God has given us to respond to injustice have been ignored.

- Few if any persons have been held responsible for the crimes committed in earlier crises.
- Few people have utilized the system God has ordained for justice—the government agencies that are designed for security and justice.
- Many people, both Christians and Muslims, took justice into their own hands.
- Many Christians were not willing to allow God to do his own justice but insisted on doing the justice themselves.
- Many have people have practice retaliation rather than forgiveness.

Any peace must address issues of justice for without justice there can be no real peace

### **Necessity of Obedience**

Just hours before Jesus was arrested, he said to his disciples, “*If you love me, you will obey what I command*” (John 14:15). John declared nearly 60 years later, “*We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands*” (1 John 2:3). There is really very little question about what Jesus taught and practiced about violence. This is so clear that the early church followed the practice of Jesus with non-violence in every instance of persecution. The question is whether we will obey what Jesus has said.

We are all familiar with the excuses that we sometimes give for our violence.

- ***We are defending the kingdom of God.*** It is God’s kingdom that will suffer if we do not retaliate.
- ***This is an emergency situation.*** Sometimes God’s rules have to be suspended in emergency situations.
- ***This is a totally different situation.*** Had Jesus lived during our time, he would not have said the same thing that he said then.
- ***If we obey Jesus’ teachings this will cause the Church more harm than good.*** Look at what has happened to north Africa which used to be Christian.
- ***We know our responses are wrong, but this is something we just have to do.*** The Lord will just have to forgive us when it is over.

However, obedience is the ultimate test of submission to God. The question our pastors and spiritual leaders must ask us is this: Are we going to obey the simple commands of Jesus or are we going to obey the commands and expectations that are given to us by our culture?

During the last ten years, a major issue has divided the Christian world. Most of us have watched the Anglican church struggle to deal with this issue. The culture in the Western world has changed so much that now homosexuality is accepted as being normal. Christians in Africa insist the Bible is very clear about the issue of homosexuality in the church. It is condemned in no uncertain terms. However, many of these who have homosexual tendencies still feel attracted to Christianity and they want the church to accept them and defend their behavior so they have invented all kinds of excuses to get around the Biblical teachings.

- ***We are defending human rights.*** Surely God is concerned about the rights of all his creations and it would be a violation of the human rights of gay people for them not to be able to express their sexuality in a way that is honest to themselves.
- ***This is a totally different situation.*** Had Jesus lived during our time and had the world understood the issue of homosexual orientation, the Biblical writers would not have said the same things about homosexuality.
- ***If we obey Jesus and prohibit the free expression of homosexuality this will cause us more harm than good.***
- ***We know it is wrong, but this is something we just have to do.*** The Lord will just have to forgive us when it is over.

Do these sound familiar? They are the same kinds of arguments we use in Nigeria to justify our violent reactions to ethnic and religious aggression.

It is time for a resurrection of Christian prophets. They must declare unambiguously what God says about obedience and the consequences of disobedience. And they need to be specific in what it means to obey Jesus' teachings about violence, retaliation, and forgiveness.

### **Importance of Testimony**

Our public testimony is perhaps the primary means of generating church growth. Acts 2:46-47 is part of a summary section in the Book of Acts. It says, "*They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*" Note that the phrase "*enjoying the favor of all the people*" is linked with the next sentence by the conjunction *kai* which says, "*and the Lord added to their number daily.*" People were coming to the church because those on the outside were attracted to what they saw in the church. There was something about their worship and their praise and their holy simple living that attracted the people in Jerusalem to this movement. Obviously, this did not necessarily continue. However, I think it can certainly be demonstrated where people project a testimony of genuineness and humility and kindness and compassion, people are going to be drawn to them and their faith. In fact, Paul made a deliberate policy out of this. He said,

*Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).*

The point I am making is that Paul understood that the way unbelievers viewed him would influence whether or not he would be able to save some of them. Therefore, he lived in such a way as to project a positive testimony.

Those of us who live in the northern part of Nigeria should hang our heads in shame when we think of the image that the typical Muslim in northern Nigeria has of a Christian. This problem suggests that we must be concerned about our testimony. Has our collective Christianity testimony been enhanced or hindered in the last few years in Jos by the ways we have responded to these various crises?

Our testimony is at stake in our reactions during these crises. In fact, the testimony of Jesus is at stake because the only real Jesus that the Muslims know is the Jesus that is demonstrated in the lives of his followers. Paul makes this remarkable statement to the Philippians, *“Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life”* (Philippians 2:14-16a). Stars can only shine in the darkness. There are few things that are darker than that black smoke of our houses burning and the painful testimonies of our loved ones dying. However, these are the times when God is calling us to shine as stars in these dark times.

It is time for our pastors and Christian leaders to develop greater concern for our combined Christian testimony and teach our people that every action and reaction they take is confirming or reversing the image of Christianity in the minds of our Muslim neighbors.

### **Certainty of Persecution**

Whether we like it or not, the Bible says persecution is a normal part of Christian life.

- Matthew 5:10: *“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*
- Matthew 5:11-12: *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*
- Romans 12:14: *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”*
- 1 Thessalonians 3:4: *“In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted.”*
- 2 Timothy 3:12: *“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted . . .”*

Near the end of his epistle, the writer to the Hebrews describes some of the great heroes of ancient Israel. He mentioned some by name and then described others who were unnamed:

*Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect (Hebrews 11:35-40).*

What these verses suggest to us is that suffering and persecution are a normal part of godliness. We do not desire it or pray for it but we should anticipate it. We should prepare for it. We should know that God has given us the ability to overcome it. Paul declared:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present*

*nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35-39).*

In fact, God even uses persecution and trouble in our lives. Whenever the persecution began in Jerusalem is the precise time that the church began to fulfill the Great Commission. Acts 8:1 says, “*On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.*” The scattering is what started the growth of the church. This is what also generated Tertullian’s statement: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”<sup>12</sup>

In addition, persecution and other forms of suffering is what God uses to purify us and perfect us and make the church what she should be. Peter declared, “*And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast*” (1 Peter 5:10). Suffering is often the catalyst God uses to streamline and purify us.

The church in East Africa and particularly Uganda experienced much persecution in its early days. Fortunately, the church in West Africa did not face as much genuine persecution in its formative years. The indigenes were more open to the gospel and to the visitors. However, this appears to be the time that West Africa and particularly Nigeria is passing through the crucible of persecution. Our church leaders must make sure they understood what the Bible teaches about persecution and must adequately prepare African Christians in how to respond to it.

## **Sovereignty of God**

One of the most comforting doctrines within Christianity—a doctrine we anticipated earlier is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Very simply, this means that God is ultimately in control of all things. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8:28: “*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*” This passage tells us our God is so big he can take the bad things that people do to us and turn them around to our advantage and the glory of God.

During one period of his life, Paul was arrested, experienced an assassination attempt and a shipwreck, and was imprisoned for four years. It was no doubt difficult for Paul to understand why he had to be detained when there was so much to do. However, Paul wrote four New Testament epistles during that time which may not have been written had he not been a prisoner. On another occasion, Paul experienced a severe problem he called a “*thorn in the flesh*” (2 Corinthians 12:7) and even a “*messenger of Satan.*” Paul was convinced this problem had been brought to him by Satan himself. However, God told him that he would not remove it. God was going to use it in his life, even though it was a messenger of Satan.

It is difficult for theologians to distinguish between what God initiates and what God allows. However, knowing that God is the ruler of this universe and that God can stop any negative thing he wants to stop is a good starting place. Also knowing that God loves us and wants what is ultimately best for us and his world suggests that the bad things that come our way will ultimately have good results for God’s kingdom. We may not experience those good

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<sup>12</sup> Christine Darg, “The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of the Church,” Jerusalem Channel, <https://jerusalemchannel.tv/blood-martyrs-seed-church/> Accessed 29 July 2022

things and we may not even hear about them personally but all negative things in our lives, including violence and discrimination will ultimately help to advance the kingdom of God.

## **Summary**

There are many other Biblical and theological issues that relate to the various Jos crises, including prayer, evangelism, human rights, accountability, restitution, perseverance, governance, friendship, respect, selflessness, and other issues. I use this opportunity to challenge African leaders to make sure they use all of their combined skills and experience in studying the Bible to understand what the Bible teaches about these important issues. I further urge them to use all of their combined talents in communication and persuasion through preaching and teaching and personal interaction to provide our African Christian brothers and sisters some godly direction on the way forward in these troublesome times.

## **Strategies for Solving the Problem**

Jesus said that a person did not build a house or go to war without sitting down and counting the cost. Jesus was teaching the importance of planning and developing strategies. When we look at Paul's missionary journeys, we see good evidence of planning. Paul followed certain basic strategies in doing his work.

If we are going to take charge of this difficult situation through which we are now passing, we are going to have to create some specific strategies. We need to be intelligent and deliberate in what we do. As with all good plans, we need to consult one another and encourage one another and strategize together. We will eventually come up with some very specific plans about how to address the situation where violence has become commonplace.

There are many strategies we need to create and refine. In the remainder of this chapter, I will stress three specific strategies reflected in the early church that relate to interacting with our neighbors of another faith. Perhaps the guidance the Church in Nigeria needs most right now is how to interact with those on the other side in a time of crisis.<sup>13</sup>

## **We Should Respond With *Interaction*.**

### ***The Principle***

In 1 Corinthians, Paul answers several questions, including one about whether or not one should eat meat that had been offered to idols. In responding to this question, Paul went further and responded to the question of whether or not a Christian could accept an invitation to eat a meal with a pagan friend. Here was Paul's advice: "*If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience*" (1 Corinthians 10:27). What Paul is suggesting here is that it is permissible for Christians to have interaction with those of other religions.

I would go one step further. It is not only permissible but it is good for Christians to have meaningful interactions and relationships with people of other faiths. Was not this Jesus' philosophy as well? Jesus was seriously criticized because he ate with "*sinners and*

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<sup>13</sup> Most of the rest of this presentation is taken from my sermon "Putting Christianity Back on the Offensive" preached at the Chapel of Redemption, University of Jos, in Jos, Plateau State on 20 March 2011. Interestingly this sermon was preached three days before this presentation was given. And, in fact, the service was interrupted to inform the congregation about the bombing that had taken place that morning in Anguwar Rukaba.

*publicans*” but his response was *“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick”* (Matthew 9:10). He was willing to interact with “sinners” because he wanted to help them. How can you help another person unless you interact with that person and establish some kind of common ground? You are certainly not going to have any influence over people if you do not interact with them.

### ***The Application***

We are sometimes told that we must *“come out from among them and be separate”* (2 Corinthians 6:17). Obviously, there is a time for separation from evil. However, there is also a time for interacting with people who believe differently than we do.

I fear the growing secularism in the church in Nigeria. I pray you will not imitate the American church. We have created exclusive Christian environments for ourselves. We can go to Christian schools all the way from pre-school through PhD. We have our Christian radio and TV stations and even Christian clubs where you can relax with Christian friends. You can even go on Christian cruises and not have to interact with the world. I do not believe this is what God intended for us. We must interact with unbelievers if we are to help them.

The more we interact with others, the more we learn about them. The more we learn about them, the more we will be able to communicate with them and the more we will be able to help them. The other side of the coin is also true. The more we interact with other people, the more they will learn about us. And, if we are living genuine Christian lives, the more they learn about us, the more they should be attracted to the God we serve.

I have had quite a few interactions with my Muslim friends, in the university, doing HIV/AIDS work and doing peace work. I have developed good friendships with all of these people. I may never convince any of them to convert to Christianity. However, I do want to create a positive image of Christianity among them so that a negative understanding of Christianity will not keep them from Christ.

Have you had any contact with people of other religions? Are you willing to get out of your comfort zone and learn more about a person of another religion? Are you willing to interact with others who do not believe like you do?

## **We Should Respond with *Humility***

### ***The Principle***

The word *“kingdom of God”* is one of the most common expressions in the gospels. That which Jesus came to introduce is described as a kingdom. However, *“kingdom”* is a metaphor or a figure of speech of that which Jesus came to introduce. There are parallels but like any comparison, the parallels are not exact. Jesus has used the expression *“kingdom of God”* at the very beginning of his ministry. However, it was in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus became to explain what this new kingdom was going to be like.

The first statement found in the Sermon on the Mount says, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:3). What does this mean? The expression *“poor in spirit”* is a figure of speech that basically means humility. This is expanded two verses later when Jesus said, *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth”* (5:5). Meekness is a synonym with humility. They mean something similar.

Meekness and humility are not normally characteristics of nations. It is usually thought that the most successful nations in the world are those that are strong and assert themselves and do not allow anyone to bully them. However, in this new kingdom Jesus came to introduce, the first quality to be mentioned was humility. What is humility? It is difficult to give a comprehensive statement but humility includes several things.

- Humility is the opposite of pride and self-promotion.
- Humility recognizes its own weaknesses and limitations.
- Humility appreciates and respects the strengths and authority of others.
- Humility does not boast or brag but allows others to speak about its strengths.

How does humility create a positive image of Christianity? This is a problem because:

- We believe Christianity is the most humanitarian religion.
- We believe Christianity is the most honest religion.
- We believe Christianity is the most just religion.

We obviously believe Christianity is not just the best religion but the truth. Humility is not a concession that the other person is right when he or she is actually wrong. Humility is an attitude. It is not a concession of the truth. It is the manner in which we live and present ourselves to others. What are some specific ways that humility should affect us as we interact with those who are outside Christianity and who may even oppose Christianity?

### ***The Application***

The first real contact we see between Christians and non-Christians in Acts was when Peter and John were arrested and taken before the Sanhedrin. When Peter had a chance to speak, he simply said, "*Rulers and elders of the people!*" Peter gave to these leaders the respect their positions demanded. And in all subsequent interactions Peter had with these people, he respected them as persons and he respected their positions.

Paul also appeared before a number of non-Christians. He always seemed to know exactly how to address them. When Paul spoke to the pagan philosophers in Athens, he said, "*Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious*" (Acts 17:22). Paul did not ridicule their religion. He acknowledged they were religious people in a positive sense and used that as a bridge to tell them about Jesus.

Human beings are made in the image of God which means that they have a limited ability to make choices. If they choose to reject our understanding of God, we must respect them, not so much for their poor choice but for the fact that as human beings they have that right to choose. We do not gain ground slandering people and verbally abusing them. If we have an employee or a boss or a friend who is not a Christian, we must learn to respect that person and his religion and his position.

One of the biggest problems that Christians run into in Muslim evangelism is the careless way that some refer to the Qur'an and the prophet Mohammed. There are quite a few books that have been written which attempt to portray Mohammed as a ruthless, cruel womanizer. Those books may be useful in keeping Christians from becoming Muslims but they are not going to be helpful in bringing Muslims to faith in Christ. We are not going to be well received if we do not respect the religion and people who follow other religions.

Just think about this: How would we feel if people accused Jesus of having Mary Magdalene as his girlfriend? Does that make us want to embrace the religion of the person who makes such an accusation or does it harden us to anything further that person would say about his or her faith?

Respect does not mean we must embrace or promote the religion. It does not even mean that we must admire the religion or defend the religion. Respect means that we must give people the right to worship however they choose without publicly slandering them. There is a time and a place to have appropriate debate and dialogue about the truthfulness of various religions. However, that usually does not include the negative emotionally charged statements that have often characterized Christian charges against Islam.

I passed through Kafanchan in 1996 just as a religious crisis was starting. When I inquired about the cause of the problem, I learned that while a young man was preaching in the market he had been accused of blaspheming Mohammed. We all recognize sometimes people are accused of things they did not do and that religious zealots often look for any excuse to attack others. However, there is no reason a person needs to say anything about Mohammed when he is preaching in the market. When preaching in the public, we need to talk about Jesus.

In our Department of Religion and Philosophy, we had a PhD seminar some time ago during Ramadan. After these seminars, we normally serve refreshments. After this workshop, someone started rushing around to provide the refreshments. However, I was very proud of my Christian colleagues who stood up and said, “No, our Muslim colleagues are fasting. We will respect their fasting by not taking any refreshments today.” This was not an acceptance of the religion. However, it was a statement of respect for one of their important religious tenets. And it helped to create respect especially for the lecturer who made that decision.

We Christians do struggle with the fact about how far we go in respecting the religion and accepting the religion.

- Do we attend the Muslim feasts when we are invited?
- Do we call on Muslims to pray in public functions?
- Do we donate money to charitable Muslim causes?

I do not have an answer that will satisfy everyone on these issues. However, one thing that I think we need to do to rehabilitate the Christian image is to have respect for those who do not believe like we do.

### **We Should Respond by *Self-Correction*.**

#### ***The Principle***

Paul wrote a very blistering letter—the letter of Galatians in which he corrected some Christians who were demanding that Gentiles be circumcised. In that same letter, Paul tells about the time when he personally and publicly rebuked Peter because he was straying from the faith. The Jerusalem Council was a public statement correcting abuses of certain Christians. If we are going to rehabilitate the image of Christianity, we will not only have to correct ourselves but also correct the beliefs and attitudes of our fellow Christians. And there are times when that might have to be done publicly.



### ***The Application***

This is a difficult thing to do. We do not necessarily want to air our dirty laundry out in front of the whole non-Christian world. However, there are times when our fellow Christians need to be corrected and even rebuked.

A few years ago, a well-known TV preacher stated that the US government should assassinate Hugo Chavez, the head of state of Venezuela. I know the news media often take things out of context and sometimes puts words in the mouths of people. I am also aware, that to his credit, this church leader, after some earlier denials and pressure from other Christian leaders, eventually apologized for his statement. However, this is the kind of thing the Christianity community cannot tolerate. When Christian leaders make non-Christian statements, the Christian thing is to correct them.

In my interactions with Muslims, I have at times said, “If Ben Laden’s version of Islam is different from your own, you have a responsibility to say so. Because if you keep quiet about it, we Christians will assume that you believe the same thing he does.” I think that same thing applies to our Christian leaders. When some public Christian leader makes a ridiculous statement that does not represent true Christianity, we need to disassociate ourselves from such statements and we also need to try to correct the brother who has made the statement.

### **Conclusion**

Here is one more key verse: “*And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit*” (2 Corinthians 3:18). There are many things we could say about the verse. Very simply this passage is saying that our lives should be like a mirror. However, the mirror should be like a mirror that is at an angle reflecting not what is directly in front of it but reflecting something from another direction. Our lives should be like a mirror that it held up at a 45-degree angle—like a mirror that is reflecting what is above us. People should be able to look horizontally into our lives and see God vertically being reflected in our lives. When this happens, people will be attracted to the Christian faith.

Before a person can ever evangelize someone, that person must have respect for the one doing the evangelism. I believe that in some ways, before we can start to evangelize Muslims, we must rebuild the image of Christianity. We must show to the Muslim world and the non-Christian world what genuine Christianity is. It is only as we do this that we will have the respect that we need to make a positive and attractive presentation of the gospel.

As we conclude, let us reflect on these questions:

- What can your church do to help take control of this situation?
- What can you as an individual do to take control of the situation?

## **Chapter Four**

# **Christian Religious Extremism, Radicalization and Militancy**

This address was originally titled “Christian Religious Extremism, Radicalization and Militancy in Northern Nigeria” and was presented to the Centre for Peace Initiative and Development, Minna, Niger State on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2011. This presentation was made to a Muslim audience.

### **Introduction**

The year was 1963 and I was 12 years old. I was living in the southern state of Louisiana in the USA and we were passing through the traumatic period known as the Civil Rights Movement. My older brother and I heard of and became curious about an activity that was going to take place about three kilometers from our house. He had recently gotten his driver’s license so he borrowed the family car and we drove to the venue. There were hundreds of people who had gathered around to observe this event. Probably the great majority of them were like my brother and me—curious about this strange event not necessarily supporters of it. We all stayed back from the main actors at least a hundred meters or so. As we watched about 30 men dressed in white garments and white pointed hoods that covered their faces surrounded a wooden cross wrapped in burlap standing upright about four meters high. Another white-robed character, riding on a horse with a large torch about two meters long slowly rode up to the cross and put the torch against the lower part of the cross. Quickly the flames spread upward until in a few seconds the whole cross was burning. While the cross burned, the men sang, “The Old Rugged Cross.” I do not remember any speeches being made. However, even at my tender age, I got the point. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was holding this public ceremony in a very prominent place to let the African American community know that they were there and that they were prepared to use violence against them to protect their own culture and religion and “keep them in their place.”

This was my first and only experience with the Ku Klux Klan, the white supremacy group that developed in the southern part of the US shortly after the American Civil War. The identity of KKK participants was protected by their white robes and hoods. Though their violent activities were usually done in private, public events like the cross-burning were designed to instill fear. The KKK members would beat blacks for violating one of their social norms and sometimes even kill them. Their primary method of operation was to intimidate by the threat of violence. And at least one of their motivations was to preserve their understanding of the Christian religion. They believed not only in a separation of the races but in the superiority of the white race and that the black race was under a curse from God. They tried to support their beliefs from the Bible and further justified their actions by singing Christian hymns. Today we would call them “Christian terrorists.”

### **Violence within Christianity**

When most people in the modern western world think of religious violence, they automatically think of Osama bin Laden and the various terrorist activities that have been propagated by his type of Islamic extremists during the last 40 years. However, as I have illustrated, Christianity has not been without its extremists, including those who use violence to support their purposes. Many, including myself, would argue that the Ku Klux Klan was an

aberration, an extreme example of a very small group of people who did not and do not represent the Christian faith. However, the KKK has not been the only violent group that has received motivation from their version of the Christian faith nor have they been the only group that has attempted to defend or promote some aspect of Christianity through violence.

- **David Koresh** created a quasi-Christian community in Waco, Texas known as the Branch Davidians in which he considered himself a prophet. He promoted very strange beliefs, some based upon the Bible, as interpreted by him. His movement turned violent and resulted in the killing of several US federal agents.<sup>14</sup>
- **Eric Robert Rudolf** was one of the most hunted fugitives in American history. He justified his two-year bombing spree against abortion clinics and sites frequented by homosexuals and even the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta by his belief that the US lost all moral authority to govern when the government legalized abortion in 1973. After pleading guilty and receiving a sentence of life in prison rather than face a trial that could result in his execution, he wrote a long explanation about why he had engaged in violence. He begins his statement with a quotation from Psalm 144:1: “*Blessed be the LORD my strength which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.*”<sup>15</sup>
- **Northern Ireland** was the home of a 30-year low level war known locally as “The Troubles.” This was primarily a violent conflict between two major sects of Christianity, Catholics, and Protestants. Both sides drew motivation from their Christian faith and used the Bible to support their violent actions.<sup>16</sup> Rev. Ian Paisley, a deeply pious man never personally engaged in violence or overtly promoted violence but demonized the Catholics in his public oratory to the point of being inciting.
- **South Africa** supported apartheid and the violence that was used to defend it at least in part based upon their Christian faith. On 16 December 1838, the white Dutch settlers in South Africa fought a battle later called the Battle of Blood River in which 470 settlers fought between 10,000 and 15,000 Zulus. During the battle, they promised God that if they prevailed they would plant a church in South Africa. Approximately 3000 Zulus died while only three white soldiers were lightly wounded. To fulfill their promise the 16<sup>th</sup> of December was turned into a national holiday remembered as the “Day of the Vow.”<sup>17</sup> The inspiration from that apparent miraculous success encouraged a public commitment to the Christian faith. Unfortunately, the descendants of these people later used the Bible and their official Christian faith to justify apartheid and the violence that was necessary to enforce and defend it.

One of the most recent examples of “Christian violence” is the deadly bombing and shooting attack in Norway by Anders Behring Breivik in which 85 people died. This assault was apparently an anti-Islamic mission. Breivik felt that this horrible tragedy would draw

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<sup>14</sup> See “David Koresh: Cult of Death” by Richard Lacayo, Jordan Bonfante, Sally B. Donnelly, Michael Riley and Richard N. Ostling in *Time Magazine US*, March 15, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> Rudolf’s full explanation is found at <http://www.armyofgod.com/EricRudolphStatement.html>. Accessed 14 July 2021. On this same website, apparently sympathetic with Koresh, two other Biblical references are given. Genesis 9:6: “*Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*” Numbers 35:33 “*So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.*”

<sup>16</sup> See Ann Marie Imbornoni, Borgna Brunner, and Beth Rowen, “The Northern Irish Conflict: A Chronology,” <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/northireland1.html>. Accessed 14 July 2021

<sup>17</sup> Adi Schlebusch, “Lessons from the Day of the Vow” in Faith Heritage, January 24, 2011; <http://faithandheritage.com/2011/01/lessons-from-the-day-of-the-vow/>. Accessed 14 July 2021

attention to his cause and “give a sharp signal to people.”<sup>18</sup> On his website before it was taken down, he described himself as “100 percent Christian”<sup>19</sup> but some believe it is more accurately to describe him as simply being anti-Muslim.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, it is not accurate nor is it fair to say that terrorism and violence can only be associated with the religion of Islam. The vast majority of Christians are peace loving people and many have suffered greatly for their faith over the centuries because they refused to participate in violence. Unfortunately, all throughout church history there has been a small minority of people associated with Christianity who have used violence to promote or defend their beliefs and practices.

The problem of violence is not necessary a religious problem but a human problem. We human beings have strong beliefs and convictions. There is built within all human beings a sense of justice. When our personal rights or property or relatives are stolen or harmed or withdrawn, we tend to respond with anger and bitterness. And, in the right situation, that anger can boil over into violence. We tend to feel justified in responding to violence because the other persons or groups have stepped across the line of right and wrong and justice demands that they be punished.

## **Two Kinds of Militant Youth**

The particular group we are interested in this paper is the radicalization of Christian youth in northern Nigeria and particularly those in Jos and Plateau State. Have the Christian youth or at least some of the Christian youth in this area been radicalized to the point that they have embraced violence as the answer to their problems? The anecdotal stories that we who live in the area hear seem to confirm that thesis. Who are these militant youth? What is it that motivates them?

### **Jos Militant Youth**

In April 1994 there was a flare up of violence in Jos in which the local Christian youth, made up of Beroms and other local ethnic groups started down the road of militancy. In response to a misunderstanding that started over the appointment of a Hausa Local Government Chairman, a political issue,<sup>21</sup> these local Christian youth got their first taste of violence by burning parts of Gada Biyu Market and a mosque on the Rukuba Road. The September 2001 crisis embraced hundreds of additional youth who experienced burning and destroying and killing for the first time. Subsequent crises have engaged these and many

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<sup>18</sup> BBC News Europe, 25 July 2011; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14259989>. Accessed 14 July 2021

<sup>19</sup> Christian Apologetics Website; post 25 July 2011; <http://christian-apologetics.org/2011/anders-behring-breivik/> (Website now defunct)

<sup>20</sup> *The Telegraph*; 1 October 2011.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/norway/8656515/Norway-attacks-profile-of-suspect-Anders-Behring-Breivik.html>. Accessed 14 July 2021. Police have said that Breivik posted on websites with fundamentalist Christian tendencies. For excerpts from Breivik’s manifesto, see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14267007>. Accessed 14 July 2021

<sup>21</sup> “Nigeria: Jos Crises, Ten Years On,” *Daily Trust*, 7 September 2011; <http://allafrica.com/stories/201109070905.html>. Accessed 14 July 2021. Another theory says that the conflict started over the Hausa demand for an emirate council. See John Y. Dung-Gwom and Laraba S. Rikko, “Urban Violence and Emerging Land and Housing markets in Jos, Nigeria,” a paper presented in *ISA Housing Conference, Glasgow, 1-4 September 2009*. [www.sma.ie/wp-content/uploads/images/stories/media\\_129777\\_en.pdf](http://www.sma.ie/wp-content/uploads/images/stories/media_129777_en.pdf). Accessed 14 July 2021

other youth. These combatants were not primarily motivated by religious conviction but to defend their families and communities. As the crises escalated there developed a growing desire to punish those they perceived to be responsible for these crises and to send a signal to Muslims that they would not tolerate their rights being violated. “Turning the other cheek” had been rejected and “an eye for an eye” was revived.

I do not think religion is the primary motivation behind the extremism of the typical Christian youth fighter in Jos. It is true that all Christians believe in evangelism and would love to see northern Nigeria turn to Christ and become a Christian area. In fact, there are missionaries who are devoting their lives to winning Muslims in northern Nigeria to the Christian faith. However, those involved in evangelism are not the radicals. I have heard of no missionary or evangelist who would use violence to advance his or her goal of evangelism.<sup>22</sup> In fact, those engaged in evangelism tend to be much more committed to the authority of the Bible and therefore, much less likely to engage in violence.

Most Plateau Christians who take their faith seriously believe those Christian youth who have become radicalized are not truly “Christians.” Though Christianity is a corporate religion that in some sense includes all those whose parents are Christians, evangelical Christian theology, which is the major type of Christianity found in Nigeria, teaches that to be a Christian, one has to make a personal commitment to Christ and then must submit to and obey the teachings of Christ. Almost none of these radical youth would have experienced and maintained such a personal commitment. Many are drunkards who smoke, take drugs, fornicate, steal and some are even armed robbers, practices nearly all Christians consider sinful and anti-Christian. In addition, many of these youth would not attend church services and are an embarrassment to their families and communities.

The Jos Christian fighters, both Christians and Muslims are primarily reactionaries. Christians are unhappy with what they perceive to be the aggression of the Hausa/Fulani Muslims and Muslims are unhappy because they perceive they are being treated as second class citizens in Plateau. And of course, both sides become angry and anxious for revenge when their properties are destroyed and their friends and families are injured and killed. Most of the youth have no real religious agenda to promote. In fact, though the politicians and community leaders on each side definitely have a political agenda, I am convinced that the majority of the Jos fighters have few if any significant political goals. In their private moments, most of these youth would be willing to go back to the status quo of the pre-September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, period. The vast majority of the militants in Jos are simply angry youth who believe they have been treated unjustly and are willing to use any means to reclaim their rights and punish those they perceive to have treated them unjustly.

### **Akhwat Akwop**

In July 2011, a group surfaced in southern Kaduna which claims that it is “an unapologetic Christian socio-political and cultural movement.” The group calls itself Akhwat Akwop which means “Soldiers or defenders of the Christendom and minorities” in the language of the Kataf ethnic group.<sup>23</sup> Its maiden news release began, sounding very much

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<sup>22</sup> It is conceded that some missionaries so identified with various colonial governments in Nigeria’s colonial past, they were tainted by the violence associated with those governments.

<sup>23</sup> The Nigerian Voice, “FG Moves To Unmask Patrons Of New Radical Xtian Group Akhwat Akwop,” July 25, 2011, <https://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/56756/fg-moves-to-unmask-patrons-of-new-radical-xtian-group-akhwat.html> Accessed 29 July 2022

like a Christian document: “Greetings in the name of our Lord and most gracious saviour and shield, Jesus Christ.” The statement also concludes by appealing to Boko Haram members to “give their lives to Jesus Christ who is the Author and finisher of our faith!” and then says:

If you need peace – come to Jesus.  
If you need rest – come to Jesus.  
If you need freedom – come to Jesus.<sup>24</sup>

If this group proves to be a genuine organization, it would indeed be a Christian terrorist group with motives and methods similar to Islamic terrorist groups. *Next* says it is “a rival religious fundamental group to Boko Haram.”<sup>25</sup> Akhwat Akwop issued a statement on 29 September 2011 which claimed that the Hausa/Fulani are committed to:

- Islamizing Christians in the north and Nigeria as a whole
- Seizing, stealing, and acquiring ancestral lands of indigenous communities in the north
- Destabilizing the government of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan
- Seizing back political power by all means and at all costs.<sup>26</sup>

Though this new group is indeed a radicalized anti-Islamic group and uses Christian language, and obviously appeals to Christians for support, it may not be accurate to say that it is a “Christian group” by any definition normally accepted in Christian circles. In its initial public relations statement, it asks seven rhetorical questions. Only one of them has anything to do with Christianity and it is quite general.<sup>27</sup> There is no theological justification for its existence. It says little about spreading Christianity. It seems to be an organization that is more anti-Hausa/Fulani than it is pro-Christian. The Kaduna Branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has categorically disassociated itself from the organization and other local organizations have rejected and criticized it.<sup>28</sup>

There is some doubt as to whether there is really such an organization on the ground. With modern technology, even one or two persons can create a website, circulate a newsletter, and make threats. However, even if Akhwat Akwop represents only a handful of people who have no ability to make good on their threats, they do fit the definition of terrorists because their objective is to fill their enemies with fear. And their radical threats are obviously appreciated by many people. In the “Comments” section of the original Vanguard article describing the organization, the contributors stated that this new organization is “a very welcome news long in coming” and “the only way to eradicate the culture of corruption and impunity.”<sup>29</sup> One post even includes a proverb that supports the organization using SMS

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<sup>24</sup> The complete Akhwat Akwop statement is found in this website: <https://pastebin.com/dp8V2Kf0>. Accessed 14 July 2021

<sup>25</sup> *Next*, 5 October 2011, [http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/News/National/5744385-147/fundamentalist\\_group\\_disowns\\_sultan\\_as\\_northern.csp#](http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/News/National/5744385-147/fundamentalist_group_disowns_sultan_as_northern.csp#); (original website is now defunct)

<sup>26</sup> “Christian Militia Akhwat Akwop Issues Strong Statement,” in *Naija Pundit*, <http://www.naijapundit.com/news/christian-militia-akhwat-akwop-issues-strong-statement>; Accessed 29 July 2022; see website for the entire statement.

<sup>27</sup> This is the question: “Why are Christians being killed every day in Bauchi, Yobe, and Borno States?”

<sup>28</sup> *People’s Daily*, 22 July 2011

<sup>29</sup> *Vanguard*; 29 September 2011; <http://allafrica.com/stories/201109290615.html>. Accessed 29 July 2022

spelling: “He who has been stung by a scorpion, wud squash even a cockroach at d sight of it.”<sup>30</sup>

There were also an equal number of people who objected to this new group. One said, “Christ is not a man of violence! Thus, no one who follows him should subscribe to violence!” Another wrote, “The responsibility of those who CLAIM to be as Christ Jesus (Christian) is to be as Christ, not like the Adversary who has come to kill, steal, and destroy. Who do you desire to emulate? Whose servant are you?”<sup>31</sup>

All of those who might be considered Christian extremists are no doubt children of Christian parents and some of them would have been baptized. Most of them would affiliate with some Christian denomination and some may even participate in the youth group, the choir, or some other Christian activity. Though the vast majority of sincere Christians in Northern Nigeria are not proud of their actions, these are the ones who might be considered the “radicalized Christian youth.”

### **Radicalization of Christian Youth in Nigeria**

A decade or two ago, Christian and Muslim youth in Jos went to school together, played football together and considered one another friends. However, with the Jos crisis that started on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2001, a hardness and antagonism began to develop toward those on the other side. Christian youth were not just willing to defend their homes and properties, they were willing to go on the offensive and destroy businesses and homes and even kill those whom they perceived as enemies, including innocent travelers passing through the area. Over the last decade, the attitudes have continued to harden, even apart from a crisis.

What has led to this radicalization and militancy? Why are Christian youth willing to burn and destroy and kill? Most Christian parents have taught the principles of forgiveness and respect for others. Pastors and community leaders, especially prior to the Gada Biyu incident, attempted to stop these youth from perpetuating retaliatory attacks. Common sense and plain human decency teach against these kinds of uncivil and anti-social activities.

What then are the issues that encourage such radicalization of the Christian youth and cause them to abandon their traditional Christian teachings and practices for hatred, violence, and retaliation? The following represent at least some of the issues.

- **Lack of Justice.** There is within the heart of every human being an innate sense of justice. Certain things are right and certain things are wrong. When Christian youth perceive that the other side is killing and destroying with impunity, they are tempted to take matters into their own hand. When they kill or destroy, they justify their actions by believing that they are just giving those persons what they deserve.
- **Grief over Losses.** Many Christian youth have lost family members or close friends in various ethno-religious crises. The normal grieving process causes extreme emotional reactions which are often not managed well. There is a thin line between the emotions of grief and anger and when anger boils over, it often results in violence. It is natural to be angry whenever one perceives injustice. However, some Christian youth have

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<sup>30</sup> *Vanguard*, 7 October 2011; <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/09/boko-haram-christian-extremist-group-akhwat-akwop-threatens-retaliation/> Accessed 29 July 2022

<sup>31</sup> *Vanguard*, 7 October 2011

allowed their anger to become unrestrained; they have started believing that killing and destroying those who have abused them is acceptable and even necessary.

- **Peer Pressure.** When young people become angry and become engaged in violence, their friends are often pressured into joining them because of their desire to be accepted and respected by their peers.<sup>32</sup>
- **Lack of Forgiveness.** Though there have been many attempts in Jos to reach Christian youth with messages of peace, forgiveness and reconciliation, these messages either have not reached all of the youth yet or some of the youth have not yet accepted them. Allowing bitterness and anger to remain inside a person creates additional stress and makes the person even more unreasonable and vulnerable to more violence.
- **Segregation.** One of the unfortunate side effects of the various crises in Jos during the last two decades has been a growing segregation between Christians and Muslims. Segregation prohibits people from having meaningful contact with people of the other faith. It erodes friendships and removes the buffer of personal interaction that would normally help to clear up false rumors. Segregation encourages suspicion and inspires mistrust. It may provide some amount of short-term protection but ultimately it lays the foundation for more violence.
- **“Enemy” Rhetoric.** Christian leaders have frequently looked to the Bible for guidance during difficult times. Many have used scriptures from the Old Testament that talk about wars and violence. Any time enemies of Israel are mentioned in the Bible, these people have seen a parallel to the Jos situation. In so doing, the congregations, including the youth, have continually had the idea reinforced that those on the other side are “*enemies of God*” who will become the Lord’s “*footstool*” (Psalm 110:1). Sometimes pastors intend for the Biblical warfare language to be used in a spiritualized sense but the hearers often apply it to the Hausa/Fulani Muslims.
- **Careless Statements.** Christian leaders have at times justified Christian violence if not advocated it. A *News Brief* article on 23 February 2006 about retaliation of Christian youth in Onitsha for violence against Christians in Maiduguri begins by saying, “At least 20 people were killed in revenge attacks on Muslims in Nigeria yesterday as religious riots intensified a day after the country’s leading Anglican archbishop warned Muslims that they did not have a ‘*monopoly on violence*’” (Italics mine).<sup>33</sup> Whether the statements of the then-CAN president actually inspired that retaliation or not may be impossible to determine. However, that was the perspective of the author of the article and that statement certainly did nothing to discourage violence.
- **Lack of Role Models.** Although there have been a few outstanding examples of youth who have resisted the tendency to engage in violence, there have not been enough of them. Even when Christian youth have courageously stood against the tide and accepted Jesus’ challenge to be peace makers, their stories have seldom been well publicized. The default mood among the youth is that of violence and retaliation and those promoting the peace are often viewed as a minority with less influence.
- **Idleness.** Many youth, even those with university educations, are unemployed. The proverb says, “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop.” Rev. Yakubu Pam, the North-Central CAN chairman, declares that “lack of employment and positive engagement” is the most significant contributor to the growing volatility of Nigeria’s youth.<sup>34</sup> As long as youth have little to occupy their time and little hope of gainful employment, they are vulnerable to being manipulated into violence and other anti-social behavior.

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<sup>32</sup> Positive peer pressure has also kept youth from engaging in violence as well.

<sup>33</sup> “Christians kill Muslims following warning by Nigerian Archbishop;” in *News Brief*, [http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/content/news\\_syndication/article\\_060223nigeria.shtml](http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/content/news_syndication/article_060223nigeria.shtml) Accessed 29 July 2022

<sup>34</sup> Telephone interview with Rev. Yakubu Pam on 6 October 2011 by Danny McCain



- ***Sinful Nature.*** The Christian faith believes that there is within humanity a tendency toward sin and evil that can only be corrected by the power of God (Romans 7:14-8:4). It is something like a moral law of gravity that is constantly dragging humans downward. Therefore, without the restraining influence of worship, prayer, praise, good deeds, Christian fellowship, and the power of the Holy Spirit in one's life, the tendency is for human beings to be pulled downward into more and more sinful and abhorrent behavior. Thus, lack of serious commitment to and practice of the Christian faith often leads youth astray.

These and other issues have combined to radicalize at least some of the Christian youth in Plateau State and northern Nigeria. Unfortunately, the situation is not likely to change significantly unless the issues that have encouraged them are addressed.

## **Consequences of Radicalization**

The youth are convinced that they are solving the ethno-religious problems with their violent responses but the question we must ask is this: Are things improving as a result of these kinds of violent reactions or getting worse? The periodic violent upheavals in Jos and surrounding areas during the last 20 years suggest that things are indeed getting worse. What are some of the consequences of the increasing militancy of the youth and the deteriorating peace in Jos and its surrounding areas?

### **Consequences to the Youth**

#### ***Willingness to Engage in Violence***

One of the most important consequences of the hardening of attitudes of the Christian youth has been their willingness to engage in more and more violence. It is not normal to want to pick up a cutlass and go decapitate someone. However, the combined issues described above, without appropriate counterbalancing initiatives, have at times helped to propel Christian youth in the direction of radical and violent conduct. For examples of this, one only need to look at the comments after practically any article in an on-line journal or on Nigeria chat rooms and one can see the rabid hateful language.<sup>35</sup>

#### ***Loss of Rational Thinking***

Once people start down the road of violence, they become less and less rational. They make irrational statements and irrational decisions.

- Irrational youth attack the military and police.
- Irrational youth disregard the advice of their parents.
- Irrational youth fail to understand how their actions affect others.
- Irrational youth risk their lives to bring justice to their perceived enemies.
- Irrational youth attack people on the other side who have done nothing against them.

Terrorism itself is irrational and it generates a vicious cycle of more and more irrationality.

#### ***Repugnant Behavior***

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<sup>35</sup> See comments from the Facebook group [jtownperspectives](http://www.facebook.com/groups/257218420962/). <http://www.facebook.com/groups/257218420962/> Accessed 29 July 2022

The longer these crises go on, the more irrational the behavior of the youth becomes, to the point that they often engage not only in violent behavior but activities that are repugnant and inhuman. One of the reactions of the Rukaba Road disaster was the roasting and eating the flesh of combatants who had been killed.<sup>36</sup> In addition, after a confrontation in Dutse Uku where a Muslim youth had been killed, his head was severed, placed on a stick, and carried around in a victory celebration by the “Christian” youth.

### ***Hatred and Distrust in Children***

It is a sad reality that the children currently in SS3 have lived their entire school lives during or between violent crises. And what these children are hearing from their parents and others they respect is often bitter and angry rhetoric. What is the result of growing up in this kind of environment? It is teaching children to hate those on the other side.

Recently, I made a similar statement to one of my Christian friends. He smiled and said, “Yes, that is true.” He then told me that a few days earlier, his four-year old son had asked, “Daddy, did you buy that suit in America?” My friend replied, “No, I bought it from a Hausa man.” His son quickly replied, “No, Daddy, you should not buy anything from a Hausa man.” Although this man employs many Hausas and has a better relationship with Hausas than the majority of the people in Jos, his son had picked up from casual interaction with others that Hausas are bad people and not people one should do business with.

About three days after that incident, I was chatting with a Muslim law student at the University of Jos. He told me that some time before that, his nephew saw a small scratch on his vehicle and said, “Uncle, did the infidels do that to your vehicle?” This child had learned from someone that Christians are people who damage and destroy things.

The point is unless we stop these kinds of rhetoric that have become commonplace in Nigeria, we will teach our children to distrust and hate those from the other side.

### ***Loss of the Christian Faith***

Anecdotal reports from before the Gada Biyu incident claim that parents and others heard of the planned disruption of the Muslim Salah. Several pastors attempted to talk to these youth but were told bluntly that they were not following the Biblical “turn the other cheek” philosophy and were not under the authority of the pastors. In rejecting the clear teachings of the Bible, they rejected the authority of Christ in their lives and ceased to be Christians by any acceptable definition of Christianity. The Bible has severe warnings for those who turn away from the Christian faith.<sup>37</sup>

### **Consequences to Society**

There are always negative consequences to society when there is radical or violent behavior. These include but are not limited to the following:

#### ***Social Disintegration***

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<sup>36</sup> Undated news release from Reconciliation Trainers Africa (RETA) immediately after the 29<sup>th</sup> August 2011 Gada Biyu incident contains a picture of a body being roasted over a fire and a youth eating some of the flesh.

<sup>37</sup> See Matthew 24:9-10; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Hebrews 2:1, 3:12-13, 6:1-6, 10:28-29; 2 Timothy 4:10.

The more the youth are radicalized, the more the society becomes dysfunctional. After the first two Jos crises, Muslims stopped living in Christian areas and *vice versa*. After the Christmas Eve bombing in 2010, people even stopped going into areas that were controlled by the other side. For a while after the Ramadan Salah, Christians and Muslims even stopped buying and selling from each other in what was before considered neutral areas. Therefore, because of violence and the factors that encourage it, segregation, and negative perceptions of the other side increases. This encourages more suspicion and more hatred and more social unrest and the society continues to spiral downward.

### ***Expanding Violence***

The radicalization of the youth also encourages more and more violence. After the September 2001 crisis, it took seven years before things boiled over again. The next major violent incident in Jos took 13 months. The next incident of violence took 11 months and the one after that took only eight months. What this suggests is that the more radicalized the youth become, the more they are willing to respond to grievances with anger and violence and the less likely they are to reach out with reason and understanding. This leads to a downward cycle of violence that is extremely difficult to halt.

### ***Reverse Development***

Violence discourages development in the society. However, the repeated violence that we have experienced not only discourages development but reverses it. Unfortunately, some companies can no longer function because they are losing so much manpower through violence or the threat of violence. There are many companies who are considering moving their operations to another state where there is more peace.

The expatriate owner of Zamani Farms in Jos, identified only as Norma, wrote a moving letter to her customers about her decision to leave Plateau State to go another part of Nigeria where she can work without the threat of violence. She wrote:

The situation here has created really impossible conditions for us on the farm. Our young crops need constant attention and care . . . When workers can't come to the farm, or when they say they don't sleep at night for fear of attack, and have no peace of mind, of course they cannot concentrate on their work. Our production has suffered seriously, we are running at a loss, and feel terrible that we are unable to provide our customers with the quantity and quality of vegetables they have come to expect from us . . . Now it is obvious that we have finally come to the end of the road.<sup>38</sup>

Norma has decided to relocate to another state. She is only one of many who have made that decision or are considering that decision based upon unabated violence. One can hardly fault a business owner for such a decision. However, every business that is lost encourages the cycle of violence. Loss of business means greater unemployment which means more anger and idle time which means more susceptibility to violence which means even greater business flight and the cycle continues.

## **Responses to Radicalization**

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted in the blog of John Campbell, posted on the Council on Foreign Relations website. See <http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2011/09/08/conflict-in-jos-a-letter-from-norma/> Accessed 29 July 2022.

How do we reverse the radicalization of Christian youth? One cannot address that problem without solving the fundamental problems that have led to the various ethno-religious crises in Plateau State. It has not been the purpose of this paper to outline all of the problems that have led to the crises in Plateau. However, those issues must be identified and addressed before the Christian youth in Plateau will renounce their radicalization and return to normality. How are we going to do that?<sup>39</sup>

General Colin Powell, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, developed a doctrine of warfare that said if a nation has to go to war, they must hit the enemy as hard as possible from as many different angles as possible with all the weapons they have at their disposal and continue doing it until victory was achieved. I believe we must use that approach to tackle the crisis in Plateau State. To use the military metaphor, we must engage in a serious battle against hatred, anger, violence, retaliation, and anything else that would disturb the peace. We must hit these problems with a coordinated effort from every angle. So far our approach has mainly involved the security sector to protect and the medical sector to treat the injured. However, we must now engage many more sectors of society, including the faith community, education, business, media, entertainment, and the government. The following is a simple outline of some of the responses I believe could and should be attempted.

## **Religious Responses**

### ***Christian Consultation***

Whenever the early Christians had a disagreement over the issue of circumcision, the leaders of the church invited the other leaders of the church to come together for a consultation. During this consultation, the leaders followed a specific format.

- They met together.
- All sides were presented.
- They reached a consensus.
- They published the conclusions.
- They distributed the results to those affected.<sup>40</sup>

I am convinced the Church on the Jos Plateau needs to have a similar type of consultation about the violence in Jos and particularly the hardening and violent attitudes and reactions of the Christian youth. Obviously, there are different opinions about the cause of the problem and the way forward. However, these different positions cannot be resolved until the church leaders meet together. Christian leaders need to meet together and present all possible solutions to the Jos crisis. They need to reach a consensus. They need to write down their consensus position and distribute the results to those who are affected by them. After that they must do self-monitoring to ensure that the consensus position is adhered to.

### ***Meaningful Dialogue and Interaction***

There are two sides of every conflict. Until both sides are able to sit down and discuss their points of view in a calm and polite manner, there is going to be little progress on solving the problems that have caused the conflict. Therefore, Muslim and Christian leaders must

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<sup>39</sup> Because this paper focuses on the radicalization of Christian youth, I primarily address Christians in this paper. However, most of the principles and recommended responses apply equally to Muslims as well.

<sup>40</sup> See Acts 15:1-31.

find a way to meet together and dialogue. These discussions must not just be a public relations act that lasts for an hour or two and then each side feels it has fulfilled its responsibilities. Muslim and Christian leaders and ethnic leaders from both sides need to continue dialoguing until they identify answers and can make appropriate compromises.

I believe that another way to address the extremism among the youth is to have dialogue meetings with the youth. This technique has been used extensively by the Young Ambassadors for Community Peace and Inter-Faith Foundation (YACPIF) which has sponsored a number of activities that have brought Christian and Muslim youth together for discussions. These began at the Kwararafa Cinema in Central Jos and have included youth rallies in Bukuru and six other communities. In these rallies, the youth were challenged to come together and re-establish the relationships they enjoyed before. In all cases, the youth were ready to lay down their swords and reach out a hand of friendship to their opponents. The greatest gains in restoring relations between Muslims and Christians have been made when the initial dialogue was followed up by regular meetings that continued the dialogue. In fact, there have been remarkable examples of transformation among the youth. Some who were leaders in the fighting before have renounced all violence and become ambassadors for peace. Such activities have proven to be very beneficial in restoring friendships and breaking down negative stereotypes of the other side. They have also demonstrated that the radicalism of the youth can be reversed and youth can become ambassadors of peace.

For the past 20 years, I have helped to develop faith-based HIV/AIDS projects for Nigeria's public schools. These projects have involved both Christians and Muslims. Bringing Christians and Muslims together for writing projects, training workshops and other interactions has demonstrated we must go beyond dialogue. When Christians and Muslims are actively engaged in projects that mutually benefit each other, they are far less likely to be suspicious of one another or engage in violence or even listen to criticism of each other.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Reducing the Rhetoric***

As stated earlier, Christians and Christian leaders have often found scriptures related to warfare and enemies and then used those scriptures to describe the conflict and to formulate their sermons and even prayers. I am convinced that this is not helpful. Without going into the theology of violence in the Bible which I will later do in this book, I will simply say that the wars that were fought in the Old Testament have little parallel with the kinds of battles that are going on in Jos and Plateau State. The problem of negative rhetoric is not just in the churches. As illustrated above, families are perhaps even more guilty. Therefore, Christian leaders and Christian families need to tone down the rhetoric. They must recognize that that rhetoric helps to create suspicion and anger in the youth which generates more violence.

Fortunately, there are some good examples of those who are keeping the stereotypes of the other side from infecting their families. I heard a story recently about a Muslim family whose house was burned during the January 2010 crisis. One Children's Day 2010, the daughter of the Muslim owner of house attended a ceremony promoting peace among children. During the ceremony she was asked what happened to her house and she said it was

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<sup>41</sup> For a more thorough discussion of this model, see my article entitled "Which Road Leads Beyond the Shari'ah Controversy? A Christian Perspective on Shari'ah in Nigeria" in *Comparative Perspectives on Shari'ah in Nigeria* (editors: Philip Ostien, Jamila M. Nasir and Franz Kogelmann), Spectrum Books Limited, Ibadan, 2005, pages 7-26.

burned. The leader asked, “Who burnt your house? Was it the Christians?” The young daughter said, “Well no. My mother said the ones who burnt the house are the wicked ones. My mother said that it is not the Christians who burnt our house. If they were really Christians, they would not do that. My mother said not all Christians are bad.”<sup>42</sup>

### ***Clear Teaching***

Jesus said, “*You will know the truth and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32). People do not absorb truth automatically. They must be taught truth. There is a tendency within humanity to lash out when one has been injured by another person. The only way to overcome this tendency is through teaching and training. Therefore, in order to reverse the radicalization of the youth, Christians must engage in a massive teaching campaign.

- **Pastors.** According to Ephesians 4:11, the primary teacher within Christian community is the pastor. Therefore, pastors must use the pulpit to clearly and forcefully teach what Jesus taught about violence. They must identify radical members in their congregation and deal with their sin of violence like they deal with other sins where church discipline would be exercised.
- **Youth Leaders.** Most churches have youth leaders and youth programmes and a curriculum of Bible study. A special curriculum must be prepared for the Christian youth and adopted and taught to all Christian youth in northern Nigeria. Martin Luther King Jr. demonstrated that teaching about violence was not enough. There must also be training that includes role playing of typical violence scenarios. It is only as Christian leaders take teaching the youth seriously that they will begin to see success.
- **Christian Teachers.** Many churches and denominations and individual Christians have private Christian schools. Teachers in these schools in all disciplines must be used to teach forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace.
- **CRE Teachers.** There are thousands of teachers employed by the Ministry of Education to teach Christian Religious Education all across Nigeria. Though more peace-related themes could be added, there are many topics in the curriculum that can be used to teach the principles of peace outlined in this presentation. The National Association of Christian Religious Educators of Nigeria should mobilize and encourage its members to be in the forefront of teaching Christian youth the importance of peace and how to develop and maintain it.

### ***Radical Engagement***

Our problems have become so severe that church leaders must consider engaging in radical solutions that may not be acceptable by all.

- Christian communities should make corporate restitution. Where Christian groups have burned mosques or Muslim homes, Christians who live in those communities should attempt to rebuild or restore what has been destroyed.
- Christians and Muslims should invite one another to their churches and mosques to extend the hand of friendship and forgiveness.

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Nafisat Lawal on 23 September 2011 by Katrina Korb

- As Muslim youths protected Christian churches on Christmas in Kaduna,<sup>43</sup> Christian youth should offer to protect mosques in vulnerable areas from rogue Christians on Fridays and Muslim holidays.
- As has been done in South Africa, we should have public truth and reconciliation meetings, in which confession of both private and corporate wrongdoing is publicly made and forgiveness is sought and granted.

### ***Courageous Modeling***

Providing a positive example is best form of teaching. In addition, the best way to motivate someone to do something is through modeling that particular activity. Christian pastors and other Christian leaders must be challenged to demonstrate positive examples of forgiveness and reconciliation and must be seen as peacemakers. If religious leaders are looking the other way when violence is taking place and privately complementing those who are defending Christianity with violence, this is sending a powerful message to the youth. However, if pastors are speaking words of peace and are actively engaged in radical peacemaking, that will send an equally powerful message to their youth.

Rev. Yakubu Pam is a good model of a Christian peace maker. After attending a UN peace workshop in New York, he was inspired to encourage peace in his community. In December 2009, he conducted a peace training workshop with Muslim youth near the Kwararafa Assemblies of God Church he pastored in a Muslim dominated area of central Jos. During the January 2010 crisis, when Muslim youth from another part of Jos came to burn his church, 23 of the young men he had trained surrounded his church and protected it. This kind of success encouraged Rev. Pam and helped to motivate him in creating the Young Ambassadors for Community Peace and Interfaith Foundation. This joint Christian/Muslim project works with youth to bring peace back to Jos. Since January 2010, Rev. Pam has done the following:

- Initiated eight peace rallies for Christian and Muslim youth in various volatile areas of Plateau State. These rallies have reached hundreds of youth with a peace message and have convinced many youth to abandon violence and embrace peace.
- Sponsored a football camp for Christian and Muslim youth, culminating in the Jos Peace Cup where a team of half Christians and half Muslims from Jos North played a similar team from Jos South.
- Trained a group of Christian and Muslim youth to monitor the 2011 elections.
- Created a centre where Muslims and Christians could come together in a neutral place to watch movies, play games, and encourage desegregation.
- Engaged in advocacy for peace in Plateau State at various levels of government.

It has not always been easy for Rev. Pam to do these things. Many of his fellow Christian clerics have viewed him with suspicion and have openly criticized him for working with Muslims. However, the results of Rev. Pam's efforts have been significant. Not only have many youth rejected violence but many have helped to stop violence in their communities and have become vocal and public advocates of peace.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Sundiata Post, "Muslim youths protect Christians during Xmas service in Kaduna." December 26, 2014. <https://sundiatapost.com/muslim-youths-protect-christians-during-xmas-service-in-kaduna/> Accessed 29 July 2022

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Rev. Yakubu Pam on 29 April 2011 by Danny McCain

It will take this kind of strong Christian leadership to challenge other Christian leaders and Christian youth to move forward and make peace.

## **Government Responses**

### ***Political Sector***

Government officials have the greatest responsibility in stopping violence and making peace because the most important duty of government is to ensure the safety of its citizens. Therefore, public officials must enact legislation, advocate for job creation schemes, support peace initiatives, and represent all of their constituents fairly. Political candidates must once and for all renounce violence and conduct their affairs in a transparent and honorable manner. The society must collectively renounce the endless cycle of contesting election results and demonstrate that good people can lose elections graciously. Politicians must be seen as proponents of peace and must be seen as being fair and objective in their statements. Without a strong commitment by government and government agents, there will be no lasting peace.

Legislatures must stop running away from the settler-indigene issue and address it in a way that it is brought to a satisfactory conclusion. In addition, where there are mixed ethnic and religious communities, the federal or state legislatures should consider some form of affirmative action in hiring policies to guarantee the rights of the minorities. Since the issues of religious and ethnic differences are not going to go away, law makers may also consider creating legislation that will require religion and ethnicity sensitivity training for workers before and during employment in both the public and private sectors.

### ***Education Sector***

There is no sector of government that has greater influence on society than the Ministry of Education. It has access to students from five years old until they are adults. The way people think and act as adults is largely shaped by those particular formative years.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education must make a deliberate effort to use its powerful resources and the years they have access to our children to help instill attitudes of peaceful coexistence and respect for fundamental human rights. A special task force should be commissioned by the Ministry of Education to create additional content for various subject areas such as religious studies, social sciences and English language at multiple levels of primary and secondary schools so that in every school year, students are exposed to issues related to peace and reconciliation.<sup>45</sup> The National Universities Commission and the National Coalition of Colleges of Education and other bodies responsible for tertiary education must accelerate work in peace education for tertiary students. The Ministry of Education has the experts and the resources to develop and implement such programmes. They simply need the directives and funding from the highest level government officials to do it.

Fortunately, progress has already been made in this area. A good model of such a programme is the GST 222 - "Peace and Conflict Resolutions Studies" which was developed by the Center for Conflict Management and Peace Studies of the University of Jos in conjunction with the National Universities Commission. This course was developed in 2006 and is now a part of the general studies programme of the University of Jos which means that

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<sup>45</sup> My colleague, Dr. Katrina Korb of the Faculty of Education, University of Jos, and I have worked on such a curriculum and have had useful preliminary discussions with the Plateau State Ministry of Education.



every student enrolled in a university degree programme is required to take the course. The course has also been recommended for all universities in Nigeria.<sup>46</sup>

If education is the best tool for influencing future generations, why should we not use this tool massively to address the issues of violence and peace?

### ***Security Sector***

The security forces in Nigeria have been given a very difficult task in trying to restore peace to Plateau State and keeping the warring youth apart. The primary training of the police is to protect its citizens against robbers and other domestic criminals. The primary training of the army is to protect its citizens against foreign interventions. Therefore, in quelling internal civil conflict, the government has asked the security forces to step out of their traditional roles and do what they have not been adequately trained to do.

In light of reoccurring civil unrest in Nigeria, it is time to increase the training of the police forces and armed forces to deal more effectively with the kinds of civil unrest Jos and Kaduna and other Nigerian cities have experienced in recent years. The police academies and military schools must include more content related to such issues. If necessary, international experts must be brought in to better prepare the security forces to deal with such civil unrest.

In addition, the security forces need to improve their public relations skills. Both the army and police have suffered enormous public relations setbacks due to mistakes on the part of their personnel and unsubstantiated rumors. Every security officer is a human being and is capable of making mistakes. The public is willing to forgive football players who make mistakes that result in the loss of important games and hurt the image of the country in the international community. If the general public received honest explanations that acknowledge the mistakes that have been made, the Nigerian people will be forgiving and understanding and will have a greater appreciation and respect for those who put their lives on the line to provide security. The security forces need to approach public relations with the same degree of seriousness and commitment that they have approached their patrols in the street.

### ***Justice Sector***

The judiciary has also received a lot of criticism from the general public for their lack of prosecution of those arrested during these crises. Part of this is unwarranted because the judiciary must work under the legal rules of evidence and when such evidence is not available due to the “fog of war,” the judiciary has no choice but to release detainees. However, the judiciary must be seen as doing more to bring about justice to those who have committed crimes. There needs to be a speedier process of conducting trials for suspects so that the public will be able to see a clear link between the crimes and the punishment. The lack of justice is one of the things that encourages the radicalization of the youth.

Another commonly held view that must be corrected is the idea that a crisis period is a free crime zone and that people can commit all kinds of crimes and they are somehow justified because what was done was during a crisis. Those who commit crimes, whether

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<sup>46</sup> See University of Jos General Studies Prospectus. The following is a partial description of the course: “This course is designed to expose students to Peace and Conflict Resolution as necessary ingredients in national development. Using case studies from within Nigeria, Africa and other parts of the world, the course aims at stimulating students’ consciousness of desiring peace and working towards it at both the micro and macro levels of human existence, especially in their immediate societies.”

during a crisis or not, are criminals and must be treated as such. The judiciary with speedier and more aggressive prosecution will help to reduce that kind of thinking.

Those youth who have been detained for crimes during a crisis should be encouraged and, if possible, required to use their time in detention to learn more about mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. Movies, music, literature, lectures, and entertainment that promote peace should be made available to those who are being detained. Also, small groups from opposing camps should be provided with opportunities to meet together for a supervised dialogue while in detention. Rather than allowing prison time to further radicalize those who have been arrested, prison officials should exercise their creativity and find ways to bring these warring parties together that will prepare them to contribute to the peace.

In addition, Nigeria must learn from other parts of Africa that are reviving traditional forms of punishment for criminal activity and traditional forms of reconciliation. For example, instead of detention (a western concept), restitution might be more beneficial because it allows for reconciliation. A traditional practice of reconciliation in Sierra Leone has proven beneficial. After the war there, a concept known as Fambul Tok (“family talk” in Krio) was re-introduced. This is a traditional practice of families or communities coming together to discuss and resolve problems. Participants can speak of their pain and loss during the conflict and can seek and grant forgiveness. This is often done around a bonfire. After such a ceremony, the communities will follow up with visits and joint work projects. This kind of traditional justice and reconciliation has helped to restore normality to Sierra Leone.<sup>47</sup>

## **Industry Responses**

One of the biggest problems in Nigeria is unemployment. A huge percentage of the youth, even those having a tertiary education, are unemployed. An unemployed young person is a threat to the peace of the nation because he or she is much more likely to engage in violence than someone who has a job. Therefore, one of the best things industry can do for the community peace is to find ways to employ more of the restive youth. An employed youth is a contributor to society in many ways, including an advocate to stop violence.

Employers have an enormous amount of influence over their employees. They control their lives for an average of eight hours a day, at least five days a week. Therefore, employers should consider implementing a wide range of activities that would foster peace.

- Integrate the work force so that there is no ethnic or religious segregation on the job.
- Require pre-employment peace orientation and monthly peace meetings.
- Include peace messages on products and facilities where possible.
- Give awards and recognition to those who are peacemakers.
- Fund appropriate community peace initiatives.

Nearly all professions, such as physicians, lawyers, architects, engineers, and others have professional organizations that support their occupations. These organizations are made

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<sup>47</sup> See Ishmael Beah, John Caulker, Sara Terry, Libby Hoffman, Benedict Sannoh, *Fambul Tok*, An Unabridged Editions Book, New York, 2011. Also see “Reconciliation and Traditional Justice: Learning from Africa’s Experiences,” a project report of a workshop sponsored by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in Pretoria 26-27 September 2006. For more information about these models see [L. Huyse, et al. “Traditional justice and reconciliation after violent conflict: Learning from African experiences,” 2009, https://www.academia.edu/18374307/Traditional\\_justice\\_and\\_reconciliation\\_after\\_violent\\_conflict\\_Learning\\_from\\_African\\_experiences](https://www.academia.edu/18374307/Traditional_justice_and_reconciliation_after_violent_conflict_Learning_from_African_experiences) Accessed 29 July 2022

up of well-educated, intelligent, and experienced people. Each of those organizations should create a committee that would brainstorm about ways their professions can make a contribution to the community peace efforts. Peace is a benefit to everyone, including the professions.

## **Community Responses**

Most Africans live in a community. Most communities have various types of community leaders, including traditional leaders. Several communities have organized vigilante groups to help protect their communities during times of crises. Those community leaders who have organized vigilante groups should use their same influence and organizational ability to bring together the various individuals and groups within the community to advocate for peace.

- **Traditional rulers** should be the leaders in peacemaking because they serve all the people in a particular community. They must use their enormous influence to promote peace and must be held responsible for violence that originates in their communities.
- **Women's groups** have abilities that are greatly underestimated. Some of the most significant peace work in Africa have been done by women. The most recent recipients of the coveted Nobel Peace prize were three women, two from Liberia. One of those women, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, became the president of Liberia.<sup>48</sup>
- **Youth groups** have the most to lose in any conflict. Just as some have been radicalized as troublemakers, many others have been and can be radicalized for peace making. Communities must work hard to encourage the youth to embrace peace.
- **Market coalitions and unions** have a great motivation to have peace in the community because without it, they cannot conduct business. Such organizations should be challenged to find ways to promote peace and reconciliation.

One thing that encourages ethnic and religious clashes is the growing segregation in Jos and other middle belt communities. Where there is segregation, there no longer exists the natural ways of dealing with suspicions and rumors. Even the most ridiculous rumor can create tension and spark violence. Thus, there must be a deliberate effort to re-integrate.

- Our communities need to re-integrate their shops.
- Our communities need to re-integrate their schools.
- Our communities need to re-integrate their celebrations.
- Our communities need to re-integrate their sports activities.
- Our communities need to reintegrate their political associations.

## **Media Responses**

The media is the voice of the community. Mass media was used in Rwanda to stir up the Hutus who controlled the media against the Tutsis and genocide was the result. Media, on the other hand, can be a powerful voice for forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. I do not believe that the public media was misused too much during the various Jos crises. There were

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<sup>48</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 October 2011. The article begins: "Leymah Gbowee confronted armed forces in Liberia to demand that they stop using rape as a weapon. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became Africa's first woman to win a free presidential election. Tawakkul Karman began pushing for change in Yemen long before the Arab Spring. They share a commitment to women's rights in regions where oppression is common, and on Friday they shared the Nobel Peace Prize." <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/world/52691975-68/women-peace-prize-liberia.html.csp>.

few if any provocative statements that were allowed on the TV or radio. However, the social media, particularly the use of text messaging has had a devastating effect in spreading rumors and stirring up passions. In addition, the “Comments” after on-line articles related to controversial subjects and Facebook groups clearly demonstrate the different positions and illustrate the vitriol that each side sometimes has for the other. Obviously there have been hundreds of positive editorials and articles written that have encouraged peace and reconciliation. Such thoughtful articles are all to be commended and continued. However, editors of online newspapers must be more careful to remove posts that are purely inciting and provide no useful point in the discussion. I must also point out that the social media has also been used very powerfully to calm fears, call for prayer and promote peace.<sup>49</sup>

Radio stations tend to be almost silent during crises and often only broadcast the official government communications. Radio managers should not ignore a crisis while it is ongoing. Well trained specialists from both communities need to be available in all media houses to calm things during times of tension. Experts must be available to screen and edit public proclamations. Hotlines should be created so concerned citizens can get accurate information.

The entertainment media, and particular the movie industry is one of the most influential sectors of society. Writers and directors of movies should be encouraged to write and produce movies that will contribute to the peace making in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Even the process of movie making can contribute to peace making by integrating the staff and actors and demonstrating peaceful co-existence in the communities where movies are being made.

Many Nigerian musicians have written peace songs. One of the most impressive efforts is the Neighbor-to-Neighbor project called “Song for Peace” which was written by Steve Gukas and produced by Wole Oni and Jeremiah Gyang and performed by many of Nigerians top artists.<sup>50</sup> It was a brilliant effort that must be imitated many times in the future. Using music is an excellent strategy because most of those youth who are tempted to become radicalized listen to popular music. In fact, youth listen to popular songs so much they memorize them. Reminding the youth of peace through the music they listen to and sing is a powerful step toward peace. In addition, music concerts often transcend ethnic and religious divides and help to break down stereotypes and create unity and acceptance.<sup>51</sup>

Media is a regular and essential part of our lives. Those responsible for various media houses must be convinced to use their vast resources and influence in the battle for peace.

## **NGO Responses**

There are at least 11 non-governmental agencies who are part of the Plateau State Peace Network. All of these are engaged in peacemaking efforts in Plateau State. The most common activities include dialogue, training, peace education, economic empowerment,

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<sup>49</sup> Rev. Gideon Para-Mallam of Jos has been one of the most effective in using this text messages for peace. His text messages have consistently called for prayer, for forgiveness and tolerance and rejected violence.

<sup>50</sup> See YouTube. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRGXMJuTXzs&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRGXMJuTXzs&feature=player_embedded) Accessed 29 July 2022.

<sup>51</sup> For a description of the power of music concerts to bring people together, see Carmen McCain “From Kano to Lagos, all for a concert” in *Weekly Trust*, 13 August 2011. [http://weekly.dailytrust.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6831:from-kano-to-lagos-all-for-a-concert&catid=57:my-thoughts-exactly&Itemid=154](http://weekly.dailytrust.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6831:from-kano-to-lagos-all-for-a-concert&catid=57:my-thoughts-exactly&Itemid=154)

religious instruction, and sports.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, eight of the eleven are inter-faith agencies. Although there is a bit of overlap between them, each was created to address a particular need and each has developed a certain specialty. These agencies must continue to work together to ensure that there is limited duplication and the greatest possible mutual support. They should freely share their expertise, their resource persons and even their experiences in raising funds and working through government red tape. Government, the religious leaders, and community leaders should provide maximum support and encouragement for these peace-making NGOs.

## **Islamic Responses**

The American proverb says, “It takes two to tango.” Christian youth have not become radicalized without some provocation. There is little benefit in trying to determine who threw the first stone in various conflicts. The truth is that the radicalization of the Plateau youth, both Christian and Muslim, feed on each other’s violence. It is to the advantage of both that the other side reverses its slide into extremism. Therefore, Muslim clerics and Hausa/Fulani community leaders could help to de-radicalize Christian youth by doing the following:

- Stress the teachings about peace in Islam.
- Teach Muslim youth against violence and provocative behavior.
- Warn Muslim extremists that lawbreakers will not be protected or defended.
- Encourage Muslims to reduce the negative rhetoric and inciting language.
- Reach out to Christian counterparts for dialogue and cooperation.
- Separate themselves publicly from all violent forms of violence within Islam.

An East African proverb says, “It takes a village to raise a child.” I believe that, in a similar way, it will take the whole community, both Christians and Muslims to reduce the tension and reverse the radicalizing tendencies of the youth, both Christian and Muslim.

## **Conclusion**

The radicalization of the Christian youth did not occur in a vacuum. Parents, Christian leaders, community leaders, educational leaders, and government all bear some responsibility for what we have allowed our youth to become. Therefore, all those who have contributed through bad examples, poor teaching or neglect must also share some of the responsibility to help reverse the radicalization of the Christian youth. This is not an impossible task.

Rwanda had descended into a far worse crisis than what Nigeria has experienced so far. One ethnic group had become so radicalized at one point that many in that group tried to exterminate a rival ethnic group. And yet 27 years after that genocide, Rwanda has almost fully recovered. It is one of the cleanest, safest, and most peaceful nations in Africa today. How did this happen? It happened because leaders took responsibility and implemented some of the methods I have described in this chapter. And that strong leadership has led to success.

Alexander Gutep actively participated in the battles against the Anguwar Rogo Muslims during the November 2008 crisis. However, as a result of the Jos North football camp and the Jos Peace Cup activities, he renounced violence and has become an ambassador for peace. When the Christmas Eve bombings took place in Gada Biyu, he was in the

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<sup>52</sup> The number in parenthesis tells the number of the organizations that are targeting the following groups: Youth (10); Community Leaders (10); Women (9); Religious Leaders (8); Traditional Rulers (7); Children (6).

vicinity. However, rather than joining in the retaliation attacks, he appealed to several of his friends not to retaliate: “Let’s think of tomorrow . . . If you see your friend outside holding a weapon, maybe a stick or a machete, call him and talk to him. Just try to let him know that violence can never solve any problem.”<sup>53</sup> His voice of friendship and reason has motivated some of his friends to also reject violence. Augustine is a former Jos fighter who has embraced peace and become a model for the militant Christian youth in Plateau State to overcome their extremism, radicalization, and militancy.

Some Christian youth have gone far down the road of violence and radicalization. However, the situation is not without hope. As I have illustrated there are pinpoints of hope on the plateau. With commitment, hard work and patience, the radicalized youth will respond and once again become productive and peaceful citizens of a prosperous and re-integrated Plateau State. And when Plateau State solves her ethnic-religious problems, she will have a powerful testimony and be a beacon of hope for other troubled communities.

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Alexander Gutep on 5 January 2011 by Katrina Korb; Name changed to protect identity.

## **Chapter Five**

# **Truth and Justice for Reconciliation: Breaking the Cycle of Impunity**

This address was originally presented to the Global Integral Missions Conference, Jos, Nigeria on 26 November 2010. The title of the paper was selected by the conference organizers.

### **Introduction**

Truth and justice are somewhere near the heart of the Christian faith. Every good thing that happens in life is based upon truth and nearly every bad thing that happens in life is related to either a lack of truth or a compromise of justice. To be more specific, every time there is a break in relationship or a conflict, truth has somehow been lost or justice has been abused. And the only way that reconciliation is going to take place is for truth to be restored and justice to be upheld.

As important as truth and justice are and as often as we use the words, truth and justice are not always easy to understand. Both truth and justice have a certain amount of cultural baggage. In other words, truth and justice are sometimes understood differently in different cultures and different contexts. I will give two examples to illustrate this point.

### **Cultural Perspective on Truth**

The understanding of truth and the expression of truth is culturally determined. For example, in the western world, we have a much more precise understanding of truth. Because of that, things like time and distance are much more clearly defined. However, in Africa there is a much more general understanding of truth. For example, a Christian goes to the market, sees a plastic bowl, and asks the Christian seller how much it costs. He says, “one hundred Naira.” The buyer shouts and says “One hundred Naira. Kai, I bought this same bucket in the market last week ago for 50 Naira.” The seller responds, “Oga, I paid more than 50 Naira for it.” And the real fact is that neither of them has told the truth. The buyer was not even in the market last week and the seller only paid 30 Naira for the bowl. Therefore, the noise that takes place in the market prior to an agreement on the price cannot be thought to be truth. This kind of looseness with the absolute facts carries over to some extent into much of the society, even among Christians who are supposed to be committed to the truth.

### **Cultural Perspective on Justice and Mercy**

Africans and those from the western world tend to have a different perspective on issues related to justice and mercy. It has been my observation that people from Africa and the western world tend to focus on two different aspects of God’s nature. Both are legitimate and both come from God. I believe that Americans tend to focus on justice whereas Nigerians tend to focus on mercy.

The American society is very committed to the principle of justice. One application of that is that everyone in society is treated the same. Everyone waits in the queue for his or her turn. It does not matter how important you are, if you break the law, you will be convicted and suffer the sting of the law. There are many American governors and former legislators in

prison today. It does not matter who you know in America. The law of justice will catch up with you. In addition, justice means that the guilty must be held responsible for their actions and must compensate the innocent for any losses caused to them. That means that if an oil company has an accident on an oil platform and allows oil to flow in the ocean, that company must compensate all those who have suffered for this loss, including the fishermen who could not fish and even the hotel owners who lost customers because the beaches had oil on them.

On the other hand, Nigeria is a society that focuses on the mercy of God. Nigerian culture is very people-oriented; that means people and even the feelings of people are more important than some abstract concept like justice. For example, if a driver is caught and it is discovered that his papers in his vehicle are not up to date, he can beg the policeman and the policeman will often eventually allow him to go. If a final year student fails a course by three or four marks, the department will often have mercy on that student and add the marks he needs so that he can pass. The culture does not like to see people suffer so it is willing to compromise on justice a bit in order to exercise mercy.

Unfortunately, both cultures tend to get out of balance. If you take justice too far, you create a cold and impersonal and harsh but just society. This is what America has become. If a company makes the slightest mistake, the customers will sue that for compensation. This is such a big problem that somewhere between 30 and 40 percent of our medical expenses are going toward medical malpractice insurance. In addition, there is no room for personal interpretation of the law. For example, my 88-year-old mother-in-law recently flew from Atlanta to Washington DC. She was selected for random screening and the agents put her through the most severe form of screening. They did so because that is what the law says. They did not have any discretion to see that it was obvious that this 88-year-old woman was not a terrorist or a threat to anyone.

And on the Nigeria side, when we have mercy that is not balanced up with justice, we create a society that loses all standards. If a principal gets caught stealing money from his school, we forgive him because he has a wife and children. If a medical student does not quite pass her exams, we still pass her and make her a doctor and she goes into the society to become a threat to her patients because we have had mercy on her.

Only God has the perfect balance between justice and mercy. Both are important. Both are part of the character of God. However, either one that is not balanced by the other creates a society that ultimately has serious problems.

## **The Biblical Perspective on Truth and Justice**

Since truth and justice are concepts that are culturally determined to some extent and certainly culturally applied, we must back up further and attempt to understand truth and justice based upon the revelation of God. Pilate once asked Jesus, “*What is truth?*” (John 18:38). There is not a corresponding question “What is justice?” in the Bible but that is exactly the question that we need to address.

### **Truth**

By using electronic software, I learned that there are 344 direct references to truth in the NIV translation of the Bible. Interestingly only 106 or 31 percent of them are found in the Old Testament. There are 132 direct references to the word “justice” in the Bible. A total of 114 or 86 percent of those are found in the Old Testament. Just from the use of the words, it



appears the emphasis of the Old Testament is on justice but the emphasis in the New Testament is on truth. Whether that would be established in a broader study of the Old Testament or not is uncertain. If that is indeed a correct statistic, perhaps the heavy emphasis on justice in the Old Testament arises because the Old Testament describes a nation that must be concerned about justice whereas the emphasis in the New Testament is more focused on individuals. Individuals are more responsible for truth than justice.

The Book of Psalms describes God as “*the God of truth*” (31:5) whose word is “*right and true*” (33:4), whose “*law is true*” (119:142), whose “*commands are true*” (119:151) and who judges the world “*in righteousness and . . . truth*” (96:13). He is a God who desires “*truth in the inward parts*” (51:6). So just from one book of the Bible we see very clearly that God is a God of truth and justice.

Because God is a God of truth, he calls us to be people of truth. The psalmist asked the question, “*who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?*” (Psalm 51:1). He then answers the question, “*He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart*” (51:2). However, the Book of Proverbs is the book that really stresses the importance of truth.

- Proverbs 8:7: *My mouth speaks what is true.*
- Proverbs 12:17: *A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies.*
- Proverbs 12:19: *Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.*
- Proverbs 12:22: *The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful.*
- Proverbs 14:5: *A truthful witness does not deceive, but a false witness pours out lies.*
- Proverbs 14:25: *A truthful witness saves lives, but a false witness is deceitful.*
- Proverbs 16:13: *Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who speaks the truth.*
- Proverbs 23:23: *Buy the truth and do not sell it.*

The New Testament confirms and adds to what the Old Testament teaches. Jesus makes this foundational statement: “*I am the way, the truth and the life*” (John 14:6). He also gives that very insightful statement about truth when he says, “*you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32). The Comforter whom Jesus promised to send is the “*Spirit of truth*” (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). In his last prayer for his disciples Jesus said, “*Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth*” (John 17:17). Jesus declared to Pilate that he had come “*to testify to the truth*” and then said, “*Everyone on the side of truth listens to me*” (John 18:37). This sparked the famous question from Pilate “*What is truth?*” Truth was so important to the Apostle Paul that in his discussion of the resurrection he declared,

*For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men (1 Corinthians 15:16-19).*

Love is associated with truth (1 Corinthians 13:6); whereas sin is always somehow involved with a compromise of the truth. Those guilty of sexual sins were described by Paul as having “*exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator*” (Romans 1:25). Paul warns the Ephesians elders that “*Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them*” (Acts 20:30). Paul says that our future judgment will be “*based on truth*” (2:2) and that those who reject the truth will experience “*wrath and anger*” (2:8).

## **Justice**

What these verses tell us is that truth is very important to God. But what about justice? God is equally a God of justice. Psalm 9:6 says, “*The LORD is known by his justice*” and “*loves justice*” (11:7; 33:5; 99:4). In fact, “*righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne*” (89:14; 97:2). Since God is a God of justice, he is obviously concerned about justice. The following are some of the statements about justice that are found in the Law:

- Exodus 23:2-3: *Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, and do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit.*
- Exodus 23:6-7: *Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits. Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.*
- Leviticus 19:15: *Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.*
- Deuteronomy 16:18-20: *Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly . . . Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.*
- Deuteronomy 24:17: *Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge.*

The Bible links truth and justice several times. Isaiah declares,

*So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice (Isaiah 59:14-15).*

John, in the Book of Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, describes many worship scenes and other descriptions of God. Note these descriptions:

- Revelation 15:3: *Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.*
- Revelation 16:7: *And I heard the altar respond: “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.”*
- Revelation 19:11: *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.*

The fact is you cannot separate truth and justice. Justice can never be built upon falsehood. And there is no absolute truth that does not lead to justice. In fact, falsehood and injustice lead not just to sin against God but also lead to conflict between individuals and groups.

## **Biblical Examples of Conflict**

We will now look at several conflicts in the Old Testament that illustrate the importance of and link between truth and justice. I have selected seven examples of conflict. These are all personal or inter-tribal conflicts. None are international conflicts. I will look at each and especially note how issues of truth and justice influenced those conflicts.

## **Cain and Abel**

The first interpersonal conflict we see in the Bible was between Cain and Abel. Abel offered gifts to God that were more acceptable than those of Cain and this created jealousy and anger in the heart of Cain. He invited his brother out in the field and killed him. This ended the conflict but it did not end the problem (Genesis 4:2-8). Cain later paid a heavy price of shame and guilt and isolation for the murder of his brother.

What was the cause of the conflict? It was jealousy which is a belief that justice has been perverted. Cain felt that somehow he had been mistreated so this justified the violent treatment he meted out to his brother.

## **Jacob and Esau**

Jacob and Esau were twin sons of Isaac and grandsons of Abraham. Esau was the oldest and became a hunter. His father loved the food that he prepared and developed a love for Esau that surpassed that of Jacob. Jacob was a quiet man who stayed closer to home and became the favorite of his mother. On one occasion, Jacob was able to get Esau to sell his birthright to him for a meal (Genesis 25:31-33). Whether this was legally binding or not is uncertain. However, when it was time for Isaac to pronounce his blessings upon his sons, Jacob was able to deceive his father and get Isaac to pronounce the first-born blessing on him. When Esau found out about this, he became very angry and wanted to kill Jacob. This forced Jacob to flee away to another country and began a period of bitterness and animosity between the two brothers that lasted for decades.

What was it that led to this disagreement and separation? The first hint of a potential problem is the favoritism among the parents. Jacob preferred Esau and Rebekah preferred Jacob. Favoritism among parents is an injustice. However, the alienation between them was widened by Jacob's deception, which is a perversion of the truth. That deception eventually led to injustice and the deception and the injustice eventually created a rift that destroyed the unity of that family.

## **Joseph and His Brothers**

Joseph was the eleventh of Jacob's twelve sons. He was the firstborn of Jacob's favorite wife. Unfortunately, the weakness that had been in the parent was also passed down to the child. Jacob showed favoritism to Joseph by loving him more than he did his other children (Genesis 37:3). This favoritism caused jealousy among the brothers. When Joseph was sent by his father to go out in the field to check on his brothers, the jealousy that had been fueled by the favoritism of their father boiled over. Some of the brothers even wanted to kill Joseph (37:20). However, the less violent brothers eventually prevailed and they sold Joseph into slavery. This is a clear example of injustice creating a division and conflict that tore a family apart for many years.

## **The Monument Conflict**

Moses successfully led the Israelites up to the east side of the Jordan River before he died. The Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh were so happy with that particular area that they asked for permission to settle on the east side of the Jordan. Joshua granted them permission but required that they help drive out the Canaanites from the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The two and half tribes agreed and

fulfilled their responsibility. They then returned to the land east of the Jordan River and started building their homes and farms and businesses.

Sometime after they returned to his area, someone suggested that they build a monument on the bank of the Jordan River to commemorate their relationship with their brothers on the other side of the river. They did so, building a large monument that looked like the altar before the tabernacle. They called it “Witness” because it was to be a testimony between them and their brothers. However, some people on the west side of the Jordan saw them building this big monument and assumed that it was an altar to one of the local pagan gods. This was reported to the leaders of the nine and a half tribes. They became so angry over this apparent apostasy that they assembled their army to go and fight their brothers and punish them for this sacrilege. Fortunately, wiser heads prevailed and a delegation was sent to visit the two and a half tribes to find out what they were actually doing. When they found out the truth, they were happy and the potential war was averted (Joshua 22:9-34).

What was the issue that led to this near war? It was rumor that was based upon lack of information. The rumor was not true and this untruth almost led to a civil war. Truth was lost and, except for some wise men who went to seek out the truth, a war would have been started that could have killed thousands.

### **The Near Annihilation of the Tribe of Benjamin**

The last chapters of Judges describe some of the saddest events in the Bible. They tell a sordid story of a man named Micah who stole his mother’s silver but later returned it. She then insisted that some of the silver be used to make idols. Micah set up a shrine with these idols. One day a Levite came through this area and became Micah’s priest. Later some men from the tribe of Benjamin came to the area, stole the gods and an ephod, and persuaded the Levite to come with them and become the priest to their whole tribe. The men from Benjamin overpowered the city of Laish and inhabited it, renaming it Dan. Later another Levite passed through this area with his concubine and was offered hospitality by one of the residents of the city. During the night, some wicked men came to the house and demanded that the man be given to them so they could have sex with them. The owner of the house and the visitor tried to pacify them by giving them the visitor’s concubine. The mob gang raped her all night. The next morning, the Levite took the body of his concubine back to his home. He cut her in twelve pieces and sent a piece of the woman’s body to each of the tribes of Israel.

This incident so infuriated the Israelites that they sent a delegation to the tribe of Dan and demanded that hand over those who had become guilty of this crime so they could be tried and punished. The Danites refused to do so and this led to a war between the tribe of Dan and the rest of tribes of Israel. The war was so devastating that the tribe of Dan was reduced to only about 600 men. This came at a great cost to the other tribes in that they lost over 40,000 soldiers. In addition, all of the cities of the Danites were destroyed as well (Judges 17:1-21:25).

And what was the cause of this conflict? There were many injustices that involved idolatry, stealing, and kidnapping. And the issue that really sparked the reaction was another gross injustice. A mob demanded homosexual favors of visiting men but wound up gang raping a woman until she died. The final injustice was the refusal of the men of Dan to hand over those guilty of this horrible injustice. Once again, an injustice that involved only a small number of people sparked a bloody civil war that cost nearly 100,000 lives.

## **David and Absalom**

Absalom became angry at his brother Amnon for defiling his sister, Tamar. He planned and carried out an elaborate assassination attempt against Amnon. This grieved his father, King David and forced Absalom to go into exile. This created a division between the father and son that was a grief to both of them. Later Absalom came back to Jerusalem but still remained alienated from his father for some time. They were eventually reconciled and things became normal between them again at least for a while. It was injustice that created this rift between David and his son, Absalom that led to horrible consequences.

## **Rehoboam and Jeroboam**

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was appointed king after Solomon died. However, he was arrogant and totally ignored the rights and emotions of his subjects. This led to a rebellion by Jeroboam who took ten of the tribes and formed a separate federation (1 Kings 12). This division of the nation of Israel continued for hundreds of years. What was the cause of this division and the many battles and wars that these two nations fought over the years? The cause was injustice. Rehoboam wanted to continue the unjust policies of his father and was unconcerned about the needs of the people. Jeroboam decided that he and his followers would no longer tolerate the injustices and therefore, they broke away and formed a new nation.

## **Biblical Examples of Reconciliation**

What we have looked at so far are seven conflicts in the Bible. In this section, I will examine the principles and strategies that led to the reconciliation of these opposing groups.

### **Cain and Abel**

There never was any reconciliation between Cain and Abel because Abel was dead. However, there was something for society to learn from this incident. To help uphold justice in this case and to provide a warning to future generations, God placed a curse upon Cain that he would carry around for the rest of his life. Cain's punishment had at least three characteristics.

- **It was quick.** In this case, God did not delay justice. Cain was driven from his land the same day he was confronted by God (Genesis 4:13). It was done quickly so Cain and his family and all others who learned about this crime would link his punishment with his crime.
- **It was public.** If justice was only a matter of punishing the wrongdoing, a private punishment may have been satisfactory. However, for this punishment to serve as a deterrent to future potential criminals, it had to be public. A mark was placed on Cain's face so that everyone who saw him saw the mark of God's curse (4:15).
- **It was permanent.** This mark kept anyone from killing Cain. He had to live a full life being reminded every time he saw his own image of the injustice he had committed against his brother (4:16).

Because it was impossible to bring about total justice and restore Abel's life, God enforced a kind of representative justice that was a public and perpetual reminder to Cain and all who knew him that injustice leads to consequences. Therefore, the society itself was

taught an important lesson. And, interestingly, there was not another recorded example of murder in the Bible for hundreds of years. Public justice helped to restrain further violence.

## **Jacob and Esau**

The division between Jacob and Esau led to Jacob fleeing to another country. As long as he lived in that country, there was no need to be reconciled to his brother. However, after at least 14 years, he decided to return home. The one obstacle to returning in peace and blessing was the ruptured relationship Jacob had with his brother. How was Jacob going to restore this broken relationship? He did at least four things to bring about reconciliation.

- **He prepared for the reconciliation.** He sent a messenger beforehand (Genesis 32:3). This was no doubt a culturally relevant way of initiating reconciliation.
- **He prayed to God** (32:10) and acknowledged his name was “Jacob” which implied he was a deceitful person (32:26-28).
- **He made restitution.** He provided his brother with many livestock including “*two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys*” (32:14-15).
- **He humbled himself.** He bowed down before Esau in humility (33:3) which implied respect and the acknowledgement of a junior person to a senior person.

Fortunately, these steps led to reconciliation with his Esau. This was illustrated by their embracing and weeping (33:4) and their subsequent friendly relationships. So, the principles used in this reconciliation were preparation, prayer, restitution, and humility. These are essential qualities in any reconciliation attempt.

## **Joseph and His Brothers**

The reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers was initiated by Joseph. It was done in a surreptitious manner. Joseph had become a high official in the Egyptian government. At least ten years after Joseph arrived in Egypt, his brothers came from Palestine to buy food. Joseph recognized them and essentially played games with them for months. He first accused them of being spies (42:9) and detained them for three days (42:17). He provided them with grain and sent them back home but detained Simon (42: 24). He had their money returned to their bags (42:25) which proved to be a source of consternation to them (42: 28). Later when the brothers returned for more grain, Joseph prepared a lavish meal for them. He gave them more grain and once again placed their money in their sacks but also placed his own silver cup in the bag of Benjamin. When this was discovered, Judah pleaded with Joseph to allow Benjamin to go back to his father and declared that he would remain behind as the slave. It was then that Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers. He then said,

*And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God (45:5-8).*

What were the things that led to the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers?

- **Repentance by Joseph's Brothers.** Joseph put his brothers through a series of experiences that appear to be designed to cause them to think about their sins and to feel godly sorrow. Eventually they were able to genuinely express their sorrow to their brother for what they had done. They asked for forgiveness and promised to be Joseph's slave (50:17-18).
- **Forgiveness by Joseph.** Joseph demonstrated his forgiveness by not punishing his brothers, by giving them the best of the land (45:10, 20), by promising to take care of them (45:11) and speaking kindly to them (50:21). Joseph's brothers had expected him to be harsh after their father died but Joseph demonstrated the same love and forgiveness after his father died as before.
- **Theological Understanding by Joseph.** One of the things that helped Joseph to forgive and be reconciled to his brothers was his understanding of the way God works. Joseph believed that God had sent him to Egypt to preserve lives (45:7) so that he could say, "*So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God.*" After his father died, Joseph had to reiterate that conviction to his brothers again when he said, "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives*" (50:20). Joseph's big understanding of God helped him to overlook the personal offenses that were committed against him and see them as part of the bigger plan of God to accomplish his will.

Joseph and his brothers were reconciled based upon Joseph's willingness not to demand justice but to exercise forgiveness. That ability to extend forgiveness was enhanced by his understanding of the nature of God.

### **The Monument Conflict<sup>54</sup>**

The building of the monument by the two and a half tribes almost led to war. However, the thing that prevented the war was the wise suggestion from someone in the nine and a half tribes that they should do an investigation before going to war. Thus, a delegation was sent to the two and a half tribes to find out the truth. And when the truth was discovered, the idea of war disappeared. In fact, the seeking and discovery of the truth led to an even stronger relationship between the two groups. Had they gone to war, a huge injustice would have been committed but because they chose to find out the truth, conflict was avoided and peace and harmony were restored. It was investigation and truth that led to reconciliation.

### **The Near Annihilation of the Tribe of Benjamin**

The last few chapters of Judges tell us that the tribe of Benjamin was almost destroyed when the other eleven tribes decided to punish them for their wickedness. What was it that helped to bring reconciliation between these Benjamin and the other tribes? We are told that some time after the massive destruction of Benjamin, representatives of the other tribes went to Bethel where the tabernacle was located. We then see three things that encouraged the eleven tribes to attempt reconciliation with their brothers.

- **The Worship of God.** When they came into the presence of God, we read, "*O LORD, the God of Israel,*" they cried, "*why has this happened to Israel? Why should one tribe be missing from Israel today?*" (Judges 21:3). It was the presence of God that

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<sup>54</sup> The story of the monument controversy, including the reconciliation, is described in more detail in Chapter one. Hence, it is only briefly mentioned here.

caused them to reflect on the violence that had been done and the inhumane way they had responded to the offense of the Benjamites.

- **The Awareness of the Magnitude of the Destruction.** When it finally dawned on the Israelites exactly what had happened and just how close to annihilation their brother tribe had come, this overpowered them with sorry and forced them to attempt to restore relationship with their estranged brothers. It also motivated them to try to help restore this pitiful group of 600 men to become a strong tribe again.
- **The Use of Creative and Unconventional Strategies.** The Israelites realized if the tribe of Benjamin were to be restored as one of the legitimate tribes of Israel, they would have to find wives for these survivors so they could produce children. Because the Benjamites had no wives and because the other Israelites had personally taken an oath that they would not give any of their daughters to them, they had to figure out a way to get wives for these men without violating their oaths. They used their creativity (and a bit of cruelty) to do get the first 400 wives and then essentially turned their backs while the Benjamites took some of their daughters without their approval. Therefore, they had to use unorthodox ways to help a brother tribe become restored and rebuild their relationship with them.

This is one of the saddest portions of the Bible. It is not necessarily a pattern to us today of the best way of rebuilding relationships. However, it does demonstrate how important reconciliation and restoration of a tribe was to these people. And it demonstrates how coming into the presence of God and seeing things from God's perspective will open up the eyes and hearts of bitter fighting men to see and comprehend the consequences of their violence.

### **David and Absalom**

David and Absalom were alienated because of Absalom's murder of his brother, Amnon, son of David. This forced him to flee into exile. David mourned for his son every day and longed to be with Absalom (2 Samuel 13:37-38). Joab, David's military advisor noted the sad condition of the king and decided to do something about it. He was able to employ the services of a widow to pretend that one of her sons had been killed by the other. She told King David that now her clan was demanding that the surviving son be killed which would eliminate all of her posterity. When the king agreed to help her, she pointed out the parallels between her case and his case. This encouraged David to bring back his son from exile. However, even after he came back to Jerusalem, the two were still alienated. For two years Absalom did not see his father, the king. Absalom sent for Joab and once more this military man intervened and made it possible for the king to see his son, thus reconciling the two. Kind David was forced to overlook the injustice done by his son and forgive him.

The key point here is that reconciliation was aided in this case, based upon the intervention of a neutral party. The reconciliation in the first instance was initiated by Joab, a neutral third party. And the completion of the reconciliation was instigated by Absalom but he asked Joab to still be the intermediary.

### **Rehoboam and Jeroboam**

The break between Rehoboam and Jeroboam was very serious. It led to many conflicts and even wars between Judah and Israel. And the sad fact is, there was never any official reconciliation between Israel and Judah. Israel eventually was conquered and deported by the Assyrians. A remnant came back and occupied Samaria but there was so much intermarriage and so much syncretism in Samaria that there continued to remain



animosity between these people. Some of the people from the northern kingdom were disbursed and did manage to become reabsorbed into the Jewish nation on a personal basis but there was never any formal reconciliation between the two nations.

This fact is a serious warning about the consequences of arrogance and injustice. These things can lead to such serious conflict that there may never be any reconciliation.

## **General Observations about Truth and Justice in Reconciliation**

I will now summarize the observations I have made about the various conflicts and the things that led to their reconciliation. I will also attempt to extract practical lessons for our conflicts in Nigeria. I am limiting the lessons to those that are related to truth and justice.

### **1. Reconciliation is always enhanced when truth is discovered and made public.**

The clearest example of this is the incident related to the monument that was built by the two and a half tribes on the east side of the Jordan River. The tribes on the western side of Jordan were ready to go to war when they heard about what appeared to be a terrible apostasy. Once the full truth was discovered, however, they were happy and supported the decision that their brothers had made. Reconciliation was easy when the truth became known.

We also see a hint of this in the near annihilation of the tribe of Benjamin. When the rest of the Israelites discovered the reality of what had happened—an entire tribe had almost been destroyed, that motivated them to do whatever was necessary to restore this tribe and, in so doing, it restored their relationship with this greatly weakened tribe. Jesus said, “*you will know the truth and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32). The truth prevented the nine and a half tribes from going to war and the truth set the eleven tribes free from their blind rage.

The most important thing any person or group can do to resolve a crisis is to find out the truth and make sure that the truth is understood by all. One of the most significant things that aided in the healing of South Africa after apartheid was the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission.” This commission gave the aggressors an opportunity to confess freely and openly their crimes and also gave the opportunity of victims to know the truth behind what they had experienced. Confessing and learning and knowing and understanding the truth set many people free—free from the uncertainty of what happen, free from bitterness and anger and free to release these things and move on with life. Something similar to this was also attempted in Rwanda where the perpetrators of violence and their victims were able to learn the truth. And once the truth was discovered, it helped to set them free.

One thing that will help one discover the truth is to temporarily set aside his or her own perception of truth and attempt to see truth from the other point of view. That is what the representatives of the nine and a half tribes did. We are normally so committed to seeing things from our own perspective, that this is difficult to do. Objectivity is the first step in discovering truth. Suspending one’s own perspective on truth is the first step in gaining objectivity. That means that if we are going to solve our problems in Jos, the Christian Beroms and Anagutas and Jarawas are going to have to try to see truth from the perspective of the Muslim Hausas and Fulanis and *vice versa*. That will be very difficult to do but the objectivity resulting from that exercise may yield the peace that has so far escaped us.

There are other things that one can do to encourage peace and reconciliation but there is nothing more important that one can do than to seek to learn and promote the truth that

surrounded the conflict. Therefore, in any conflict situation, whether it is a minor disagreement between family members or an international crisis, seeking to gain and understand the facts must be the first step in solving that problem.

## **2. Reconciliation is always encouraged when people see things from God's point of view.**

When Jacob knelt in worship before God before meeting his brother, this helped to clear his mind and removed the scales from his eyes. He was then able to see and understand his brother's feelings more clearly and what he would have to do to reconcile to him (Genesis 32:10). Something similar happened to the leaders of the eleven tribes who had almost annihilated their brothers. When they went to Bethel to worship at the tabernacle, they were forced to see their recent actions from God's point of view and they cried out, "*O LORD, the God of Israel,*" they cried, "*why has this happened to Israel? Why should one tribe be missing from Israel today?*" (Judges 21:3). Since God is the ultimate truth, getting God's perspective on any issue is to understand the truth.

We see something similar to this in the reaction of Joseph to his brothers. He was able to forgive them because he looked at their abuse of him from God's point of view. He said, "*it was not you who sent me here, but God*" (Genesis 45:8) and "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives*" (50:20). Although Joseph had suffered a great atrocity at the hands of his own brothers, when he looked at the big picture, he could see the hand of God even in this horrible atrocity committed against him and this helped to take away his anger and bitterness and gave him the grace to forgive his brothers. If God had done something so wonderful through him in Egypt, why should he be angry at his brothers for making it possible for him to get to Egypt, even though they did so in a cruel and inhumane way?

In every conflict, both parties should attempt to see the problem from God's point of view. This is one of the reasons why religious leaders are key persons in the resolution of any conflict. Obviously, the scriptures from any religion can be manipulated to support practically any action. However, there are abundant teachings in both the Qur'an and the Bible that encourage us to live peacefully with our neighbors and to forgive those who have offended us. Therefore, pastors, Sunday school teachers, Bible study leaders and teacher of religious education in public schools must develop appropriate curricula, provide proper teacher training, and then make opportunities to teach our young people about violence, conflict, peace, and reconciliation from God's point of view.

The Bible reveals to us God's perspective on all things. As we will see in the next point, the Bible reveals that justice is the work of government (Romans 13:3-4). However, the Bible further reveals that individuals are not to attempt to enforce justice for personal offenses. The Apostle Paul declared:

*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head" (Romans 12:18-20).*

Paul also practiced what he preached. In one of the last sentences he ever wrote, Paul said, "*Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for*

*what he has done*” (2 Timothy 4:14). In other words, Paul was saying that even though this man had harmed him which no doubt negatively affected the gospel, God would take care of him. There was no need for retaliation. Understanding conflict from God’s point of view and being committed to doing God’s will always encourage peace and reconciliation.

### **3. Peace is always promoted when justice is public and appropriate.**

The story of Cain and Abel is an excellent reminder of how justice restrains evil and helps preserve peace. God could have required Cain to forfeit his life for taking the life of his brother. That would have been consistent with the Mosaic Law which was instituted later (Numbers 35:16-21). However, God chose a punishment that would be a perpetual reminder to Cain and all who knew him of the ongoing consequences of injustice. The story of Ananias and Saphira in the New Testament served a similar purpose in the early church. When they attempted to deceive the church leaders about their gifts to the church, they were both struck down immediately. As long as that incident remained in the mind of the church, it served as a deterrent to others who might want to perform similar injustices.

Public justice is one of the most important means of restraining violence and forcing people to control their emotions and passions. One of the problems that we have experienced in our various Jos crises is that a time of religious or ethnic violence has become a “free crime zone.” Apparently people believe that they can kill and destroy and get by with it during an ethno-religious crisis because few if any people have ever been held responsible for their injustices during these crises. The perceived lack of justice in these crises also encourages people to take justice into their own hands. If the common belief is that the government is not going to bring about justice, then whenever aggrieved citizens can, they will at times bring about their own version of justice. It is fair to say that many of the burned homes and businesses and mass graves in Jos in our recent crises have been a direct result of lack of public justice in earlier crises.

However, when those within government who are responsible to uphold justice fulfill their responsibilities, the need for individuals to take justice into their own hands becomes less necessary. In other words, the more law and order and the more justice there is in society, the less likely it is that people will feel they must personally teach criminals a lesson.

It does not take a philosopher or a lawyer to see that when people are allowed to kill and destroy with impunity in religious and ethnic crises like those in Jos, this will encourage even greater killing and destruction in future crises. Jesus has removed retaliation and social punishment from the hands of us as individuals. However, justice is still one of the most important responsibilities of government. The Apostle Paul declared,

*For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer (Romans 13:3-4).*

Therefore, perhaps the most important thing that governments can do to prevent future occurrences of violence is to identify those guilty of criminal acts in previous crises or any new crises and enact justice that is swift, public, and appropriate.

#### **4. Reconciliation is often established when the offending party takes the initiative to repent and make restitution.**

When Jacob was returning to the land of his birth, he knew he would meet his brother, Esau. As he began to think about what he had done to his brother, his mature conscience caused him to see his offense from a different point of view and encouraged him to seek reconciliation. Therefore, he determined that he would initiate reconciliation with his brother and would take that task very seriously. He planned his reunion carefully, sending ahead a trusted aid to notify his brother of his intentions. He then sent ahead an enormous flock of livestock. This was to partially compensate him for the losses he had incurred as a result of Jacob's schemes. Finally, he bowed before his brother in humility. Though we do not have recorded any specific words seeking forgiveness, the actions speak for themselves. Jacob, the offender, took the initiative to be reconciled to his brother and his efforts were rewarded.

Ideally, if a person has offended another person, that person should be the one to initiate the restoration and seek forgiveness. Proverbs 28:13 says, "*He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*" The Benjamites tried to cover the sin of their brothers who had raped the Levite's wife. We see the severe consequences they and the other Israelites paid for this injustice. If a community has offended another community, the community leaders should initiate reconciliation and restitution.

During the reign of David there was a famine and when David inquired of the Lord about the reason for this, the Lord reminded him that an injustice had been committed against the Gibeonites. Joshua had made a treaty with them when they first entered Canaan (Joshua 9:15). However, 400 years later, Saul attempted to destroy them. God remembered that covenant and held the Israelites responsible for maintaining it. David eventually handed over some of the descendants of Saul to the Gibeonites so they could have justice against what Saul had attempted against them (2 Samuel 21:1-9). Whereas we may not like the way this problem was solved, we do have to note that David, acted on behalf of his nation to solve an offense that had been committed against another nation.

A key point in the reconciliation between Jacob and Esau involved restitution. Restitution is paying back to others that which has been taken from them, usually wrongfully. Restitution was an important principle in the Mosaic Law. Exodus 22:1-15 gives several possible scenarios where restitution is required. All of these cases are based upon individual restitution for individual offenses. However, where there have been corporate offenses, it would be appropriate for there to be corporate restitution.

For example, would it be appropriate for a church or other Christian community to help restore homes or businesses for those Muslims who lost their property in one of our crises at the hand of "Christian" radicals? Jesus was willing to heal the servant of one of the hated Roman army officers (Matthew 8:5-13). In addition, he visited the home of Levi one of the despised tax collectors and welcomed him to be one of his followers (Luke 5:27-30). When challenged about why he would do something good to one who had been such a financial terror to society, he simply said, "*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*" (5:31-32). If some of us would express our repentance to some on the other side who have suffered at the hands of those perceived to be "Christians" in tangible terms of restitution and good deeds, we would have taken a giant step toward reconciliation. We would have illustrated this important fact that the stronger of the two offended parties usually is the one who initiates reconciliation.

## **5. Reconciliation is often initiated when justice is suspended and forgiveness is granted by the offended party.**

There can never be reconciliation without truth. However, it may be possible at times to suspend the justice that is due to a person and extend forgiveness. Joseph is a good example of this. When he finally met his brothers, few people would have condemned him if he had really punished them, as he was in a position to do. Had he thrown them in prison or even had them executed, this would have been viewed as the justice they deserved. However, Joseph was willing to release them from justice and extend to them mercy.

Mercy and justice come close to being the exact opposites of each other. If a man receives the justice that he deserves, then there will be no mercy extended to him. On the other hand, if a person receives mercy, then in some sense of the word, justice has been suspended or at least tempered. For example, in the university plagiarism is considered cheating and can get one suspended or even expelled from the university. However, individual lecturers and departments may sometimes extend a student mercy and not insist on the full implementation of the law. If justice is done and the person is expelled, there has been no mercy. If mercy is extended and the person is given another chance, then the justice demanded by the law has not been fully implemented.

God is a God of both justice and mercy. He is the only person who upholds both of these without compromising the other. Even the doctrine of salvation is a combination of those two ideas. God wants to be merciful and forgive us of our sins but his justice keeps him from doing so. That is why it became necessary for Jesus to die on the cross. That sacrifice, in some legal sense, satisfied the justice of God and enabled him to extend mercy to those who repent. However, since we are not God, it is difficult for us to keep mercy and justice in a perfect balance. Therefore, sometimes we must concede justice in order to extend mercy.

In every conflict situation, crimes have been committed against both the state and individuals. Justice demands that those who have committed those crimes be made to suffer the penalty that those crimes demand. If the state releases those persons from their penalty, an injustice has somehow been committed. However, God allows us, at least as individuals, to extend mercy and release those who have offended us from the penalties they deserve. Note these verses:

- Matthew 6:14-15: *For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*
- Matthew 18:21-22: *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."*
- Mark 11:25: *And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*
- Luke 6:37: *Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.*
- Luke 17:3-4: *If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, "I repent," forgive him.*

In looking closely at these verses, it might be argued that these are all verses relate to forgiving our Christian brothers. However, note these verses:

- Luke 6:27-29: *But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic.*
- Romans 12:18-21: *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

These verses tell us plainly that it is not always necessary to demand justice in every situation. We have the right, at least as individuals, to grant forgiveness to those who have opposed us and to release them from the penalties that their offenses demand.

However, there appears to be a condition to offering forgiveness. God does not grant us forgiveness unless we repent which implies an acknowledging and rejection of that sin. The primary example here is Joseph forgiving his brothers. However, there is evidence that the brothers acknowledged their crimes against Joseph and had turned against them. Therefore, Joseph was free to extend forgiveness to them.,

I am convinced that we will never have peace in Jos or any other conflict situation if we as individuals insist on total justice. If there is any attempt at repentance, we as individuals should be willing to extend mercy to those who have offended us just as God has granted us forgiveness for our offenses against him.

## **6. Truth and justice can sometimes be seen more clearly by a third party who can facilitate the reconciliation process.**

David was obviously angry when his son Absalom killed his son Amnon. Absalom fled and lived in exile for some years. David could not see what his anger was doing to him and his kingdom and Absalom was not in a position to ask for reconciliation. It took the objective view of a third person, Joab, to be able to see what needed to be done. It was at his initiative that David allowed Absalom to be brought back to the kingdom. Later, it was also with the support of Joab that Absalom was able to renew personal contact with King David.

Third parties are still essential to reconciliation. Often the two warring parties are so blinded by the injustices done against them that they cannot see the viewpoint of the other side. However, those who are not as emotionally involved in the problem can often see enough of both sides that they can push reconciliation forward. Jesus himself taught this principle. He said if there is an offense, one was to go to the brother and attempt to get the problem sorted out. If that were not successful, one was to take one or two other persons—hopefully neutral people who could help to erring brother to see his error (Matthew 18:15-17). If we are not able to bring about reconciliation on our own, we should seek neutral third parties that can be more objective and cooperate with them in establishing peace.

Implementing this principle is extremely difficult in conflict situations because there are few people in the country who are truly neutral on the issues that separate us. However, it is not totally impossible. In our sports activities, our umpires and referees are often closer to one team than the another. However, most of them have enough professionalism that they suspend their personal preferences and officiate the game like they see it. All arbitrators in

ethnic or political or religious conflicts must seek to have that same kind of professional objectivity. If we can suspend our prejudices for or against the conflicting parties, we will be closer to bringing them together and solving their problems.

**7. Reconciliation is sometimes encouraged when the violence produced by injustice becomes so appalling that even the victorious are grieved.**

When the tribe of Benjamin was almost annihilated, the eleven tribes later saw the incredible devastation that they had caused and this awakened their consciences and their compassion. This then motivated them to stop the violence and help rebuild the people they had just defeated and almost destroyed.

There is within the heart of every person some bit of compassion when he or she sees unrestrained destruction. This is one of the ways that the new media can serve a positive role. If they can show the destruction that is produced by violence without also stirring up passions and revenge, this may cause people to say, “enough is enough” and work for peace.

In some of the limited efforts of peace making that I have been engaged, I have sensed a little of this, especially at the grassroots level. The people are tired of violence and killing and destruction. They have seen enough violence to last the rest of their lives. This can indeed be a strong motivation for bringing about peace and reconciliation.

For a number of years, Church leaders gathered monthly on Sunday afternoons in Jos to pray for peace. Overall, these were positive events. However, at times there was an edge in the prayers or people prayed imprecatory prayers against the other side. One day after we had had a crisis on the Rukaba Road, one of the pastors was praying and he started praying something like this: “O God, what has happened to us? Our children are killing people and eating their flesh?” He then started weeping and pleading for God to have mercy on the church. There was no longer any focus on “them” but the prayers were for God to have mercy on us. The horror of the report of young men eating the flesh of one of the combatants they had killed was so horrifying and repulsive that it brought about a renewed look at ourselves which encouraged lamentation and repentance.

**8. Reconciliation is sometimes never achieved thus leaving a perpetual legacy of bitterness, misunderstanding, violence, and under-development.**

It is an unfortunate reality that the division which started between Rehoboam and Jeroboam was never peacefully and officially resolved. In fact, neither nation ever achieved the success and prestige of the united nation under David and Solomon. From their creation, these two nations started on a long painful downward spiral in national regression. They lived side by side for several hundred years, sometimes fighting one another and sometimes supporting one another against common enemies. However, neither nation was able to ever achieve what God had planned for that nation because of their separation caused by injustice.

Israel and Judah stand as a perpetual warning to all of us of the dangers of misunderstandings that lead to conflict and violence. If we are not careful, we can allow divisions to become so deep that they may never be resolved. The division between the Jews and the Arabs is a modern case in point. They have been fighting for the last 75 years and appear to be little closer to peace and reconciliation than they were 50 years ago. There are similar animosities between various tribes in Africa and many other parts of the world. Many times, the offenses that created the conflict are minor or even forgotten. However, the

violence and retaliation have created a permanent state of animosity that keeps both groups from developing and achieving the kind of success they desire.

If we have no other reason for solving our problems, let us make every effort to become reconciled to others for the sake of our children and future generations.

### **Conclusion**

Truth and justice are at the foundation of a civilized society. To the extent that truth and justice are honored and upheld in a society, to that extent the rights of individuals, including minorities will be respected and life will be peaceful. To the extent that truth is hidden and justice is perverted, to that extent confusion and suspicion will creep into the society that may lead to conflict, violence, and destruction. The words of the Lord to Zechariah are still God's way for the best possible society.

*This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other" (Zechariah 7:9-10).*

May truth and justice be the shining beacons along the shores of our lives that keep us from further violence and lead us back to peace and reconciliation that will produce success in personal lives, families, and communities.



## Questions and Answers after the Presentation

There were 10 questions asked immediately after the presentation. Because they help flesh out the application section of this presentation, I have chosen to include those in this book. All of the questions were asked at one time. I wrote down the questions and responded to all of them at the end. I went home immediately after the presentation and wrote out my answers to the questions as closely as I could remember my answers. For the sake of ease in connecting the questions with the answers I have chosen to put my answers immediately after the questions. At the end of the question-and-answer session, I have added some comments and explanation about the atmosphere and general reaction of the audience to my presentation and the question-and-answer session. Questions and comments are in bold type; my responses are in italics; other comments are in normal type. Most names have been reduced to initials so as to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

- 1. I believe that we must repent but is not rebuilding their houses going too far? Will it not lead us to suggest that we have been at fault? I believe in repentance and forgiveness rather than restitution.**

*Unfortunately, you cannot separate restitution from repentance. Restitution is repentance. If I say "I'm sorry" but I do not take practical steps to demonstrate my sorrow, I have not really repented. What if an armed robber came to your house tonight and stole plenty of your money? Tomorrow he goes to church, hears the gospel and gives his life to Christ. What would you think if someone advised him, "It is good to seek forgiveness from those you have stolen from but don't worry about trying to pay back what you have stolen?" We would think that person was rather foolish. The Bible is quite clear about restitution. We must restore or repay that which we have wrongfully taken from another person or destroyed. I will admit as I did in the presentation that most of the references to restitution in the Bible are on a personal basis. However, I think it is only logical that if there has been some kind of corporate responsibility for an injury or damage, there should be some kind of corporate response of repentance. What do you think it would say to our Muslim neighbors if some Christians showed up to help them rebuild that which people claiming to be Christians had destroyed?*

- 2. Where is the balance in all of this? I think the balance must start with us as individuals. We must ask ourselves the question, "What is the heart of God?" When we go too far on justice, we lose humility and this can lead to cruelty. However, when a society is built completely on mercy, it leads to chaos and anarchy. I believe the key concept here must be balance.**

*Thank you very much. I agree with all you have said. (The next day the questioner wrote me a text message that said, 'Thanks 4 ur paper yesterday. Wanted 2 greet but u had left. D truth will stand d test of time. R.')*

- 3. Some people speak "facts" but they do not speak the "truth." For example, the blood on Joseph's coat was a fact but it was not the truth. We see and hear a lot of facts during these crises but we often do not hear the truth.**

*I like your observation. I am not sure that that the distinction between "facts" and "truth" will stand up linguistically but you are making a very good point. I would probably express this by saying that some people tell the truth but not the whole truth. The facts they give are indeed true but they have not given enough of the facts to really*

*represent a true reflection of what happened. I agree that this is a major problem. And probably all of us are guilty to some extent. First, we only see truth from our own perspective and not the whole truth. And second, we tend to interpret everything from our own perspective and, third, we tend to communicate things from our own perspective. I have often said over the years that just about everything you read in the international media about Nigeria is the true. They are facts that cannot be disputed. However, they are not the whole truth and therefore, they do not reflect a true representation of the issue. So thank you for that helpful reminder to make sure that we are speaking the whole truth. Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." It does not matter where the truth comes from or who speaks that truth, the truth will always ultimately set you free.*

The person making the observation followed up with this comment:

**Jesus said in Matthew 23:23 that there were some things that were more important than others. He declared those to be "justice, mercy and faithfulness." I believe that as much as possible, we must focus on those three things during these crises. In addition, Paul says in Romans 12:18, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Sometimes it is not possible to live with one's enemies.**

*Thank you for those helpful comments. I agree with them.*

- 4. I appreciate your comments on humility, prayer, and love. Certainly, key issues in our Jos crises are forgiveness and love. We cannot win Muslims without love. However, I have one worry. Why is it that some leaders find it difficult to speak the truth? For example, the police commissioner himself said that the most recent crisis began with an attack on a church. However, one of our senior church leaders got up immediately after that and said that it was not. The Muslims have an agenda. They want to get political power. Why do we not address this issue? How can our leaders not speak the truth? We need to talk together but we need to tell them the truth.**

Someone in the audience asked for permission to clarify an issue. He said,

**It is not correct to say that Christian leaders have not spoken up during these crises. Christian leaders have spoken up with the greatest clarity and conviction. Let me clear up the confusion over the report of one issue. There is a lot of confusion over the statements about where the most recent conflict started. I think I can clear that up. The attack started in the Nasarawa area at an ECWA church. When the word got out, it was reported that it was behind St. Michael's (Catholic) church. The media was too scared to go back in that area so they simply reported what they had heard. The police commissioner got this word and correctly reported that a church had been attacked. However, because the media did not actually get to the area, they assumed it was a Catholic church that had been attacked. Therefore, it was reported that St. Michael's had been attacked. When the Catholic archbishop heard of this, he called the priest in charge of that church and asked him about the status. The priest told him that his church was OK. St. Michael's had not been attacked. That is what the archbishop reported—that the Catholic church in the area had not been attacked. The confusion came from the fact that it was an ECWA church that was attacked but the media reported that a Catholic church had been attacked. So, both the police commissioner and the Catholic archbishop were both right though neither had complete information when they made their comments.**

- 5. I agree with many of the things that you have said but many of them are not relevant to our situation in Jos. Algeria and Morocco used to be Christian areas. However, they were overrun by Islam and now there are almost no Christians in those areas. Christianity has lost out completely in those areas. Islam continued to push its way even into Europe and was stopped only in Spain. If we fold our hands today, soon they will overrun us and the land will not be ours. If Israel would be slack for only one day, the Arabs and Muslims would take over their land. Therefore, they have to be very vigilant and protect themselves. It seems to me that religious conflicts are different from other conflicts. What can we do in these religious conflicts to keep them from taking our land?**

*You make a very interesting observation. I am not sure that I will be able to respond to all that you said but let me make one or two comments. First, if we defend Christianity by disobeying the commands of Jesus, I am reasonably sure God is not going to be very happy with us. Second, I recognize that Israel has to be very vigilant. However, there is a fundamental difference between Israel and the Church. Israel is a nation. They are a bona fide, recognized, legal state and therefore, they have a right and responsibility to defend their state and their citizens. I think most Christians would accept that. However, when Jesus came along, he removed from individuals the right of retaliation and violence. I think that most Christians would still recognize that a Christian has a right to defend himself. However, when we burn a Muslim's house or business, that is not self-defense; that is violence. When we kill a Muslim neighbor or imam, that is not self-defense, that is murder. Perhaps there is a difference between attacks that are religiously motivated and those that are motivated for some selfish interest such as armed robbers. And if it can be demonstrated that our conflicts here in Jos are indeed religiously motivated, we have even more reason to respond with peace and non-violence because Jesus is absolutely crystal clear about the way his followers were to respond to violence and the book of Acts is crystal clear about the way the early church responded to the aggression of their enemies.*

- 6. As long as these perpetrators of these acts are allowed to continue their actions without punishment, we will never have peace. The Jos crisis cannot be treated in isolation. We must view the Jos crisis as a part of the overall attempt by Muslims to dominate the world. The pope made a statement about the Muslims trying to take over the world. He was condemned for the statement but he was right. It is Islam that is perpetuating all of these things.**

*I have two comments here. I agree with you that the impunity with which people commit crimes during these crises encourages these crises. It seems like when a religious or ethnic crisis begins, that becomes something of a free-crime zone. You can kill and destroy and nothing will happen because it was "in a crisis." When people see that those arrested for these crimes are released and nothing ever happens, they are tempted to take matters in their own hands and go ahead and bring about instant justice. I do not excuse that but I understand those feelings. I agree that if more people who were caught committing crimes during these crises, whether they are Muslims or Christians, were properly tried and convicted and sentenced appropriately, it would have some kind of deterrent effect in the future. The second comment I have is related to your statement about the Muslims have an agenda to take over the whole world. I am sure that is an accurate statement. However, I believe the Christians also have an agenda to take over the whole world, do we not? Do we not sponsor missionaries to go into northern Nigeria*

*to attempt to win Muslims to Christ? Do we not even send 'businessmen' and other tentmakers into northern Africa to try to reach Muslims in those areas and plant the church in those areas? I agree that we do not use violent means and we must condemn any act of violence in the name of religion. However, we cannot fault our Muslim neighbors for wanting to spread their religion. Anyone who really believes in his religion will want to spread it.*

- 7. I was in the Chapel of Redemption when you responded to questions about the crisis some months ago. During that time, someone talked about the various wars and battles in the Old Testament as a model and motivation for our defending ourselves against attacks today. You said at that time that because of the doctrine of progressive revelation, we can no longer use the things in the Old Testament as appropriate models for us today. However, in your presentation today, you used only Old Testament examples. How can you say that we cannot use examples of battles in the Old Testament but you can use examples of peace in the Old Testament?**

*(I smiled when I heard that question. I knew this fellow thought he had 'caught' me and he almost had. It was a very interesting question and I was quite proud of him for asking it.) That is a very thoughtful and perceptive question. It does indeed appear that I have been inconsistent, doesn't it so I will be happy to try to respond to your question with a couple of observations. First, without trying to explain in this short amount of time the doctrine of progressive revelation, I do indeed believe that it is a genuine doctrine based upon the teachings of Jesus himself. Jesus said seven different times, "You have heard it said . . . but I am saying to you." And in some of those statements, Jesus said that it has been said in the past that the proper response was "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." However, in this age Jesus declared that forgiveness and reconciliation were the appropriate response. That certainly demonstrates a moral and ethical progress—an elevation of the standards of response to those who have offended us. Second, I will repeat what I have already hinted at earlier. The Old Testament wars were largely fought by nations, particularly Israel and Judah, who were defending their national sovereignty. Jesus did not annul a nation's responsibility to defend and protect itself. In fact, the Apostle Paul said in Romans 13 that a nation does not bear the sword in vain. Nations still have a right to defend themselves and their citizens and to insist that justice is done to those who commit crimes. However, Jesus said that God has removed that responsibility from us as individuals. Third, I was not able to use New Testament examples because there are none that illustrate the points I wanted to make. The New Testament Church period only covered a period of about 60 years or a little longer. And there were no serious conflicts during this time that were resolved that we can learn from. Obviously individual Christians were persecuted by the government and the responses we see from them are entirely consistent with the teachings of Jesus. However, the organizers of this conference asked me to talk about "Truth and Justice for Reconciliation: Breaking the Cycle of Impunity." The thing that I wanted to point out in the paper was how the lack of truth and justice contributed to conflicts and a focus on truth and justice helped to solve those problems. Fourth, the Old Testament did indeed contain the kinds of conflicts that were created by lack of truth and justice. Though I do believe that we should not attempt to create our responses to the Jos crisis by looking at the wars of the Old Testament, the Bible, including the Old Testament is useful for teaching, rebuking, instructing, and correcting. And the principles that are found related to reconciliation are universal, whether they are found in the Old Testament or the New Testament.*

- 8. How can we really have reconciliation between Christians and Muslims? After all, what does light and darkness have to do with each other? Everyone knows that these crises always start on Friday not on Sunday. Christians never come out of their churches on Sunday, ready to fight. I just do not see how light and darkness can ever co-exist.**

*First, let me say that whether we like it or not, we have to co-exist. We have no other choice. Unless all Muslims are converted or killed or driven from Nigeria, we are going to have to learn to get along in this country. And I do not think that anyone is so optimistic as to think that we will convert all Muslims to Christ in our lifetime. I also doubt if anybody thinks that they can all be killed or driving from Nigeria. So, we just have to get along. In addition, there is nothing in the New Testament that prohibits Christians from co-existing with non-Christians. This phrase “light and darkness” has been used several times so let me respond to that issue. God has made us to be creatures who need one another. We are not like goats, who can go off and live by themselves, except during mating time. We are more like sheep who are always flocking together. God has made us to have several kinds of relationships and the nature and intensity of each relationship is determined by different things. For example, the most intimate relationship I have in the world is with my wife. That is obvious. We are closer to one another than we are to our children or our brothers and sisters. It would be wrong for me to have the same kind of relationship that I have with my wife with anyone else. At the next level, I have a relationship with my children and my brothers and sisters and immediate family members that I do not have with other people. Again, this is entirely appropriate. I will do things for them that I will not do for others. I have another relationship with my neighbors and friends that I do not have with people that I have never met before. I even have a certain relationship with the people from my country that I do not have with people from another country. If I am in an airport in Nairobi and I see an American and a person from Singapore, I am more likely to be attracted to and strike up a conversation with the American than the person from Singapore. This is all perfectly normal and natural. However, there is something that does defy that pattern just a bit. I have a relationship with fellow Christians that is very close and intimate indeed. In fact, I think you will agree with me that the relationship between my brothers and sisters in Christ can be closer than that of even my relatives. I think you see the point. I certainly can never have a relationship with a Muslim that is the same as that of a fellow Christian. However, because Muslims are members of the human race, I can and should have some kind of appropriate relationship with them. In fact, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians and told them that if they wanted to visit a pagan in his home, that would certainly be permissible. In fact, I think it is not only permissible, it is essential if we are going to reach Muslims for Christ. How will we ever be able to reach them if we do not establish some kind of positive relationship with them? So, I am not saying that in our attempts at reconciliation we are attempting to create a relationship that is the same as that which we have with our fellow Christians but I am saying we must create a relationship that is appropriate. And I can assure you that the kinds of relationships we have had in the recent past—the hating and killing and destruction—those are not the appropriate relationships we should have with our Muslim neighbors and colleagues.*

- 9. I am a missionary who serves in northern Nigeria. My whole life and ministry have been devoted to reaching out to Muslims. Therefore, I certainly cannot be hating Muslims while I am trying to reach them. My family and I have agreed that if necessary, we are willing to die in our posts to win Muslims to Christ. However, I see**

**the Jos situation a bit different. Is it possible that what I do on the mission field when I am attempting to demonstrate the love of God may not be the same way that I would respond in Jos to a religious crisis? Do I submit myself to martyrdom in Jos like I would in the community where I work or do I respond differently when I am attacked by unknown persons? In other words, where is the place of self-defense for Christians, especially when there is no ministry issue at stake?**

*Again, that is a very thoughtful and difficult question. I am not sure exactly what to tell you. I think I can agree with you that in a ministry situation you may respond somewhat differently than you would in a random attack by thugs or robbers. I am not a pacifist. For example, armed robbers attacked my house a couple of years ago and actually shot at me. If I would have had a stick and could have disarmed them and protected my family, I do not think that I would have done the wrong thing by using the stick to protect myself and my family. Although it is certainly not a unanimous position, as a general rule Christian theologians have believed that Christians have a right to defend themselves against thugs and hoodlums. However, you have rightly pointed out that when we are persecuted for righteousness sake, we should respond like the people in the Bible responded—with love and forgiveness.*

**10. I believe that we are now living in a generation of political correctness. This is something that we have learned from the western world. We cannot condemn actions that are evil and wrong. We are being taught by our leaders that we are all the same—that we are all brothers. I do not believe Muslims are my brothers and I resent people trying to force me to be something that I am not.**

The longer this question-and-answer session went, the higher the emotional temperature in the room became. The person who made this statement was quite emotional. P, the main organizer, felt that he needed to intervene at that point. He came to the front and took the microphone from the person coordinating the question-and-answer period. He said, “We are not here to create more problems. We want to move beyond the level of conflict and even the boisterous dialogue. Our brother, C from B has demonstrated the way I think we should respond to those on the other side—with brotherly love. I do consider my Muslim friends my brothers. I have a mechanic who has taken care of my vehicle and he has become like a brother to me. We need to change our thinking. “We are all God’s creations.”

At this time, J walked up to the front and took the microphone and gave a very forceful response. He said, “Muslims are not our brothers. What does light have to do with darkness? I disagree with anyone who says, ‘we are all one.’ We are not one. We are children of light and they are children of darkness.” He continued in this vein for a couple of minutes and then shifted to address another issue: “We want this conference to be practical. We want it to give solutions. However, all we have done so far is talk, talk, talk. We are not following the schedule. We should be eating lunch right now. I plead with the organizers to rethink what they are doing. If you continue in this way, some of us will leave. If we have to talk like this, let it be in small groups.” He then walked back to his chair in a rather angry manner. There was a pretty good show of support for his comments.

Up to this point, I had been just sitting there taking notes on the questions. Though I have included the answers I gave immediately after the answers, I have only done this for the sake of written communication. The method we normally use at such conferences is that people will ask their questions and make their points and the speaker will take note of them and then respond to them one at a time. Actually, several of the questions were a bit

repetitious. I have tried to remove the repetition from the questions so they will not be so tedious. However, the “light and darkness” issue had been hammered away at several times and my response to it did not come until after this explosion near the end. In addition, since I was not taking advantage of the opportunity to respond to each question as it was asked, these questions were feeding each other and the emotions were rising. Actually, the way I have recorded the questions does not really reflect the atmosphere of the room, though I have recorded them all in the order in which they were asked.

At this time, S, the director of the international coalition who had helped to sponsor the workshop walked to the front and took the microphone. She was obviously troubled by the way that this session was going. She tried to calm everyone down. She encouraged people to be thoughtful and respectful in their public statements. She explained that they had indeed built-in time for there to be discussions in small groups and responded to one or two other issues. She then prayed a very calm and soothing prayer.

After the prayer, B, who was leading the session, looked at me and said, “What should we do?” I said, “I think Madam said that lunch was ready. Why don’t we take our lunch?” Ben turned to the audience and said, “We are told that lunch is ready. Would you want to take your lunch now and have Professor McCain respond to the questions later or would you want him to respond now and eat our lunch when he finishes?” The latter group was the majority so Ben handed me the mike and I started to respond.

I stood up and smiled and said, “Well, you may have noticed that during your questions I kept turning around and checking to make sure the back door was open. I thought for a moment I might have to make a run for it.” The audience laughed. That was good. I needed to reduce the tension. I continued, “It is a good thing that I am an academic and am accustomed to such questions and reactions. We like the rough and tumble atmosphere in the academic community.” There were more smiles and nods of appreciation. I made one or two other general comments and then said, “As you can see, these are difficult issues. Difficult issues mean that different people have different opinions about the way forward. That is what makes them difficult. All of the people in this room are leaders and leaders, especially are the people who have different opinions about how to solve problems. So, we should not be surprised when there are strong opinions about such difficult issues.”

I then responded to the questions basically in the order that they were given with the answers that I have already recorded. After the last question I made this concluding statement.

*Some of you are aware that I am currently engaged in a global study of Pentecostalism. Our university applied to participate in this global study being conducted by the University of Southern California. Out of almost 500 applications, only 21 grants were given and the University of Jos received one of them. Last week, the two principal researchers came to Jos to visit us and interact with us about our project. I went down to Abuja to pick them up. We spent many hours in Jos while they were here and then I took them back to Abuja so we spent a lot of time together. One of the things that these researchers were particularly interested in was the Jos crisis. Professor Don Miller, the lead researcher said to me at one point, “Danny, you people here in Jos have an ideal opportunity to do serious research in the issues of violence and peace. Most of the principal players in this conflict are still alive. The crisis is still fresh in everyone’s memory. You have a university and trained researchers right here. You have the perfect laboratory in which to study these issues.*

*And if you study this problem and find answers and solutions to these kinds of problems, you will have something to share with the rest of the world because there are conflict situations all over the world.” I appreciated and agreed with his words because they agree with what I have been saying for the past eight months.*

*Ladies and Gentleman, I believe in the sovereignty of God. I believe that God does all things well. When I ask myself why God allowed this crisis to happen here in Jos, the answer that keeps coming back to me is that perhaps God allowed these problems to happen in Jos because he knows that we in Jos are the best equipped people to deal with these crises. We have a strong church in Jos. We have good and mature Christian leaders in Jos. We have people who really know how to study and interpret and communicate the Word of God right here in Jos. And we have had one of the most severe ethnic and religious clashes in the world of the last few years right here in Jos. I believe that God has entrusted us with this crisis because he wants us as thoughtful mature Christian leaders to find a Christian response to the crisis. And if we can find a response that will work in Jos, it will work in the rest of Plateau State. And if we can solve our problems in Plateau State, perhaps the rest of the country can learn from us and what we learn will help solve other ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria. And if we can solve our problems in Nigeria, there are many other places in the world, like Sudan and Somalia and Pakistan and other places where there are ethnic and religious tensions. So, as amazing as it sounds, perhaps it is an honor that God has bestowed upon us these crises because he knows that we have the ability to solve them. The question that I have for us as I conclude is this: Will we disappoint God who has entrusted us with this responsibility? Will we commit ourselves to doing all that we can to solving the Jos Crisis in a godly and Biblical manner? Will we respond to these problems the way God has taught us to respond or will we respond like our ancestors taught us? May God grant us the wisdom and the strength and the courage to do the right thing.*

The audience applauded when I concluded my statement. I had several people come up to me later and thank me, especially for my closing statement.



## Chapter Six

# A Christian Blueprint for Inter-Religious Peace Building in Northern Nigeria

I co-wrote this paper with my daughter, Carmen McCain. We were asked to present a paper with this title by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Management for the one-day conference entitled “Religion and Post-Conflict Peace Building in Northern Nigeria” held at the University of Jos, Jos, Nigeria on 22 June 2010. The presentation version was published in *Religion and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Northern Nigeria*, Shedrack Gaya Best (ed.) Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies, University of Jos, Jos, 2011. It has been revised and updated for this publication.

### Introduction

Northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt have experienced a history of politically motivated crises since the days of colonialism. Unfortunately, the last 40 years have seen an increase of violent communal conflicts. These conflicts are motivated by and identified with multiple factors including historical, political, ethnic, economic and, in recent years, a growing religious factor.<sup>55</sup> Thousands of people have lost their lives and billions of Naira worth of property have been destroyed. Communities that once lived in peace have become segregated, and former friends and neighbors are now viewed as enemies. Colleagues who have worked side by side for many years are now suspicious of one another. Students who have gone to school together and played sports together are now separated from each other and no longer trust each other. As Jesus once said, there has been “*great distress in the land and wrath against this people*” (Luke 21:23).

The consensus of most people is that we need to return back to times when there was greater peace in Northern Nigeria, when most people respected the rights of others to live lives based upon their culture and worship according to their consciences. But how do we go back to those days? Is there a path that leads us to that goal? Is there a blueprint that will guide us to the peace that we all so desperately want and need?

### No Blueprint Available

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that we are going to find such a specific blueprint. And if we cannot find an existing blueprint for peace, it is doubtful if we will be the ones to unveil a new blueprint in this paper. To create such a blueprint is very difficult for many reasons.

### There is No Specific Blueprint for Peace in the Bible.

The Bible contains many helpful principles related to every issue in the world, including violence and peace. However, a blueprint outlines specific and detailed strategies that tell one how to get from the beginning of the process to the conclusion. Though we

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<sup>55</sup> For a useful discussion of the complex motivations behind these conflicts, see Eghosa E. Osaghae and Rotimi T. Suberu, “A History of Identities, Violence, and Stability in Nigeria,” Crise Working Paper No. 6, 2005 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08c9840f0b652dd00141e/wp6.pdf> Accessed 30 July 2022.

believe the principles in the Bible related to peace will push us in the right direction, no such specific detailed plan exists for the situation in which we find ourselves in Northern Nigeria.

### ***No Blueprint in the Old Testament***

The Bible is a progressive unfolding of what God was doing over a period of about 1500 years. As such it is made up of two general parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament gives us the history, the legal framework, the culture, the music, the wisdom and the communications of God's representatives for a nation God had raised up to fulfill a specific purpose. The primary nation in the Old Testament, Israel, participated in many wars and conflicts, and there are several examples of peace being established between her and some other nations or people with whom Israel was in conflict. However, since these conflicts were primarily conflicts in which one nation was at war with another nation, the strategies that were used to create peace in those situations do not have a direct correlation with the kinds of conflicts that we are experiencing in Northern Nigeria. Thus, we cannot find within these conflicts a specific blueprint for our situation.

There are some internal conflicts in the Old Testament in which people within the same nation fought each other and these yield some helpful insights. For example, shortly after the people of Israel conquered the land of Canaan, the two and a half tribes that decided to remain on the east side of the Jordan River decided to build a monument as a reminder of their relationship with their brothers on the west bank of the Jordan. This was misunderstood by the other nine and a half tribes and the two bodies almost went to war with each other (Joshua 22:9-34). There are some key lessons we can learn from that incident that will help prevent conflicts:

- Things are not always the way they appear to be.
- It is always essential to get the facts before going to war.
- Face-to-face discussions are better than information reported by others.

There were other internal conflicts such as when Saul attempted to kill David (1 Samuel 18:10-11) and when Jeroboam, in reaction to the arrogance of Rehoboam, took ten of the tribes and created an independent nation (1 Kings 12:16ff.). The book of Judges tells of a terrible war between the eleven tribes of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin that almost annihilated Benjamin (Judges 19:1-21:25). These incidents show us the ugly side of human nature and demonstrate the consequences of internal conflict but do not give us an infallible blueprint for peace whenever there is conflict.

### ***No Blueprint in the New Testament***

There was a good bit of conflict in the New Testament as well and some important teachings about responding to violence. However, again, the parallels are not exact.

- In the New Testament, Christianity was in its first generation and was a tiny minority. In Northern Nigeria, Christianity is not new and is a minority, but not a tiny minority.
- In the New Testament, the government itself was often the persecutor. Although there have been some forms of discrimination against Christians in northern Nigeria by various state governments, government actions have usually not been violent.
- In the New Testament era, many Christians personally remembered hearing the teachings and seeing the examples of Jesus or those who had known him related to

violence. First-hand experience of those teachings and examples are not part of the memory of the current church in Nigeria.

The early church certainly experienced violence and threats of violence during those early days in Acts. How did they respond to violence or the threat of violence?

- They experienced miraculous deliverance based upon prayer (Acts 5:19-20; 12:5-10).
- They ran away from the conflict (8:1; 13:5-51; 14:6; 14:20; 16:40; 17:10; 17:14).
- They suffered serious persecution and did so gladly (16:22-25).
- They negotiated with the government (16:35-40).
- They depended upon government protection (19:35-41; 23:23-45).
- They utilized the government court system (25:10-11).

The point is that though Jesus addressed the issues of violence and peace, there was no clear and consistent pattern of responding to violence in the early church. The New Testament Christians responded appropriately but differently in the various violent situations they faced.

### **No Blueprint throughout Church History**

There is no consistent pattern of responding to violence throughout church history. For the first three centuries, Christianity was a minority religion and often persecuted. The general reaction of Christians was passive. In fact, there developed such a high view of martyrdom, church leaders had to warn Christians against seeking to be martyrs. After the Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian, Christianity was gradually accepted to the point it became the majority and dominant religion in Europe and began to work closely with governments. Interestingly, the majority status and the close association with government did not encourage the passivity Christians were known for in the first three centuries. Christian leaders in Europe, working closely with government, often allowed and even requested governmental armies to fight their wars. The conflict with Islam during the period of the Crusades saw European Christians creating armies and actively fighting in the name of Jesus.

Augustine was the first Christian to propose the just war theory, in response to the Manicheans who claimed the Old and New Testaments were incompatible.<sup>56</sup> Augustine's writings provided the moral and theological foundation for Christians to actively participate in the military. However, this view is not universally accepted among Christians. Although Christianity was heavily identified with the state in Europe, many Christians in Eastern states from present day Turkey and Egypt to India and China lived as minorities among other religious communities, requiring much different responses to their neighbors than the aggression of the Crusaders.<sup>57</sup> In Europe, the Swiss Brethren of the Anabaptist Movement, beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, actively opposed Christians participating in any kind of violence. Various Anabaptist groups and their descendants such as the Mennonites and Church of the Brethren have been a vocal Christian minority opposing violence ever since, including official government violence in the form of war.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> John Langan, "The Elements of St. Augustine's Just War Theory." *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 12 (1), 1984, pages 19-38.

<sup>57</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2002

<sup>58</sup> F. L. Cross, & E. A. Livingstone, E. A. (Eds.). *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1983

## **No Blueprint in Nigeria**

Christianity was accepted in West Africa without the kind of conflict its entry sparked in East Africa. Although there were people like Garrick Braide who suffered ridicule and imprisonment for his faith in the Niger Delta area, primarily from the colonial government and mainstream Christianity, the planting of the church in Nigeria was relatively peaceful. However, there was more persecution of the church in the early days of Christianity in East Africa. Protestant and Catholic Christians killed by the Bugandan ruler Mwanga in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Uganda are still viewed as martyrs and heroes in East Africa.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, because of increasing competition with Islam in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria, there has been more and more religious conflict. Over the last 35 years or so, three positions have developed within the Nigerian Christian church related to violence.

1. Because government has been unable to defend Christians or bring justice, Christians must do both. This group has encouraged Christians to return “fire for fire.”
2. Christians should defend themselves but not aggressively go on the offensive.
3. Christians should only pray and allow God and the government to deal with all examples of violence.

Therefore, there are still, within the body of Christ, varying opinions about the best way to respond to violence against Christians. As such there is certainly no clear Christian blueprint for developing peace in Northern Nigeria.

## **The Components of a Blueprint**

A blueprint is a plan for creating or developing something in the future. To create a blueprint, it is assumed that the one doing so is an expert and knows all of the factors, materials and techniques that will be taken into consideration in preparing that blueprint. Because of that presumption, we will raise two preliminary statements of clarification.

First, we are not sure that expatriates are the right people to create a Christian blueprint for establishing peace in Northern Nigeria. Although our family has lived in Nigeria since 1988 and in Jos since 1991, have personally witnessed all of the major conflicts in Jos and have been engaged in peace building at some level for many months, we do not presume to understand all of the cultural, political, ethnic, and religious convictions and passions that have created the problems in Northern Nigeria. Perhaps there is some advantage in being outsiders and being able to see things somewhat objectively. However, what little advantage there is in that is counteracted by the limitations of understanding local issues like one whose worldview about such issues has been shaped in this environment.

Second, we are not sure it is wise or even possible to create only a “Christian blueprint” for peace in northern Nigeria. Any blueprint that does not respect the convictions of non-Christians and does not include input from all parts of society will have little chance to succeed. So, the best we can do is to point out various issues from the Christian perspective that must be included in any blueprint for future peace and stability in Northern Nigeria.

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<sup>59</sup> See F J. Faupel, J. F. *African Holocaust: The Story of the Uganda Martyrs*. Nairobi: Pauline Publications. 2007

Therefore, in this chapter, we will not attempt to provide an actual blueprint. Rather, we will suggest some of the components that must be included in any blueprint for peace. We believe when a blueprint is created by representatives of all the key players in Northern Nigeria, there are certain components that will need to be included, including the following:

### **1. A Blueprint will Provide Support for the Affected.**

One of the fundamental Christian principles is to assist the weak and helpless and vulnerable in society. One of the first actions of what might be considered the first church planted outside of Jewish territory was to send aid to the people in Jerusalem who were suffering from a famine (Acts 11:27-30). The apostle James, who wrote what is probably the first New Testament document, declared, “*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world*” (James 1:27). John, who wrote the last of the New Testament documents concurred, “*If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?*” (1 John 3:17). All of these verses suggest that one of the fundamental responses to any crisis, whether it is a natural disaster such as a flood or a man-made disaster like a war, is to respond with compassion and assistance to those who have been negatively affected by that crisis.

Supporting the innocent victims of disasters has consistently been one of the components of any blueprint for progress in Christian communities. There are dozens of relief organizations today, both Christian and Muslim, which provide international support to victims of disasters. Traditionally, relief agencies have provided support for individuals, regardless of their ethnic or religious convictions or which side of a conflict they come from. Addressing the needs of grieving and displaced people who are affected in violent crises must be the first component of any blueprint for peace.

The first step in reconciliation is for individuals and organizations on both sides of the crisis to agree to work together to provide relief and assistance in rebuilding their lives and properties. As we work together, we will help to restore friendship and trust between ourselves and the acts of compassion we provide will also provide healing to our societies.

### **2. A Blueprint will Learn from Other Success Models.**

An American proverb says, “If we don’t learn from the mistakes of others, we are destined to repeat them.” The opposite side of that statement is equally true. If we learn from the successes of others, we may be able to replicate them. It is a fact that violent religious and ethnic clashes did not start in Northern Nigeria. The world is filled with similar examples and there are at least some success stories from which we can learn. We will mention two.<sup>60</sup>

#### ***Northern Ireland***

Northern Ireland has fought wars for centuries but more recently the nation experienced a 30-year war between Protestants and Catholics. Obviously, this was not purely a religious war. The Protestants tended to be loyal to England and the Catholics wanted independence from England. This was a guerilla type war that involved bombings, secret killings, battles between the combatants and also with the military. Atrocities were committed

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<sup>60</sup> Other conflict situations like the apartheid era in South Africa and the Civil Rights Movement in the US provide outstanding lessons and models for healing societies that are fractured along racial lines.

on all sides. One confrontation known as “Bloody Sunday” has been investigated for dozens of years and in 2010 the conclusions of investigators were made public.<sup>61</sup> Fortunately, Northern Ireland offers the world hope. There is now peace in Northern Ireland, and the society that was segregated, suspicious and antagonistic toward one another is slowly healing.

### **Rwanda**

Rwanda experienced a severe ethnic crisis that most considered genocide. This was not a religious crisis since both the Tutsis and Hutus were both Christian communities, but rather a crisis with its roots in historical and political animosities. In 1994, between 500,000 and one million people were killed in the most brutal and barbarous manner. Neighbors killed their friends whom they had lived next to for generations. Co-workers betrayed their fellow workers. These atrocities were done based purely on ethnic identity. The killings were often done with primitive weapons and were particularly heinous.<sup>62</sup> However, the good news is that amazing progress has been made in reconciliation and rebuilding of the society during the last 15 years. Tutsis and Hutus have returned to neighborhoods they shared before. Reconciliation and restitution programmes have worked well. The economy of Rwanda is improving and the nation is putting its ethnic clashes behind them.

There are many lessons that Northern Nigeria can learn from those two incidents:

- Peace making takes time. It took almost 30 years in the case of Northern Ireland.
- Former neighbors who killed each other can be reconciled and continue living together. This is one of the remarkable stories Rwanda is demonstrating now.
- Compromises are essential if peace is to reign. No party ever gets exactly what it wants in a conflict situation.
- Traditional and cultural reconciliation methods can be helpful. Though using traditional means of reconciliation are not always perfect, the traditional Gacaca courts revived in Rwanda to hold trials on a village level for released prisoners worked very well in bringing normalcy back to the country.<sup>63</sup>

The two illustrations are both positive examples. However, a wise person will learn from the mistakes as well as the successes of others. There are abundant examples of mistakes that have been made in attempting to heal civil wars and religious conflicts.<sup>64</sup> If we are going to restore peace and harmony in Northern Nigeria, it is essential that the blueprint will include learning from others who have taken this road before us.

### **3. A Blueprint will develop a Consensus among Church leaders about the Appropriate Christian Response to Violence.**

In April 2010, Dr. Pandang Yamsat, then president of the Church of God in Nigeria (COCIN), articulated what he considered to be one of the biggest needs in the ongoing

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<sup>61</sup> On January 30, 1972, 14 people were killed when British paratroopers shot protesters in Northern Ireland. In June 2010, the British Prime Minister apologized for this act on behalf of the British people and publicly acknowledged that the victims were innocent of wrongdoing. See the article, “After 38 years, justice at last for Bloody Sunday Victims.” *The Tribune Magazine*, 19 June 2010; <http://www.tribunemagazine.co.uk/2010/06/18/after-38-years-justice-at-last-for-bloody-sunday-victims/>

<sup>62</sup> C. Newbury. Background to Genocide: Rwanda. *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 23 (2), 1995. pages12-17.

<sup>63</sup> L. Hinson, (Director). *As We Forgive* [Motion picture]. United States: Image Bearer Pictures. 2008

<sup>64</sup> The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the conflicts in Southern Sudan and Darfur, the guerilla movement in the Philippines, and many other conflicts provide us with examples of what has not worked in bringing peace.

crisis—Christian consensus.<sup>65</sup> He complained that there were too many Christian leaders making too many contravening public statements and called for Church leaders to come together and attempt to articulate a Christian joint response to the Jos Crisis. He recognized that not all Christians would agree on the way forward and accepted the fact that a consensus position may still have minority viewpoint. However, Dr. Yamsat strongly appealed for unity as much as possible and a clear understanding of each other where there were disagreements.

Jesus Christ was quite clear in his statements about the way to respond to persecution and violence. The early church followed the teachings and example of Jesus very closely. However, the conditions in Northern Nigeria are different today than the conditions that existed during the first century. The cultures are different; the religious mix is different; the issues are different; the political structure is different; even the level of understanding in the church is different. Therefore, it is difficult if not impossible to take some of the individual statements in the Bible and apply them exactly as they were applied in the New Testament. Christianity has traditionally attempted to extract the principles from the Biblical teachings and find ways to apply them in a culturally appropriate manner. For example, five times in the New Testament, we read the statement “*Greet one another with a holy kiss.*” However, it is only very rarely that one sees a Nigerian publicly kiss another Nigerian. The explanation is, “It is not our culture.” Whenever a person shakes hands or greets someone in another cultural appropriate way, it is assumed that the principle behind the command “*greet one another with a holy kiss*” has been satisfied.

One of the essential parts of the blueprint for peace in Northern Nigeria is for Christian leaders, including scholars and other Christian leaders to come together and create a consensus of the problems and the way forward. The steps for this are outlined in the Jerusalem Council where the Church had to decide another cultural/religious issue—whether or not circumcision would be required of Gentile believers. Those steps included:

- Inviting church leaders to a meeting (Acts 15:6)
- Articulating the problem through allowing input from all sides (15:7-12)
- Reaching a consensus in a culturally appropriate manner (15:13-21)
- Publishing the results in a clearly written statement (15:23-29)
- Distributing the letter to those affected (15:22, 30)
- Holding constituents responsible for its implementation (21:25)

It is an approach similar to this that the Christian leaders in Northern Nigeria must take.

- A conference should be called of church leaders in Northern Nigeria so that they can articulate the problems and work together to create a blueprint of the way forward.
- Time must be given for all parties to present their positions.
- The body should reach a consensus of the appropriate response. This will be based upon correctly interpreting what the Bible says about all issues affected the church and society in Northern Nigeria including such things as responding to violence, self-defense, property and human rights, ethnic loyalties, forgiveness, and reconciliation.
- The body must publish its writings and make them available to others, noting any minority positions.

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<sup>65</sup> This statement was made in a meeting of church leaders in the office of the President of Church of God in Nigeria (COCIN) on Monday, 26 April 2010.

- The individual church leaders and denominations should hold their members responsible to follow the principles and policies articulated by the whole body.

If the church would take these steps, it would have developed a significant part of the blueprint for peace in Northern Nigeria.

#### **4. A Blueprint will Encourage Cooperation with Non-Christians to Insure Peace in Society.**

The Bible recognizes that there will often be minority populations within a society. In the Old Testament, Moses gave very clear guidelines about how to treat aliens (Exodus 22:21, 23:9, Leviticus 19:10; 23:22). In fact, Moses gave this important command to the Israelites: *“The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God”* (Leviticus 1:34; See also Deuteronomy 10:19). In fact, aliens are often linked with widows and orphans and it is expected that they will be treated in the same way because of the disadvantages they may experience as foreigners (Deuteronomy 14:29; 16:11, 14; Malachi 3:5). However, aliens were not allowed to do things that were morally wrong or considered repugnant to the Jews, like violating the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10; 23:12), eating meat with blood in it (Leviticus 17:10), failing to drain blood from a slaughtered animal properly (17:13), eating animals found dead from unknown causes (17:15), offering sacrifices to Molech (20:2), or blaspheming the name of God (24:16). Aliens had the right to grow rich in the land of Israel and even obtain Jewish slaves (Leviticus 25:47). In fact, aliens were to have the same privileges that Israelites had and be treated the same way under the law (Numbers 9:14; 15:14-16; Deuteronomy 1:16-17).

There are two important differences in the way the New Testament addresses the issue of “aliens.” First, Israel was a nation with its own sovereign borders, its own ethnicity, its own language, and its own form of government. However, the New Testament church is a much different organization. It has no borders; it transcends all languages and ethnic groups; and it exists in all forms of government. Whereas there may be majority Christian areas, there are only a few nations in the world today that would declare themselves to be official Christian nations and there is nothing in the New Testament that demands such a declaration.

Second, the only Christianity described in the New Testament was very much of a minority religion at the time. Therefore, we have no examples and little if any instruction about the way a majority Christian church should treat minority religions that might exist among them. However, there are some important principles related to peace in general that are found in the New Testament.

- Matthew 5:9: *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*
- Romans 12:18: *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*
- Romans 14:19: *Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*
- Hebrews 12:14: *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*
- James 3:18: *Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*

In light of these “peace” verses, what should we as Christians do to help establish peace in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious community?



***Christians must reach a compromise with Muslims on controversial issues.***

In a society which is homogenous, the culture or the state can democratically impose laws and statutes that are consistent with their religion and culture. However, where a society has a minority group from another ethnic group, another religion or with some other identifiable characteristic that is different from the majority, there must be compromises that insure the constitutional and human rights of the minority. In most places of Northern Nigeria, Christianity is a minority. In most places of the Middle Belt, which is geographically in the northern part of Nigeria, Christianity is the majority with a minority of Muslims. That means that all across Northern Nigeria, in order for there to be peace and harmony in the society, all parties must be willing to compromise where possible.

Within Christianity, there is a range of responses to situations in which compromise is expected and they fall into two major categories.<sup>66</sup> First, there are those things that are commanded in the Bible in such a way that there is little possible compromise. Into this category are certain fundamental beliefs. Christians believe that there is one God who is all powerful, all knowing and is present everywhere. Christians believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was killed and buried but rose from the dead. Christians believe that they must pray regularly and must worship together on a regular basis. We believe that we must share the message of the gospel of Christ with others who do not yet know it. In fact, these beliefs and practices are so fundamental that if some authority refuses to allow one to practice them, the authority must be politely but firmly disobeyed. When Peter was told that he must not preach in the name of Jesus, he replied, “*We must obey God rather than men!*” (Acts 5:29). Regardless of how small a minority Christianity is, committed Christians will believe and practice those things, even if it means severe consequences.

Second, there are practices and traditions within Christianity that are part of our Christian faith but, should individuals be denied the right to practice such things, this would not keep them from being Christians. For example, ever since the early church period, Christians have worshipped on the “*first day of the week*” (Acts 20:7). However, worshipping on Sunday is not such a fundamental command that if Sunday is not allowed to be a work free day so Christian can go to church on Sunday, that person would compromise his or her conscience. Many Christians, in countries like Bangladesh have adjusted their worship days to Friday when Muslims are also meeting for their weekly prayers.<sup>67</sup>

In the interest of peace, whether in the majority or minority, Christians should meet their Muslim counterparts and work out agreements about fulfilling their various religious practices. Agreements should allow for the essentials of the various faiths to be practiced without problems but those things that are considered repugnant or offensive to those of another faith, can be adjusted in such a way that there is peace. For example, if the blocking off streets for mosque and church is causing tension in the community, both communities should find alternatives to parking. If having an all-night vigil with loudspeakers is offensive to a majority Muslim community, Christians should compromise because conducting all night vigils with loudspeakers is not a Christian requirement. Christians should also appeal to their Muslim counterparts, where they are a minority, that practices that are considered offensive

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<sup>66</sup> According to Mohammad Hashim Kamali, there are similarly such categories of expression, what he terms as “public interest or *maslahah*” in Islam: “*daruriyyat* (essential interests), *hajiyyat* (complementary interests) and *tahsiniyat* (desirabilities)” See M. H. Kamali, *Freedom of Expression in Islam*. Kuala Lumpur, Berita. 1994, page 23.

<sup>67</sup> Information gained from personal communication from Meshak Ilobi, a five-year resident of Bangladesh

to them such as marrying underage children should not be practiced. Islam allows the marriage of 13-year-olds but nowhere commands it. Therefore, Muslims should be encouraged to give up this practice in order to maintain peace with their Christian neighbors.

There is a difference between our rights and our religious duties. Our faith may give us the right to do a certain thing and we may willingly refuse to do that thing in order to maintain peace. For example, the Apostle Paul declared that if eating meat would offend his brother, he would refuse to eat meat for the rest of his life (1 Corinthians 8:13).<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, what our faith requires us to do, we must do by all means and should we be forbidden, we must still do so, being fully willing to take the consequences.

***Christians must work with Muslims to solve social problems.***

According to Rupert Brown the “contact hypothesis” in social psychology has as “it’s central premise . . . that the best way to reduce tension and hostility between groups is to bring them into contact with each other in various ways,” and in order to be successful this contact must “be of sufficient frequency, duration, and closeness to permit the development of meaningful relationships between members of the groups concerned.”<sup>69</sup> The best way to break down negative stereotypes and create peace in the community is to interact as freely as possible with others from different backgrounds. Such interaction helps to rebuild trust; it helps to expose destructive rumors; it lays a foundation for peaceful community relations.

Christians and Muslims will want to maintain some independence from one another:

- We will not likely want to worship together.
- We will not likely want to build joint worship centres.
- We will not likely agree on the kinds of food we should eat.
- We will likely maintain separate clothing regulations and patterns.

The Bible nowhere prohibits Christians from working with non-Christians on social problems. Thus, there are many things Christians and Muslims can and should do together.

- We can work together on education.
- We can work together on fighting corruption.
- We can work together on cleaning up the environment.
- We can work together on sports and other important youth activities.
- We can work together on HIV/AIDS and substance abuse prevention and treatment.

The more we work and play together, the less suspicious we will be of one another and the more difficult it will be for rumors and isolated incidents of violence to destroy the peace. Therefore, one of the key ingredients to building a Christian blueprint for peace in Northern Nigeria is to work with non-Christians to rebuild that peace.

**5. A Blueprint will Require Cooperation with Government in Solving Problems.**

The Apostle Paul declared that government is God’s “*servant*” who can do good and also be an agent of judgment (Romans 13:4). Because of that “*it is necessary to submit to the*

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<sup>68</sup> In Romans 14, Paul provides an extensive discussion of the whole issue of giving up rights in order to maintain peace and harmony within the church and, by implication, within the society.

<sup>69</sup> Rupert Brown, R. *Prejudice: Its social psychology*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1995, pages 236, 239

(governmental) *authorities*” (13:5). Peter makes a similar statement: “*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right*” (1 Peter 2:13-14). In light of this very clear instruction, the Christian must attempt to cooperate with government in its attempts to make peace in our various communities. How do we do this?

- We must participate in the political process.
- We must hold politicians responsible for their actions.
- We must insist that peace efforts become a priority with government.
- We must demand that justice be done for those found guilty of fomenting violence.

We are quick to blame government when there are problems in society. However, we must remember that in a democracy we the people are the government. If the government is not good, it is because the people have allowed it to become bad. If the government is not responding to the needs of the people and particular to the need for peace in our community, we must make sure we are making our views known to those responsible for such things.

No blueprint for peace in Northern Nigeria can afford to ignore the government. We must understand the government processes and cooperate with government as much as possible to bring about peace.

## **6. A Blueprint will Demand the Practice of Christian Principles in All Things.**

Ultimately, a Christian blueprint for bringing peace in Northern Nigeria means that Christians must practice the principles taught in the Bible. A good architect will continue to refer back to the experts who have established the principles related to his or her particular discipline. Those wanting to create a Christian blueprint for inter-religious peace in Northern Nigeria would do well to consult the Bible, the ultimate textbook for all things associated with Christianity. What are some of these important principles?

### ***Principles about Being Good Neighbors***

- Leviticus 19:18: *Love your neighbor as yourself.* (See also Matthew 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8).
- John 13:34-35: *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*
- John 15:10: *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.*
- Romans 12:10: *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.*
- Romans 13:10: *Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*
- Ephesians 4:2: *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*
- 1 Thessalonians 3:12: *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.*
- 1 Peter 3:8: *Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.*
- 1 Peter 4:8: *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

- 1 John 4:7: *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.*

### ***Principles about the Treatment of Enemies***

- Matthew 5:43-47: *You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?*
- Luke 6:27-30: *But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.*
- Romans 12:20: *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.*

### ***Principles about Responding to Offenses***

- Matthew 18:21-22: *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."*
- Mark 11:25: *And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*
- Luke 17:3-4: *If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him.*
- Ephesians 4:32: *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*
- Colossians 3:13: *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

### ***Principles about the Value of Humanity***

There are teachings about humanity that must influence our attitudes toward those who are not Christian believers. For example, Genesis 1:27 says: *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."* There has been debate for hundreds of years over the meaning of humanity being created in *"the image of God."* It obviously is not a physical reflection. However, one thing is clear from this passage. God made human beings in some way after the pattern of his own life. And if that is true, that means that every human has value. Anything that is patterned after God himself has value, no matter how much it has been twisted and perverted. This suggests to us that all human beings have value, no matter what religion they practice, no matter what ethnic group they come from and no matter how anti-social they may have become.

The Book of Revelation has one phrase that contains a lot of implications: *"... whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life"* (Revelation 22:17b). What this verse and many others teach is that God has given to humans the privilege of choice.

Christianity is a voluntary religion. No one can force a person to become a Christian. And because God has given to every person choice, we must recognize and respect that choice, no matter how different that choice may be from our own. Therefore, if a Muslim or other non-Christian refuses to become a Christian, we must not force him or her and, in fact, we must recognize that it is God himself who has given that person that choice. Therefore, the choice itself is an expression of God's image in that person.

One of the ways that one can measure the value that society places on various social expectations is the punishment that is given when they are broken or not fulfilled. For example, in the university, being late for class may get students a rebuke but cheating on an examination can get them expelled. The value of human beings is so great in the Bible that the Mosaic law declares that anyone who deliberately kills another person must forfeit his own life (Exodus 21:12; Leviticus 24:7; Numbers 35:30).

All of these facts demonstrate that God places the highest priority on human life and the free exercise of human abilities such as choice. Therefore, any Christian blueprint related to peace in Northern Nigeria must recognize and celebrate that fact.

## **Conclusion**

We have not outlined a blueprint for inter-religious peace building in Northern Nigeria. However, we have pointed out some of the key components that must be a part of that blueprint. It is our conviction that Christian leaders must come together and spend the necessary time, praying and thinking about the best way to solve these problems. God has always worked through human beings to accomplish his will on this earth. We who are followers of Jesus must commit ourselves to the principles that he taught and volunteer to work hard to develop and follow a blueprint based upon Jesus' teachings and example.

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## **Chapter Seven**

# **Making Peace Between Christians and Muslims: Christ and Culture in the Midst of Religious Conflict and Violence**

This address was presented to the Annual Conference of International Institute for Christian Studies (IICS now Global Scholars) — “Christ, Culture and the Academy” at the Airport Hilton, Kansas City, Missouri, USA on 17 July 2010. This organization recruits and places Christian academics in public universities around the world. This is the only presentation found in this book that was presented outside of Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

It is unlikely that most people will face the kinds of violence we have experienced in Nigeria. For example, in Nigeria, IICS families have had three major armed conflicts in which hundreds of people have died each time, six armed robberies and multiple burglaries. However, apart from Dr. Dan Clendenin seeing smoke coming out of the Kremlin in Moscow during the attempted coup near the end of Mikhail Gorbachev’s administration,<sup>70</sup> I cannot remember any of the other 100+ IICS academics outside Nigeria who have personally witnessed mass violence, other than normal criminal activity some have experienced.

Unfortunately, we all recognize that “the war to end all wars”<sup>71</sup> did not end all wars. It appears that our world is becoming an increasingly more violent place. As you know, during this week, within 25 or 30 miles of where IICS staff members, Paul and Paulina Gibson live and serve, there was a major terrorist attack that killed at least 75 people, including one American.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, it is possible that some of you and especially our international staff will experience some kind of communal or ethnic or religious violence in your life. Therefore, I want to share with you some thoughts about violence and peace but I will particularly focus on our responsibility as Christians to be peacemakers.

I will begin this presentation by explaining some of the things that have forced me to think about violence and peace and to get personally involved in peace making in Nigeria. Second, I will point out some practical common-sense statements about peacemaking. Third, as a teacher of the Bible, I will make some general statements in an attempt to establish a Biblical foundation for the work of peace making. This is not complete but a start toward a Biblical theology of peace. Finally, I will suggest some general principles I believe should guide the Christian and Christian organizations in establishing peace in conflict situations.

### **Experiences of Violence and Peace**

There is presently a worldwide competition between Islam and Christianity.

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<sup>70</sup> Between August 19-21, 1991, there was an attempted coup by Russian hardliners who believed that Gorbachev’s reforms had gone too far. The coup attempt was unsuccessful but did destabilize the government and no doubt helped to hasten the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

<sup>71</sup> This statement was made by President Woodrow Wilson about World War I.

<sup>72</sup> On Sunday, July 11, 2010, terrorists exploded a bomb in a sports center in Kampala, Uganda where fans were viewing the World Cup.

- Both believe the other is a false or at least an incomplete religion.
- Both believe the other is unfairly representing the other.
- Both are trying to make converts from the other side.
- Both are using multiple means of promoting their goals.

Africa is largely divided between the Muslim north and the Christian south. Thus, much of the competition between Christianity and Islam is being played out in Africa. Nigeria is the largest country in Africa and is fairly evenly divided between Christians and Muslims. Nigeria is a mini-Africa, reflecting all the possibilities and problems of the continent as a whole. Like Africa, Nigeria is divided between the Muslim north and the Christian south with a middle belt being strongly contested by both religions. Jos sits at the top of the middle belt and is in the crosshairs of the competition between the two faiths. For many years, Jos was a peaceful place, accommodating Christians and Muslims and anybody else living there. However, in 2021, all of that changed and we have been engaged not just in competition but in violent conflict. I will now tell you about a few of our crises.

### **September 7, 2001**

Early on Friday afternoon, September 7<sup>th</sup>, four days before the tragic September 11<sup>th</sup> event in the US, a colleague stopped by my house and said, “Don’t go into town this afternoon. There is trouble there.” Before that day was over, there was black smoke billowing out of several parts of Jos and we were under a 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM curfew. We later learned that there had been a confrontation at a mosque that afternoon. It was reported that a Christian lady had walked on a road blocked off in front of a mosque for the Friday afternoon prayers and the mosque security personnel challenged and abused her. She went home and got her brothers who confronted mosque security guards. This was the catalyst that started a conflict that had been brewing for weeks over a political issue.<sup>73</sup> Over the next few days, the violence spread to all parts of Jos. During this crisis, it is estimated that somewhere between 1000 and 2000 people lost their lives in and around Jos. In addition, hundreds of millions of dollars of houses, businesses, churches, mosques, vehicles and other property were destroyed.

The violence was eventually brought under control in Jos but spread to the lower part of the state and perhaps as many as 10,000 additional people were killed. This crisis became so severe that the federal government declared a state of emergency in Plateau State and suspended the governor for six months. Along with the state of emergency came a nightly curfew so all evening activities were greatly curtailed for many months.

### **November 28, 2008 (seven years later)**

About 7:00 AM on Friday, November 28, 2008, my neighbor came to my house and shouted up to my bedroom window, “Oga, they have started again.” The day before, there had been a Local Government Area election in the area. During the middle of the night, the Muslims in the Jos North Local Government Area became convinced the election had been stolen. Because of this perceived injustice, violence erupted again and continued for three or four days, killing between 700 and 800 more people and destroying much more property.

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<sup>73</sup> The government was planning to give a political appointment to a Hausa man which are considered non-indigenes of Jos by the local ethnic groups. The local ethnic groups, Beroms, Anagutas and Jarawas believed that this was an appointment that should only go to an indigene which member of an ethnic group that originally lived in that area and was, in some sense considered to be the owners of that area.

## **January 17, 2010**

During the week of January 11<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup>, 2010 I had been teaching a modular class in Lagos. While there I met some missionaries from North Africa who were considering shifting their base of operation to Nigeria and had come to Lagos to check things out. I suggested they fly with me to Jos where most of the missionary headquarters are and where much missionary training takes place. They agreed and flew with me from Lagos to Jos, arriving in the early afternoon. When I got off the plane and turned on my cell phone, there was a message on it that said, “Trouble in Nasarawa area of Jos. Tell folks to avoid it.” I did not say anything to my guests but asked my driver in my broken Hausa if there was trouble in Jos. He did not yet know of any problem but before we got home, he and I both received two or three more phone calls and text messages alerting us to danger on the north-eastern side of Jos. To get home, I took the north-western route around Jos but I could see the black smoke billowing from burned homes, businesses, churches, and mosques on the other side of town, the way I would have normally returned from the airport. We have never gotten the complete answer about what actually sparked this conflict. It had something to do with a Muslim rebuilding his house that was destroyed in the November 2008 crisis next door to a church on a Sunday.

The conflict boiled up again and, once again, hundreds of people were killed and hundreds of homes and businesses were destroyed. The crisis spread to Bukuru on the south side of Jos where many were killed. It spread out to Kura Jenta, a little Hausa/Muslim village where it was reported that about 150 Muslims were killed, including women and children. Many of them were thrown in a well. The mosque in the village was damaged and the words “Jesus is Lord” were scratched on the walls that were still standing. A couple of weeks later, a Christian village, named Dogo Nahawa, was attacked. One of the two pastors in the village lost his wife and all his children. The other pastor lost all his possessions. I preached in that village in an open-air combined service about two months later when we were donating some supplies to the villagers. The residents told me personally that they buried 501 people in a mass grave. Some have estimated that as many as 1500 people have been killed in this crisis.

These crises have actually touched many people close to us.

- A lady who works in my house lost a brother, a brother-in-law, and a cousin.<sup>74</sup>
- Another worker lost a cousin.
- A young man who lived with in our worker’s quarters for ten years, lost his chief mechanic, who had worked on my vehicles many times.
- A part-time driver lost three cousins he had been with the day before the crisis began.
- My next-door neighbor of 18 years was shot and killed in the last crisis less than a half mile from my house.
- A colleague whom I recruited to help teach in our Christian Studies diploma program at the University of Jos was killed.
- The University of Jos in which I work lost 26 students and nine staff in the first crisis alone. At least five students were killed in the second crisis. The university statistics of the third crisis are still unknown to me.

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<sup>74</sup> On the day of this presentation, the village of Mazzah was attacked. This is a village less than ten miles from our house on the north side of Jos. During the attack nine people were killed by machetes, including the uncle of this lady’s husband. In addition, the family of a pastor in the village was killed, including his wife, daughter, grandson, and another person living with them.



During these crises, the IICS team in Nigeria has been very much involved.

- Our IICS personnel were engaged in relief efforts, including the registration of refugees and the distribution of food, water, blankets, and emergency funds.
- Two of our IICS houses were made available as places for IDPs which including providing food and shelter for people fleeing from the violence. At times we had over 80 people sleeping in my house and in my vehicles outside. One of our colleagues supervised about 40 teenagers who stayed at one of the IICS houses for several nights.
- I have worked with the leadership of our community to plan for defense of our university residential quarters. I have patrolled at night with our security group trying to spot invaders so we could warn our community of a potential attack.
- I have presented reports and recommendations to investigation panels related to these crises and the way forward.

The point is that when I speak of violence I do not speak in theory only. Violence is something my family and I and our IICS colleagues in Nigeria have seen and experienced.

### **Peace Efforts**

On Wednesday, three days after our latest crisis, I got a text message from one of my good friends that said, “I’ve been thinking prayerfully about some ideas & need 2 bounce them off you (relates 2 the crisis) R u in Jos & cud we meet 2day or 2moro?” I met with him and two other people on Friday of that week. I suggested that we should invite Muslims to our next meeting and we did. That meeting led to a group of about 15 people who have met weekly since that time, planning various kinds of activities to promote peace. We sponsored a meeting with religious elders and later youth leaders. We provided some food and other relief items to people who had been affected by the crisis. We met with community leaders on both sides of the conflict. We created a plan to help create jobs for unemployed youths.

About one month into the crisis, I received a call from Rev. Yakubu Pam, one of my former students and currently an Assemblies of God pastor. He told me about an attempt he was making the following day to bring together youths who had been fighting in these crises. I had a PhD presentation I had to attend that morning but managed to get there for the second half of the meeting and it was amazing. We expected about 60 youth to attend but hundreds of youths had come to this cinema seeking for peace. We had a similar meeting the following week in Bukuru and, eventually we sponsored a total of eight of these community meetings, bringing together the Christian and Muslim youths. A few weeks after these started, we had a big stadium event in which we brought together thousands of youths from all over the state. I was very happy that we were able to bring so many of these former fighters together. They marched around the stadium with their banners proclaiming such messages as:

- Enough of the Violence
- No to Violence; Yes to Peace
- Let’s Embrace One Another in Peace
- We Want Peace
- Stop the Killings
- Give Peace a Chance
- Treat Others Like You Want to be Treated
- Peace Forever

I will now focus on describing peace from the three specific perspectives.

### **“Common Sense” Assumptions Related to Peace**

#### **Everyone wants peace.**

In the heat of our conflicts in Jos the tendency is to call people on the other side “animals” and accuse them of loving violence and destruction and death. There may be a few perverted people in the world who enjoy fighting but that would not be true with the vast majority of the people in this world. Most people want peace so they can just do the normal things of life. Thus, it seems to me if the vast majority of the people on all sides want peace, then peace should be possible.

#### **People fight because of very strong convictions.**

What is it that causes people to take up weapons and kill one another and destroy one another’s property? They fight first of all because of strong convictions and because of deep-seated anger and resentment against the other side. Why are the Taliban fighting in Afghanistan? It is because they have deeply held convictions that they believe are being threatened. I am not sure we in America have done enough to understand the concerns of the Islamic world. Therefore, we have tried to overpower those we perceive to be enemies with force. I believe there must be a much greater effort to understand the convictions and worldview of the other side or there will never be peace. If you do not understand why the other side is fighting, you will not know how to find peaceful solutions.

#### **Violence will seldom lead to peace.**

A strong nation may overwhelm a weaker nation or enemy and bring about a forced peace. This was done in World War II and in the first Gulf War. However, it is unlikely that any nation is going to successfully use military force to overcome an ideology or a movement. The US was not able to do it in Vietnam. I doubt if we will win the war against Islamic terrorism through military means.

Violence creates more animosity and hatred. Violence makes people more and more determined to fight. The world is filled with many examples. North Ireland fought for 30 years with no decisive military victory on either side. Sudan fought for more than 25 years with no clear winner. Therefore, we must look for a better way to win peace than violence.

Fortunately, there have been some ideological wars that have been largely won. The battle against apartheid in South Africa was quite violent for many years but was eventually won through negotiation and compromise, though there are still residual problems.

In our particular case in Jos, when these crises crop up, police or the army comes in and puts down the immediate uprising. However, this does little or nothing to solve the real problems that have caused the crisis in the first place.

#### **To bring about peace, different sides must come together.**

As long as there is limited contact between people who are ideologically different, suspicions arise and there is little way to understand concerns or squelch rumors. Unsubstantiated rumors have gotten hundreds of people killed in Nigeria. Therefore, the

different parties must find a way to come together. Many countries in the world, including the US, have an official policy that they will not negotiate with terrorists. That seems to me to be a short-sighted policy that is basically a public relations tool for the home country consumption. Of course, you have to negotiate with your enemies, especially when those enemies have serious philosophical or ideological differences.

***Opponents must come together to discuss and dialogue.***

We have done plenty of dialogue in the last few months. However, dialogue has its limitations. About two weeks after our crisis in January, we sponsored two dialogue sessions, one for religious elders and one for the youth. These people came together and basically shouted at each other. There was little willingness to compromise. However, at least they were talking and not fighting.

***Opponents must go beyond dialogue to active cooperation.***

Dialogue can take you only so far. I believe that one of the best ways to build peace is for people from opposing sides to come together, find common projects that they can work on and do those together. One thing that has helped push me into the realm of peace-making is that for the last ten years, I have been working with Muslims doing HIV/AIDS work. This has built a level of trust and respect that has been helpful in bringing people together. To bring about peace, there must be compromise on all sides. The only way you can have a one-sided peace is totally crush and destroy the other side. That is usually not a possibility. Therefore, if there is going to be peace, all sides must compromise.

One of these days, Israel and the Palestinians are going to reach a peace deal. And when that happens, it is going to require compromise on all sides. And when they do compromise, they are going to make the same kinds of compromises that they could have made 20 or 30 years earlier.

The only way to have peace is for each side to be willing to give up something. Compromise gives the appearance of weakness on the part of leaders. However, the art of compromise is actually a great strength and is absolutely essential to bringing peace.

These are the common-sense conditions that are necessary to establish peace.

## **Theology of Peace**

I will now suggest several points that help establish a Christian theology of peace.

**God is repeatedly associated with peace.**

God is called “*the God of peace*” (Romans 15:33; 16:20; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20) and the “*God of love and peace*” (2 Corinthians 13:11). Jesus is described as the “*prince of peace*” (Isaiah 9:6), “*lord of peace*” (2 Thessalonians 3:16) and the “*king of peace*” (Hebrews 7:2) and Isaiah says of him “*Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end*” (9:7). These links between God and peace demonstrate that peace is apparently very important to God.

When Jesus was born, the angels declared “*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests*” (Luke 2:14). When the message of Jesus was taken

throughout the world by the apostles, it was described as the “*good news of peace*” (Acts 10:36), the “*way of peace*” (Romans 3:17) and the “*gospel of peace*” (Ephesians 6:15). These statements suggest that peace was a very important part of the early Christian message.

The Bible promises that God will give peace: The famous blessing from Numbers 6:24-26 says: “*The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.*” Psalm 29:11 says: “*The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.*”

These and many other scriptures provide a positive connection between God with peace. Why is God interested in peace? God is a perfect being with no conflict within himself and God created no conflict within his eternal kingdom. Where conflict has arisen, it has come from some source outside of God and, therefore, God is anxious for that conflict to be resolved and for peace to be restored once again.

### **Peace is a key component of the Christian faith.**

#### ***It is important to have peace with God.***

- Romans 5:1: “*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”
- John 14:27: “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*”

#### ***It is important to have peace with fellow believers.***

- Mark 9:50: “*Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.*”
- Romans 14:17: “*Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*”

#### ***It is important to have peace with all people.***

- Romans 12:17-18: “*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*”
- 1 Corinthians 7:15: “*But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.*”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:13: “*Live in peace with each other.*”

#### ***Peace is a core component of the gospel.***

- Acts 10:36: When Paul told his companions about his experience in Cornelius house, he said, “*You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.*”
- Romans 8:6: “*The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*”
- Romans 14:17: “*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit . . .*”
- Ephesians 2:14-18: “*For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law*

*with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."*

Peace is part of the nine-fold aspects of the fruit of the Spirit. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"* (Galatians 5:22-23). The greeting *"grace and peace"* is found 13 times in the New Testament. Paul says in Romans 15:13: *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

### **Every person is precious in the eyes of God.**

Genesis 1:27-28 says: *"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."* When God created human beings, he created us as one people. Paul says in Galatians 3:28: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* I recognize that this statement was primarily describing the equality of those who are in Christ. However, the passage also reflects a part of God's nature who views all people as having equal importance. From God's perspective, there is no room for racism or class distinctions or any other kind of ethnic or social barrier between those people who have been created by God.

I believe God grieves just as much over Muslims who are killed as Christians. The last verse in Jonah illustrates this point very well. Jonah had had a rather arrogant attitude toward the Ninevites, assuming that God was only interested in the Jews. This is the way the book closes:

*But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?" (4:10-11).*

This is the only book of the Bible that ends in a question. This is a question we as Christians must think about when we are attempting to make peace. If God is concerned about those who do not know about him and do not worship him, should we not be concerned about these people?

A group of Church leaders in the Jos area wrote a document about the Jos Crisis and one of the chapters was entitled "To Win Them or to Kill Them." Even the title of the chapter makes a sharp point.

### **God has given to human beings a free will.**

What does a free will mean? One of the amazing privileges God has given to human beings is the ability to make moral choices and even the choice to accept or reject God. This is illustrated in the Garden of Eden when God gave Adam and Eve the choice to choose to obey or disobey God. Thus, the ability to make choices means even when people choose to reject God, that choice itself is a confirmation of the nature of man and a testimony to the

genius of God. It is incredibly sad when people choose to disobey God. However, even the decision to ignore God is a celebration of the way God made the human race. Therefore, even when people choose to worship a different god or worship God in a different way other than what is taught in the Bible, we must accept their choice as one that has been allowed by God and continue to work for peace with them. We human beings must never force our fellow human beings to do what God has not forced them to do.

### **Jesus pronounced a blessing on peace makers.**

Matthew 5:6: *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”* As Jesus was introducing his kingdom and describing the characteristics of that kingdom, he promised nine blessings on people who would do various things in the kingdom. One of those blessings was pronounced on the peacemakers. Jesus recognized that the world would be filled with many independent thinking people that would generate conflict. He also knew that the kingdom he came to this world to introduce would generate a lot of misunderstanding and possibly conflict so he stated from the very beginning of his ministry that it was important to make and maintain peace.

### **Peace is necessary for God’s kingdom to move forward.**

Paul says in Galatians 4:4 *“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son . . .”* The KJV says *“when the time had fully come.”* This suggests that the time that Jesus came to this earth was the most ideal time he could have come. One of the fascinating things about the timing of the coming of Jesus to this earth is that particular time slot was one of the few times in the history of the world in which there were no major active wars going on. Jesus was indeed the *“prince of peace.”* The area known as Palestine has probably had more wars fought in it and over it than any other piece of land in the world. Had there been a war going on during Jesus’ time, he could not have completed his ministry and prepared his disciples as he did. Had there been wars going on in the Mediterranean world at that time, the apostles and other evangelists would not have been able to travel and preach the gospel freely as they did. If there had been violent conflicts in the areas which were evangelized, the information and questions that led the apostles to write the epistles may not have reached them and even if the epistles had been written it would have been difficult for them to be delivered to their respective recipients. Though there was local persecution, the fact there was peace in that part of the world was a great advantage to spreading the gospel.

If you do not have peace with your neighbor, you will not be able to evangelize him or her successfully. In addition, if you do not have peace in a community, it will be difficult for the Christians to be *“salt and light”* and transform that community into a place that builds up God’s kingdom. If there is violence between Christians and non-Christians, there will be nothing attractive about Christianity and, in fact, non-Christians will be repulsed by Christians rather than attracted to them. We have to have peace for the gospel to advance.

I have worked with Muslims for the past 19 years and closely with them for the last 10 years. Obviously, as a Christian I would like for all of them to become believers. That is not likely going to happen. In fact, I am not attempting to do the typical kind of evangelism with them every time I interact with them. However, I do attempt to do serious evangelism among them but it is not so much personal evangelism as it is *“image evangelism.”*

Christians have a horrible image problem in Nigeria. Christians are viewed by Muslims as:

- **Drunkards.** It is Christians who oppose the Sharia laws banning alcohol.
- **Immoral People.** It is the Christian girls on our university campuses that dress provocatively and immodestly.
- **Promoters of Evil.** Satellite TV brings movies from Christian America filled with sex and nudity and violence and materialism. The western world and even some of the Christian denominations are promoting homosexual marriage.

This is the way many Muslims view Christians. Therefore, we have to do something to build up the Christian image.

When I went to the mosque compound once and interviewed a Muslim colleague with whom we had done HIV and AIDS work, I asked him, “What has it been like to work with Christians?” He smiled and to me but also his several colleagues who were listening, “Oh, you would not believe it. They are better than us. They really are trying to help us. They are more concerned about Muslims than we are.” My Muslim colleague may not become a Christian but he will go home and say good things about Christians and hopefully that will help his children to have a better attitude toward Christians than they otherwise would have. Therefore, in my interactions with Muslims, I am trying to lay the groundwork that will present a Christian worldview to them and will also lay a foundation that will make acceptance of Christianity a greater reality.

The Bible reveals that God is the creator of peace and is concerned about peace. The lack of peace is an affront to the purpose of God. Therefore, all who accept the Bible as authoritative in their lives must be concerned about peace and must work hard to establish and maintain peace.

### **General Principles for Christian Peacemaking**

Based upon the common-sense assumptions related to peace, the teachings of peace in the Bible and my own personal observations and experiences, I will suggest the following as principles that are essential for Christians to use in any peace-making efforts.

**A Christian model of peace making must be based upon the ability to correctly interpret and apply the Bible.**

*This means we must have a good understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.*

I was recently asked to present a paper entitled, “A Christian Blueprint for Inter-Religious Peace Building in Northern Nigeria” at a one-day seminar sponsored by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Management at the University of Jos. During the early part of my paper I said that the Bible did not contain a blueprint for solving our problems in Jos and Nigeria. I explained that we cannot really use the Old Testament as a formula or a specific pattern because the entity through which God was working in the Old Testament was what might a theocratic nation—certainly a nation that considered itself to be a theocracy. Therefore, the principles of peace making we see in the Old Testament are useful but are not as direct and applicable as we might wish them to be. In addition, even the New Testament does not provide a clear formula for our situation in Jos either because at the time the New Testament was being written, Christianity was a tiny minority. When you are a tiny majority, you have only a limited number of things you can do to maintain peace, including the things that the early church did like:

## *Reflections on the Christian Responses to Three Jos Crises*

- Praying and depending upon God for supernatural deliverance (like Peter did).
- Running away from conflict (like believers did after Stephen was stoned).
- Taking advantage of government security agents (like Paul did this in Jerusalem).
- Appealing to laws of the land (like Paul appealed to Caesar).

All of these are still legitimate means of responding to conflict but they are not comprehensive enough for our situation in Jos and many other conflict situations. Therefore, we must not be guilty of over-applying or under-applying specific statements in the various parts of the Bible.

Very simply, we must have a good understanding of the Old and New Testaments and how to apply them to our contemporary situation if we are going to develop a Biblical response to violence and peace.

***This means we must understand and apply the key principles taught in the New Testament related to violence and peace.***

Here are some of the teachings of Jesus:

- Love your enemies (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27). It is love for enemies that really sets apart Christians from others (Luke 6:32-34).
- Pray for your enemies (Matthew 5:44).
- Do good for your enemies (Luke 6:27), even to the point of giving your tunic when they demand your cloak (6:29).
- Do not retaliate against your enemies but rather turn the other cheek (Luke 6:29).
- Bless your enemies (Luke 6:28).

These teachings are not difficult to understand. The problem is applying them in our contemporary situation.

The apostles taught the same things Jesus had taught.

- There should be no retaliation against one's enemies: Romans 12:17-19 says: "*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord.*"
- There should be compassion and good deeds toward enemies. Romans 12:20-21 continues: "*On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*"

These are the same things Jesus taught and practiced which means that the early church clearly understood and followed the teachings and practices of Jesus.

***This means we must attempt to explain the difficult passages in the Bible.***

Though no life was lost, no one was seriously injured and no property was destroyed, Jesus used a mild form of violence to drive the corrupt businessmen from the temple (Matthew 21:12; John 2:14-16). Does that in any way justify the use of violence? Does this mean we can Christians may use mild violence to defend the causes of God?



Many Christians in Nigeria believe when Jesus said if you are slapped on one cheek, and you turn the other cheek, you have fulfilled your obligation. They insist that there is no third cheek. Therefore, after the second offense or insult, you are free to respond in a way that the aggressor will understand. And Christians often believe the only language “these people” understand is “fire for fire.” Is this a correct interpretation or application of this teaching?

On his last night on the earth, Jesus made a rather strange statement:

*He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment. The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.” “That is enough,” he replied. (Luke 22:36-38).*

What did Jesus mean by this statement? Was he actually encouraging his disciples to go out and buy swords or was this some kind of metaphor or idiom? Was he encouraging self-defense in this situation? Was he justifying retaliatory violence in certain cases?

Many Christians in Nigeria believe that this statement is the justification for arming themselves with weapons. In fact, some churches have taken up special offerings to buy guns that can be used to defend their church buildings. Is this what Jesus meant by getting a sword? If not, can you explain what he did mean?

If a Christian leader is not prepared to answer these and similar types of questions, it will be difficult for them to lead people in peace making.

***This means we must recognize there is no absolute formula for peace in every situation. Therefore, we must use wisdom in different contexts.***

Unlike Islam which essentially has created its own culture, Christianity upholds a basic system of principles and adapts itself to practically any culture. That means that sometimes the application of a principle in the Biblical days may vary a bit today and may not be literally applied. For example, five times the New Testament says, “*Greet one another with a holy kiss.*” However, no one ever greets me in Nigeria with a holy kiss. They believe that they can achieve that objective in another culturally appropriate manner.

I recently noted Paul’s statement when he was among the Thessalonians: “*For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it*” (2 Thessalonians 3:7-8). Paul was happy he could say he had not taken the food of the Thessalonians. However, in many parts of Africa, if you do not accept the people’s food, you have not accepted them. If you went to someone’s house and ate only your own food and refused to eat their food, they would be insulted. Therefore, those serving in Africa would have to find another culturally appropriate way to illustrate their love for the people they are serving rather than insisting on providing their own food.

The truth is sometimes the actual application changes from the original application but the core truth must be upheld. Is it possible that the actual way to respond to violence and adhere to the principles taught in the Bible may actually look a bit different from what we see in the Bible? I believe that is a possibility. And this leads to another important point.

**A Christian model of peace making must be created and led by local leadership.**

The correct interpretation of a passage never changes. There are no African or American ways to interpret the scripture. There is only one correct interpretation of any scripture and that is what it meant in the mind of the original communicator. However, there are many applications of Scripture. And, in fact, application is always done within a local context. Romans 14 illustrates this point clearly. Those from a Jewish background felt the Sabbath day was a holy day and should be set aside as special. The Gentile Christians had no such tradition and viewed all days as equally holy. Paul accepted both positions. Both were applying Biblical principles in a culturally appropriate manner. The priority of each particular application was determined by their culture.

When there were two women quarreling in Philippi, Paul told them to solve their problems but did not specifically tell them how. He said to the local church leaders, “*Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel . . .*” (Philippians 4:3). In other words, Paul recognized that this peace-making effort was something that had to be done locally.

Those people who work to make peace in a cross-cultural situation have some advantages. They are able to see and understand issues a bit more objectively because they see them differently than the local people. However, outsiders also are handicapped in fully understanding local issues and all the nuances of the various local worldviews. Therefore, the local people must be the ones who really take ownership of the peace-making process. This means that outsiders can be consultants but the final peace-making strategy must not come from the outside. This has been my understanding and my practice in Jos. I recognize I can only be a consultant and not the person who ultimately makes the decisions related to peace.

**A Christian model of peace making must reject pre-Christian worldviews related to violence.**

***Those based upon natural reactions***

If you hit me, the natural human reaction is to hit you back. Jesus told us that his followers should overcome that natural reaction which is part of practically everyone’s original worldview with the love-based reactions that Jesus himself had taught.

***Those based upon emotions***

When your family is killed, it is hard not to be emotional and respond with emotional reactions. During our crises, I have heard many irrational statements such as “I don’t care if they kill me, I am going to. . .” Many people were killed because they acted irrationally. We cannot make good decisions based upon emotions. Our emotions will cause us to fall back on our traditional pre-Christian worldview.

This is a lesson that was illustrated well by Martin Luther King, Jr. when he taught his people non-retaliation. He would encourage these young black activities to break the “segregation” laws, such as eating in a “whites only” restaurant, knowing that the white police would arrest them. And often the white police would use extreme force against them and beat them. King understood that you cannot follow your normal instincts in a situation like that. So, he trained his followers to overcome that traditional worldview. They would

train by doing role-model confrontations so that when they experienced these things in the real world, they would respond without violence.

If Christian leaders do not teach and train their followers to have a Christian response, their members may fall back to their pre-Christian worldview responses. They may fall back to their natural reactions. We do not need only teaching; we need training that will teach our people how to respond in crisis situations.

- What should you do on election days or other times when there is potential violence?
- What should you do when you see black smoke over part of the city?
- What should you do when you get a text message describing some particular scheme that “they” are doing?
- What should you do when your own people start getting weapons and insist that you go with them to the battle front?

I believe that we need clear teaching and specific training to overcome those old worldview reactions to violence.

### **A Christian model of peace making must acknowledge the errors and sins of Christians who have participated in violence.**

Jesus said, “*You will know the truth and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32). Truth is always what sets us free. Even if truth hurts, we must observe and promote the truth. The wise man declared, “*He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy*” (Proverbs 28:13). I have found that admitting the truth when “our side” is wrong is one of the most difficult parts of peace making.

It is sad when people only want to tell one side of the story. They make our problems in Jos to be purely persecution of Christians by Muslims. They point out how Muslims have killed Christians but they say nothing about Christians killing Muslims. They complain that Muslims will not give land for Christians to build mosques in the north but they do not acknowledge that Christians in the south sometimes do not give land for Muslims to build mosques. How can we properly represent Jesus if we fail to uphold the truth?

I spoke at a Sharia conference a few years ago in which many top Muslim academics and legal practitioners were present. I chastised them gently about why they refused to publicly criticize and disassociate themselves from Bin Laden, if they did not believe his was the correct form of Islam. However, when we are in these crises, you seldom hear a Christian who will criticize other Christians, even when they have been guilty of inhuman atrocities. They often say that if a Christian kills a Muslim, the Christian was just defending himself but if a Muslim kills a Christian he is an “animal.”

This is difficult because when you criticize your own people, you appear to be on the enemy’s side. I once presented a paper at a venue and some questions afterwards came close to being hostile. I was publicly laughed at by some attendees when I suggested we must build friendships and positive relationships with those on the other side. Many of these people would have read my books and respected me as a scholar and Christian leader. Unfortunately, when I pointed out errors of Christians in these crises, it was not appreciated. It is partially understandable that people have such strong feelings when the incident is in the recent past and the wounds are still very fresh. However, our commitment to Christ is a commitment to truth which demands open and honest confession whenever we have done wrong.

**A Christian model of peacemaking must be based upon building relationships with those on the other side.**

Building a relationship of trust between people is essential if you are going to bring people together and make peace.

- ***A Christian model of peace making must not hesitate to work with non-Christians in building peace.*** Paul encouraged Christians to go to the homes of unbelievers and eat with them. Paul cooperated with the security forces in order to bring about peace. Paul took advantage of the judiciary system. Paul did not consider unbelievers as enemies but as possible candidates for conversion.
- ***A Christian model of peace making must tone down the rhetoric.*** Our joint Christian prayer meetings after these crises were often filled with references to the imprecatory psalms and other portions of the Bible that uses militant language. Obviously, as the wise man declared, there is a time for everything. However, I believe that to make peace, we must set aside the imprecatory psalms during these crises. We must be careful with spiritual warfare language during a time of crisis. Our focus must be on peace and not on conflict. We must look for ways to establish friendship not solidify adversarial relationships through violent language.
- ***A Christian model of peace making must be transparent.*** We commonly think that there must always be a neutral person involved. I am not sure that that is possible. I am not sure that you have to be totally neutral in peace making but you should be objective and you should be honest and you should respect the integrity of the other person. Those who are going to make peace must be willing to sit down and seriously talk and listen to each other and hear each other. We must be willing to state what we honestly believe and what we honestly do not understand about the other side.
- ***A Christian model of peace making must be done by people of integrity.*** It is only people of integrity who can negotiate and maintain peace. If a person is not viewed as a person of integrity, no one will take that person seriously. And any peace that is based upon deception or injustice will never last.

**A Christian model of peace making must persevere even in discouraging times.**

One of the most important things I have learned in my limited peacemaking efforts is that peace making is hard work. Paul makes this important statement to new believers who were experiencing persecution:

*And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance (2 Thessalonians 3:2-5).*

**Conclusion**

God desires that there be peace in the world. It is the responsibility of those who claim to be followers of Jesus to make sure that God's peace returns to this earth. Peacemaking is tedious and frustrating but when peace is achieved, it is worth all of the effort. May God give us peace in Nigeria and around the world and my God's people lead the way.

## **Chapter Eight**

# **Reflections on the Christian Responses to Three Jos Crises**

The day before the prestigious Byang Kato Memorial Lecture Series conducted at Jos ECWA Theological Seminary, Jos, Nigeria on 22 February 2010, I received a phone call informing me that the person who had been scheduled to give the presentation had been forced to cancel. I was asked if I could give the lecture. Therefore, in 24 hours I wrote the address found in this chapter. This lecture took place only a few weeks after Jos had suffered a serious crisis and one of the students of JETS was killed.

### **Introduction**

“They have started again.” This is a statement that we have heard several times in Jos during the last eight years. Those words usually are some of the first words we hear whenever there is a fresh outbreak of ethnic-religious violence in Jos. What are the thoughts that go through our minds whenever we hear those words? And what are the thoughts in our minds related to these crises when we are one month past one of these crises? This presentation is to provide you with some of my own thoughts and reflections about the reoccurring violent crises that we have had here in Jos in the last few years. I am reasonably sure that these thoughts I am about to share are not original. I would assume that many others have similar thoughts. And these thoughts are not necessarily profound. They are simply the thoughts and reflections of a person who is a Christian expatriate preacher and theologian who has lived in your country for over 21 years. Before I share these thoughts I will provide you a bit more about my own particular journey that has helped to shape these reflections.

### **Preliminary Remarks**

#### **Residence**

I am not a Nigerian. My skin is white. I do not speak any Nigerian language fluently and what little Hausa I know is spoken with a very distinct non-African accent.

- I was born and reared in a sheltered environment—a place where I never experienced any of the violence that we have suffered in Jos during the last eight years.
- Because I am a citizen of another country, I can leave Nigeria any time I wish. If things get bad in Jos, I can pack up and go home. Most Nigerians cannot do that.
- I am not an indigene of Plateau State. I do not have the same feelings toward the land a Berom or Anaguta man might feel. Jos to me is my home not my homeland.

All of these observations confirm that I am an outsider and will always see the kinds of crises we have experienced in Jos from an outsider’s perspective.

#### **Experience**

I have lived in Nigeria since September 1988 and I have lived in Jos since August 1991. Because I am a citizen of another country, that means that I have volunteered to live in Jos for these past 18 years. I live in Jos because God called me to live in Jos. I live in Jos

because I enjoy living in Jos. I live in Jos because this is where my home and ministry are. Since I have been in Jos since 1991, I have been present for all of the major problems that we have had. Let me tell you a little of my own experiences so that you can understand my context and what has influenced my thinking about these things.

When I first came to Jos, I helped start the Diploma in Christian Studies programme at the University of Jos. As such, I did a good bit of public relations work—going around meeting various church leaders to orient them about this new programme. During that time, I was invited to meet the executive committee of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) that was meeting at the Kwararafa Assemblies of God Church in Jos. I was hoping they would give me a place at the beginning of the agenda so I could make my speech and leave but they put me on at the end instead which meant I had to sit through all the other agenda items.

Interestingly, the major agenda item that day was a discussion of the recent crisis that had taken place in Kano as a result of the attempted Bonnke crusade there. The discussion involved three parts. First, various leaders gave official reports about burnt churches and dead members, including pastors. I was not as familiar with the PFN at that time as I am now but I do remember hearing that Assemblies of God and Deeper Life lost churches during that crisis. The second part of the meeting was a discussion about how the churches in Jos could provide relief. A place was designated for the donation of clothes and food items.

The third part of the meeting was even more surprising. It was a discussion about how to protect their churches in case there was an attack. I remember two of the specific suggestions given in that meeting. First, pastors were encouraged to get a tipper load of stones dropped onto their church premise. One of the churches in Kano had been saved by the members simply throwing stones at the attackers. Second, someone suggested that they should never throw away the old head pans ladies used. These could serve as shields against stones that were being thrown during the attacks.

I left that meeting that day with very mixed emotions. First, I was fascinated by these reports. This was like something I had read in church history. Within 300 kilometers of where I was living, there were actually Christians who had died for their faith and others who were suffering serious persecution. I was also happy I could actually participate in helping people who had suffered for their faith. After the meeting, I went to the market and bought a bag of maize and some other food items and took them to the collection point. However, I was troubled by the third part of the meeting. I never remember hearing any lectures in seminary about defending church buildings. I had never had to think about Christians doing anything violent, even if it were defensive. Even throwing stones at people who were attempting to burn a church was far beyond my world experiences.

My first experience of one of these crises was in 1994 when there was a small crisis in Jos. The Gada Biyu market was burned and a Muslim school was burned on Rukaba Barracks Road. I did not see any of this violence as it happened but later saw the burned-out facilities.

In 1996, I had gone to Minna to conduct a workshop. We were coming back on a Friday afternoon. As we entered Kafanchan, in Kaduna State, we noticed a number of people walking toward town with bows and arrows. My brother-in-law, Professor Philip Horton, was with me at the time and commented, “I see that they have archery here in Kafanchan.” However, the closer we got to town, we began to see knives and spears and other weapons. When we got to the center of town, we met a group of people marching down the road

singing a Christian song. We had to pull off to the side of the road. We asked someone what was going on and we learned that a young man had been preaching in the car park. He had been accused of blaspheming Mohammed so had been arrested by Muslims and taken somewhere. The local residents had gotten their weapons and were marching to where he was being kept to try to get him released. As we continued our journey, we were stopped four or five times by local vigilante groups. I remembered rolling the window down and being asked “Are you a Christian?” I had never been asked that question in that tone of voice before! We eventually passed safely through Kafanchan. However, we later learned that two people were killed in Kafanchan. That crisis later spread to Zaria where more people died and then back to Kaduna where even more people lost their lives. This was a sobering experience—to have actually seen one of these crises at the boiling point and to know that people had lost their lives and property as a direct or indirect result of the Christian faith.

It has been our unfortunate opportunity to participate in all three of the major crises in Jos. During the first two, we had an IDP camp at my house in which we fed and housed 150 to 200 people for several days. During the last crisis, the man who has been my next-door-neighbor for 18 years was killed. I will not take time to repeat all of the traumas and frustrations of those experiences, since many of you have passed through similar things. All of us who have experienced these crises know that they are ugly, evil, and frightening.

Another thing that influences my perception of these events is that I teach in a department of religious studies in which I have almost daily contact with Muslim colleagues. In addition, I have been involved in HIV/AIDS work for the past ten years and most of that work has involved Christians and Muslims. I think it is fair to say I have had more experience in working closely with Muslims than the average Christian living in Plateau State.

## **The Problem**

After living and working in Jos for 18 years, in an academic atmosphere, I am very well aware that the situation in Jos is very complex. I must confess that I do not fully understand all of the issues, much less the solution to the problem. The three major crises that Jos has experienced obviously have many dimensions.

- ***Ethnic.*** The tension in Jos relates to old rivalries between Hausas and local ethnic groups.
- ***Political.*** Whoever controls the politics has great power and influence. Thus, there is a struggle that even uses force at times to get and maintain key political positions.
- ***Economic.*** Whoever controls the area controls the economy to some extent.
- ***Religious.*** There is little secularism in Africa so whatever affects the community affects the religion. Religious buildings and leaders often become targets.

The bottom line is that there are many different forces and issues that create these tensions and conflicts that are beyond my knowledge and experience.

## **Commitments**

I am a committed Christian. As such I believe the Bible is the final rule and authority for all areas of our life. Where it speaks, I believe it is accurate and where it commands, I believe we must obey. I have had a reasonably good education in learning how to study the Bible and my whole career has been built around trying to understand the Bible, explain it and apply it in the various contexts in which I have found myself.

## Issues That Relate to the Jos Crisis

Regardless of whether the various crises we have had in northern Nigeria are ethnic, political, economic, or religious, I believe there are certain general principles that are part of our Christianity that have a bearing on them. I further believe that it is only as we understand the Biblical teachings about these and then make wise applications to our own context that we will really begin to make progress in solving these problems. I will raise these issues and make a few brief comments about them. However, because I am an outsider I am not the ideal person to make the final pronouncements on them. I believe that godly Nigerian Biblical scholars and Christian leaders must work their way through these issues and then help the church to make sanctified applications of them.

### Respect for Life

God places a high value on life. This is illustrated several ways:

- **God is the author of life including human life** (Genesis 1:27; 2:7). Anything that God creates should not be thoughtlessly destroyed.
- **God's enemy is the author of killing, stealing and destruction** (John 10:10).
- **God prohibits taking innocent life.** One of the Ten Commandments says, "*You shall not murder*" (Exodus 20:13).
- **God prescribes the ultimate penalty for taking human life.** Exodus 21:12 states: "*Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death.*"

If God is the creator of life and the devil is the destroyer of life, then God's people should always be on the side of saving and preserving and restoring life and not be on the side of destroying it. In certain cases, the Bible teaches that people who commit certain crimes forfeit their right to life. However, it is government that has the responsibility to take that life and not individuals (Romans 13:4). I believe that Nigerian scholars must make a thorough and definitive study of the theology of human life and specifically address the issue of how that applies to these communal and ethnic and religious violent clashes.

### Relationships with Others

God has made human beings to be social beings. That means that we need one another and that we function best when we are interacting with others. Because we are social beings, there are literally hundreds of guidelines given in the Bible that relate to our relationship with one another. In fact, six of the Ten Commandments relate to interacting with others. Here are a few scriptures that have a direct bearing on the Jos Crisis.

- Exodus 22:21: "*Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.*"
- Leviticus 19:18: "*. . . love your neighbor as yourself.*" Jesus repeated this statement in three places (Matthew 5:43, 19:19; 22:39)
- Matthew 5:44: "*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you . . .*"
- Romans 12:18: "*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*"

One of the key words used to describe life in the Old Testament period is the word *shalom*. This word was a comprehensive word that contained the idea of completeness, soundness,



and wholeness.<sup>75</sup> It is a word that dealt with everything from greetings, health, cessation of wars and relationships between human beings. God wanted his people to experience a comprehensive peace in all areas of their lives and especially their relationships with others. Although the concept of peace continues to be used in the New Testament, another comprehensive word is used to describe the relationships between people, the Greek word *agape* which is most often translated love. However, this word does not focus so much on the emotional aspect of love as the action aspect of love. *Agape* is not so much a function of the emotions but a function of the will. Thus, it can be commanded (Matthew 22:39) and even commanded of repulsive people like enemies with whom it would be difficult if not impossible to develop a warm emotional attachment (Matthew 5:44).

Relationships are important in Africa. Interacting with family, the community and even strangers is a celebrated value. Because of the communal structure of most of Africa, Africans have also traditionally had a lot of experience relating with those from other clans and tribes. Much of this has been positive and some has been negative. It is time for African theologians and Christian leaders to do a thorough and comprehensive study of Christian relationships, particular with non-believers and those who might even be considered enemies and enlighten the African church how these teachings must be applied.

## **Justice**

One of the fundamental characteristics of God is justice. God is a God of justice. The following verses reflect that truth.

- Psalm 33:5: *“The LORD loves righteousness and justice . . .”*
- Psalm 103:6: *“The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.”*
- Isaiah 30:18: *“Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!”*
- Acts 17:31: *“For he (God) has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed.”*

In addition to God being just, God demands that we also must be just.

- Deuteronomy 16:18-20: *“Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly. Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.”*
- Matthew 23:23: *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.”*

There are several issues in the Jos crisis that relate to justice:

Crimes are committed during these times and often the criminals go free. On the Sunday after the most recent crisis, I went to a church and most of the service was devoted to testimonies. One man said he left his home and when he looked back he saw it was in flames. He testified that he became angry and started passing out weapons to the young men around

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<sup>75</sup> C. L. Feinberg, “Peace” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Editor: Walter A. Elwell, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1992, p. 833

him and he personally burned three of his Muslim neighbors' houses. This man confessed a crime in public. Justice demands that society do something about it. Ever since these ethnic-religious crises have started, a mentality has developed that a crime committed during a crisis is not really a crime. When you kill your neighbor or burn your neighbor's house during a crisis, you are somehow exempt from the normal law. However, God is a God of justice. And God expects and demands justice during a time of violent crisis as much as a time of peace.

Although the settler-indigene issue involves other issues, it is also related to justice. There are certainly issues related to traditional homelands and traditional institutions that have to be resolved satisfactorily. However, if people live and work and pay local taxes in a certain area, it seems to me to be an act of injustice to refuse those persons the right to enjoy the services<sup>0</sup> that are paid for by their taxes.

Justice is not a matter that we take into our own hands. Justice related to legal issues is a responsibility given to the court. Paul had no hesitation using his legal rights (Acts 22:25) or appealing to the court system whenever his rights were about to be violated (Acts 25:8).

I am convinced we do not use the justice system enough in Nigeria. For example, after 1999 when Sharia began to be implemented in certain parts of northern Nigeria, we complained a lot about Sharia. However, to the best of my knowledge, no Christian ever pursued the issue in court and had the legality of Sharia appealed all the way to the Nigerian Supreme Court. In addition, I am convinced that we have not exhausted the ways that we can use the judicial system in Nigeria to sort out these problems that we have.

God is a God of justice and demands that his followers be people of justice. African theologians must engage in a serious examination of the theology of justice and give the church practical guidelines about how these things apply in times of violence and crisis.

### **Forgiveness and Retaliation**

It is a fact that we live in a world that is not always just. There are many examples of injustice around us. What should be the attitude of followers of Jesus toward injustice whenever it appears? It seems to me that the Bible suggests several possibilities.

#### ***We should correct injustice if it is possible and legal.***

Whenever Paul was wrongfully arrested and wrongfully beaten in Philippi, he insisted that those responsible for the actions come and personally release him and, in essence, apologize for taking the law into their own hands. This was not an issue of evangelism for Paul (Acts 16:37-39). It was a matter of justice, but Paul pursued that justice with almost the same degree of energy and commitment that he did evangelism.

The citizens of Nigeria have many rights, including the right to vote, the right to contest for office, the right to sue people in court, and the right to fully utilize the judicial system. Should we not take greater advantage of and pursue more passionately the recognition of these legal rights?

#### ***We should report cases of injustice or potential injustice to appropriate authorities.***

Whenever Paul learned from his nephew about an attempt to kill him, he insisted that this be reported to the authority that could do something about it (Acts 23:17).

***We should not take justice into our own hands.***

The Bible is very clear on this:

- Matthew 5:38: *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”*
- 1 Peter 3:8-9: *“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”*

***We should forgive and pray for those who offend us.***

- Matthew 5:43-44: *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”*
- Colossians 3:12: *“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.”*

***We should allow God to provide his own justice.***

- Proverbs 20:22: *“Do not say, ‘I’ll pay you back for this wrong!’ Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.”* (See also 24:29).
- Romans 12:17-21: *“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

The Jos Crisis was made possible in part because the Biblical ways God has given us to respond to injustice have been ignored.

- Few if any persons have been held responsible for their crimes in previous crises.
- Few people have utilized the system God has ordained for justice—the government.
- Many people, both Christians and Muslims, have taken justice into their own hands.
- Many Christians were not willing to allow God to do his own justice but insisted on doing the justice themselves.

God is a God of justice. God has also informed us about what to do when injustice occurs. It is time for African theologians and Christian leaders to study issues related to injustice and give to the church clear and practical guidelines about what to do in times of injustice.

**Obedience**

The thesis of my book *Tough Tests for Top Leaders*,<sup>76</sup> is that God is raising up African leaders to have not just a continental leadership role but a world-wide leadership role. However, before God gives us additional responsibilities, he always puts us through various

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<sup>76</sup> McCain, Danny, *Tough Tests for Top Leaders*, More Books, Jos, 2005; Revised edition, August 2022

tests to see if we are prepared for leadership at the next level. The book identifies 13 of those tests I believe God is putting African leaders through at the present time. I am convinced that perhaps the first test is the test of obedience. And the particular example I think God is using at the present time is obedience to Jesus' guidelines about violence. There is really very little question about what Jesus taught and practiced about violence. This is so clear that the early church followed the practice of Jesus with non-violence in every instance of persecution. The question is whether we will obey what Jesus has said.

We are all familiar with the excuses that we sometimes give for our violence.

- ***We are defending the kingdom of God.*** It is God's kingdom that will suffer if we do not retaliate.
- ***This is an emergency situation.*** Sometimes God's rules have to be suspended in emergency situations.
- ***This is a totally different situation.*** Had Jesus lived during our time, he would not have said the same thing that he said then.
- ***If we obey Jesus' teachings this will cause the Church more harm than good.***
- ***We know our responses are wrong, but this is something we just have to do.*** The Lord will just have to forgive us when it is over.

However, obedience is the ultimate test of submission to God.

- John 14:15: *"If you love me, you will obey what I command."*
- John 14:23-24: *"Jesus replied, 'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.'"*

The question our pastors and spiritual leaders must ask us is are we going to obey the simple commands of Jesus or are we going to obey the commands and expectations that are given to us by our culture?

During the last ten years, there has developed a major issue that has divided the Christian world. Most of us have watched the Anglican church struggle to deal with this issue. The culture in the Western world has changed so much that now homosexuality is accepted as being normal. We in Africa insist that the Bible is very clear about the issue of homosexuality in the church. It is condemned in no uncertain terms. However, many of these who have homosexual tendencies still feel attracted to Christianity and they need the church to accept them and defend their behavior so they have invented all kinds of excuses to get around the Biblical teachings.

- ***We are defending human rights.*** Surely God is concerned about the rights of all his creations and it would be a violation of the human rights of gay people for them not to be able to express their sexuality in a way that is honest to themselves.
- ***This is a totally different situation.*** Had Jesus lived during our time and had the world understood the issue of homosexual orientation, the Biblical writers would not have said the same things about homosexuality.
- ***If we obey Jesus and prohibit the free expression of homosexuality this will cause us more harm than good.***
- ***We know it is wrong, but this is something we just have to do.*** The Lord will just have to forgive us when it is over.

Do these arguments sound familiar? They are the same arguments we use in Nigeria to justify our violent reactions to ethnic and religious aggression. However, please note this. I believe that God has already rejected the Christianity of much of the western world. Those churches that are accepting homosexuality in the church and even ordaining practicing homosexuals into the Christian ministry are in serious decline. One of the obvious reasons for this is that they have chosen to disobey the clear teachings of the Bible. If we make the same decision to reject the clear teachings of the Bible with regards the issue of violence, I am convinced God is going to overlook Africa and find others to be the world-wide leaders of Christianity.

It is time for there to be a resurrection of our Christian prophets. They must declare unambiguously what God says about obedience and the consequences of disobedience. And they need to be specific in what it means to obey Jesus' teachings about violence, retaliation, and forgiveness.

## **Testimony**

Our public testimony is perhaps the primary means of generating church growth. Acts 2:46-47 is part of a summary section in the Book of Acts. It says, *"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."* Note that the phrase *"enjoying the favor of all the people"* is linked with the next sentence by the conjunction *kai* (and) which says, *"and the Lord added to their number daily."* People were coming to the church because those on the outside were attracted to what they saw inside the church. There was something about their worship and praise and simple living that attracted the people in Jerusalem to this movement. Obviously, this did not necessarily continue. However, I think it can certainly be demonstrated that where people project a testimony of genuineness and humility and consideration and compassion, people are going to be drawn to them and their religion. In fact, Paul made a deliberate policy out of this. He said,

*Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).*

The point I am making is that Paul understood that the way unbelievers viewed him would influence whether or not he would be able to save some of them.

In the public document entitled, *"KAIROS' NIGERIA: A Prayerful Call to Nigerian Christian Leaders"*<sup>77</sup> written and supported by 22 Nigerian Christian scholars and church leaders, one of the sections is entitled, *"To Win Them or to Kill Them?"* That is a profound question. The answer is obvious. We are called to win Muslims to Christ. However, we cannot win them if we are killing them.

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<sup>77</sup> I do not know the original source of this document. It was forwarded to me by email.

Those of us who live in the northern part of Nigeria should hang our heads in shame when we think of the image that the typical Muslim in northern Nigeria has of a Christian.

- ***A Christian is a drunkard.*** It is Christians who resist the Sharia laws that ban alcohol.
- ***A Christian is an immodest person.*** It is our Christian girls who dress immodestly in our universities and other tertiary institutions.
- ***A Christian is an immoral person.*** It is from Christian America that all of these movies come into our homes that include nudity and immorality
- ***A Christian is violent person.*** Mosques get burnt, Muslim homes get torn down and Muslims lose their lives at the hands of Christian attackers.

We who are genuine Christians know that a true child of God would not take up a cutlass and go kill his Muslim neighbor or burn his house. However, most of our Muslim neighbors do not have a sophisticated understanding of who is a genuine Christian and who is just a cultural Christian. We are all painted with the same brush. How are we ever going to win them if this is the tainted testimony we are presenting to them?

This issue suggests that we must be concerned about our testimony. Has our collective Christianity testimony been enhanced or hindered in the last few years in Jos by the ways we have responded to these various crises?

Two days before the latest Jos crisis, I was in Lagos teaching a course at WATS. We were discussing the Christian response to violence. One of the students stood up and said, “Sir, ever since the Christians started defending themselves and retaliating in 1987, we have had fewer church burnings and fewer lives lost than before.” I said, “First of all, I am not willing to concede that is a true statement. However, for the sake of the argument, let’s say we have had fewer churches burned and fewer Christians killed as a result of our philosophy of retaliation. However, in so doing, we have sent the Muslim community straight to hell.”

Our testimony is at stake in our reactions during these crises. In fact, the testimony of Jesus is at stake because the only real Jesus that the Muslims know is the Jesus that is demonstrated in the lives of his followers. Paul makes this remarkable statement to the Philippians, “*Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life*” (Philippians 2:14-16a). Stars can only shine in the darkness. There are few things that are darker than that black smoke of our houses burning and the painful testimonies of our loved ones dying. However, these are the times when God is calling us to shine as stars in the dark universe.

It is time for our pastors and Christian leaders to become concerned about our combined Christian testimony and teach our people that every action and reaction they take is confirming or reversing the image of Christianity in the minds of our Muslim friends.

## **Persecution**

Whether we like it or not, the Bible informs us that persecution is a normal part of the Christian life.

- Matthew 5:10: “*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*”

- Matthew 5:11-12: “*Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*”
- John 15:18-21: “*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.*”
- Romans 12:14: “*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*”
- 1 Thessalonians 3:4: “*In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted.*”
- 2 Timothy 3:12: “*In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted . . .*”

Near the end of his epistle, the writer to the Hebrews describes some of the great heroes of ancient Israel. He mentioned some by name and these described others:

*Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect (Hebrews 11:35-40).*

What these verses suggest to us is that suffering and persecution are a normal part of godliness. We do not desire it or pray for it but we should anticipate it. We should prepare for it. We should know that God has given us the ability to overcome it. Paul declared:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35-39).*

In fact, God even uses persecution and trouble in our lives. Whenever the persecution began in Jerusalem is the precise time that the church began to fulfill the Great Commission. Acts 8:1 says, “*On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.*” The scattering is what started the growth of the church. In addition, persecution and other forms of suffering is what God uses to purify us and perfect us and make the church what she should be. Peter declared, “*And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, **after you have suffered a little while**, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast*” (1 Peter 5:10). Suffering is often the catalyst God uses to streamline and purify us.

We Christians must not think that persecution is strange or that we are Christians who are different from others who have suffered for their faith. We must understand that people who follow Jesus will suffer for their faith and that their suffering is a part of their testimony, a part of their ministry and a part of their sanctification. Since persecution was an expected and somewhat normal part of the Christian faith, the Bible gives us a record of the way the early church responded to the various forms of persecution that came their way.

- They submitted to arrests and abuse and even execution of the government (Acts 5:18; 12:1-2, 4; 21:33)
- They prayed (4:24; 12:5) and accepted supernatural deliverance (5:19; 12:8-10).
- They ran away to safer areas (8:1; 12:17)
- They took advantage of the government resources. Paul used both soldiers (23:23-24) and the judicial system (25:11).

The amazing thing about all of this is that there was no example of violence that was recorded by any of the followers of Jesus in the early church period. The only hint of violence we see was when Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant while attempting to defend Jesus, but Jesus rebuked him and healed the man (Matthew 26:31-32; Luke 22:51).

The church in East Africa and particularly Uganda experienced a lot of persecution in its early days. Fortunately, the church in West Africa did not face as much genuine persecution in its formative years. However, this appears to be the time that West Africa and particularly Nigeria is passing through the crucible of persecution. Our church leaders must make sure they understood what the Bible teaches about persecution and must adequately prepare African Christians in how to respond to it.

## **Sovereignty of God**

One of the most comforting doctrines within Christianity—a doctrine that we have already anticipated a bit earlier in this presentation is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Very simply, this means that God is ultimately in control of all things. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8:28: *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”* This passage tells us that our God is so big that he can take the bad things that people attempt to do and turn them around to our advantage and the glory of God.

During one period of his life, Paul was arrested, experienced an assassination attempt and a shipwreck and was imprisoned for four years. It was difficult for Paul to understand why he had to be detained when there was so much to be done. However, Paul wrote four New Testament epistles during that time which may not have been written had he not been a prisoner. On another occasion, Paul experienced a severe problem he called a *“thorn in the flesh”* (2 Corinthians 12:7) and even a *“messenger of Satan.”* Paul was convinced that this problem had been brought to him by Satan himself. However, God told him that he would not remove it. God was going to use it in his life, even though it was a messenger of Satan.

To try to understand what God initiates and what God allows goes beyond the scope of this paper and probably beyond the ability of any of us to fully comprehend and explain. However, knowing that God is the ruler of this universe and that God can stop any negative thing he wants to stop and also knowing God loves us and wants what is ultimately best for us and his world suggests the bad things that come our way will ultimately produce positive



results for God's kingdom. We may not experience them personally but the bad things, including violence and discrimination will ultimately help to advance the kingdom of God.

I believe our Nigerian theologians and church leaders must use these crises to better understand and articulate the comforting doctrine of the sovereignty of God and particularly show ways that God may use these horrible crises to advance his kingdom.

## **Summary**

There are many other issues that relate to the Jos Crises including faith, prayer, evangelism, human rights, wisdom, accountability, restitution, perseverance, governance, and other issues. I use this presentation as a means to challenge African leaders to use all of their combined skills and experience in studying the Bible to understand what the Bible teaches about these issues and then use all of their combined skills in communication and training to give our African Christian brothers and sisters direction on the way forward.

## **Lessons from Other Conflicts**

After narrating some of the negative experiences of the Israelites in the Old Testament, Paul says to the Corinthians, "*Now these things occurred as examples . . .*" (1 Corinthians 10:6). What that passage suggests and what the Biblical writers do often is to point to things that have happened in the past, both good and bad, and use them as examples for their readers. Learning through example is one of the most important means of acquiring knowledge and wisdom.

Unfortunately, violence is not new to our world. The kinds of hatred and bitterness and destruction that we have experienced in Jos are as old as Cain and Abel. Many places have experienced violence in the past and we would be foolish if we failed to learn some of the things they have learned in their times of trouble.

In this next section I will refer to three specific examples of communal hatred that produced violence. Most of us are familiar with these so I will not go into detail but simply try to point out two or three lessons from each. It is obvious that none of these illustrations is a perfect parallel to our own situation here in Jos, but they do contain enough parallels that it is necessary for us to take a look at them.

## **Rwanda**

The little East African country of Rwanda experienced a major ethnic crisis in 1994 when the majority Hutu tribe attempted to annihilate the minority Tutsi tribe. It is estimated that somewhere between 500,000 and 1,000,000 million Tutsis were killed during these 100 days of genocide. Here are two important lessons we can learn from that incident.

***Human beings are capable of incredible treachery.*** In this genocide, friends who had lived side by side for decades picked up machetes and hacked their neighbors to death. Apparently there had been long-standing animosities between these two ethnic groups and when the conditions got just right, this ethnic hatred and bitterness boiled over into the worst kind of violence. Here is the lesson: Nigeria is not exempt from such a thing. During our recent crisis we had small examples of this same kind of passionate ethnic hatred and violence. If this ethnic prejudice becomes unrestrained in Nigeria, I fear the consequences.

***Deeply offended people can be reconciled.*** The most remarkable thing about the Rwanda situation is how much progress has been made in forgiveness and reconciliation. There are examples of people who literally hacked their next-door neighbors to death who are now once again living next door to the remaining family members of those who were killed and living in peace and harmony. The little country of Rwanda has also experienced remarkable growth and development during the last 15 years since the genocide. This is a testimony to the fact that God can bring “*a crown of beauty instead of ashes*” (Isaiah 61:3).

## **South Africa**

Since apartheid was officially made a legal policy by the South Africa government in 1948, the majority black Africans in South Africa were discriminated against and treated as second class citizens. This led to much conflict including burnings, killings, and imprisonment and torture by the white minority government. However, in 1994, Nelson Mandela was released from prison and a few months later, as a black South African, he was elected to be the president of South Africa. Again, there are two lessons I want to underscore.

***Things can change in Africa.*** If you had lived in South Africa between 1954 and 1990 you would probably have thought things would never change. You would have been tempted to believe that neither you nor your children nor your children’s children would have the opportunity to enjoy the same rights and privileges as the whites. However, things did change and now South Africa is a different country with equal rights and opportunities for all races (though there are still class struggles). The point is that we should not allow ourselves to be discouraged. Even though we have just passed through another major crisis, we believe there is reason for optimism. Things can change. Evil cannot triumph over good forever.

***Change often takes a long time.*** The problems in South Africa did not develop overnight. They took centuries to develop. And they were not solved overnight. Nelson Mandela personally spent 27 years in prison and thousands of other protestors spent time in prison. However, eventually truth and justice triumphed over hatred and evil. Again, the application should be obvious. We may not be able to get Jos back to the way it was by next week or even next year. The wounds are deep and the problems are complex. However, we should not be discouraged if we do not solve these problems quickly. We must keep on working at the job. We must persevere in our attempts to seek solutions.

## **The US Civil Rights Movement**

About 11 percent of the current American citizens have African roots. Most of their ancestors were taken to the US as slaves. In 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation which freed all slaves. Unfortunately, because they were all slaves and owned almost nothing, most of them continued to work for their former slave owners in virtual slavery conditions for the next 100 years or so. However, during the last 150 years, there was a gradual discontent in the black community about their status as second-class citizens in America with little or no ability to improve themselves. This reached a crescendo in the 1950’s and 1960’s. While the blacks were working hard to change things, many whites, particularly in the southern part of the US, were working just as hard to make sure things did not change. This resulted in some violence that including burnings and bombings and killings. However, the end result was that our own apartheid-type laws<sup>78</sup> were eventually annulled and African Americans finally were given equal rights and America gradually

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<sup>78</sup> The system in America was legally called “separate but equal” but was commonly referred to as segregation.

changed so that black citizens have generally gained equal opportunities as well. This situation has continued to improve to the point that the United States has had its first African American president. That statement in itself is a positive testimony to the fact that though there are residual examples of racism in individuals, the monster of institutional racism has been largely defeated in the US. There are three lessons I will point out that are worth learning from our American struggles.

***The Civil Rights movement had strong leadership.*** For generations, African Americans had grumbled and complained about their conditions. However, it was this generation of African American leaders who felt that it was time to push this problem through to its logical conclusion. These leaders included people like Ralph David Abernathy, Andrew Young, Medgar Evers, Hosea Williams, John Perkins, and Rosa Parks. However, the whole world knows that the most significant of these leaders was Martin Luther King, Jr. He was articulate. He was courageous. He was selfless. He was a strategic thinker. He was a hard worker. He was a visionary leader. He was not a perfect man and his opponents found every flaw he ever had and publicized them widely. However, he and other civil rights leaders developed specific plans and strategies and poured their souls into these projects until there was success. As you know, Martin Luther King never lived to see the success that he is credited with because he was assassinated at the age of 39. However, he had done enough in his short lifetime that the changes he advocated became inevitable. I am convinced that if our problems in Jos are going to be solved, we are going to have to have strong visionary leadership. We are going to have to have a generation of leaders who stop just complaining about our violent conditions and start doing something about them.

***The faith community worked with other parts of the society to bring about change.*** During the civil rights movement, 99% of the American blacks were Christians. In fact, the only cohesive unit that the black community had was the church. Therefore, it was the church where the planning, the organizing, the training and the comforting took place. Nearly all of the early civil rights leaders were not just Christians but were also pastors. They were motivated by their Christian convictions. They were convinced that the race relations then were detrimental to both blacks and whites and their strong Christian convictions were what motivated them. They also utilized their homiletical training to articulate their message.

However, the civil rights leaders understood that the church could not make this change alone.

- ***They worked with the political leaders.*** They were able to convince President John F. Kennedy and later President Lyndon Johnson of the justice of their cause and these presidents were able to bring the full weight of the federal government to help them.
- ***They also worked with the judicial system.*** They deliberately got themselves arrested by breaking the segregation laws so that they would have a criminal case in court. They would often lose their cases at the lower courts but they would continue appealing these cases up the judicial ladder until they got justice.
- ***They worked with business leaders.*** They used their buying power to force businesses to employ black employees and where they would not, they would boycott them and cause them to feel their combined economic power.
- ***They worked with the media.*** The media like sensational things and the civil rights leaders were able to give them dramatic footage and astounding sound bites which they could use that helped push the civil rights movement forward.

- ***They worked with sympathetic whites.*** There were many white Americans who were sympathetic to their causes. African American leaders worked closely with them and made them a strategic part of the community.

The point is that though these people started from the faith community and continued to be a part of that community, they utilized every other legitimate part of the society to promote their cause and bring about these necessary changes. I am convinced that as a general rule, the government attempts to resolve these ethnic-religious crises have not been very successful. It is time for the faith community to take over the leadership of this battle. However, like the American civil rights leaders, we must be willing to use every part of the society that is willing to participate.

***The civil rights movement used practical training.*** The Civil Rights movement was largely led and implemented by young people. Martin Luther King understood that these young people needed to be taught. I have described earlier how these civil rights leaders would train those who were in the forefront of the civil rights movement. They recognize that it would take more than just lectures but practical training to prepare them to deal with violence. I am convinced we can learn from that example. We need to teach our young people and we need to train them in how to respond to violence.

## **The Way Forward**

I do not profess to have a word from the Lord on how to solve these complicated problems. However, I would like to make some practical suggestions about the way forward. Obviously, we know that God can solve all these problems so we should continually pray that God will give us wisdom in how to overcome them. God is calling us to go beyond prayer and do some very practical things.

### **We Must Develop Genuine Relationships Not Just Casual Acquaintances.**

If we are ever going to be able to present to Muslims and other ethnic groups what Christianity genuinely is, we are going to have to establish good relationships with them. When Paul was dealing with the issue of meat offered to idols, he said that if an unbeliever invites you to go to his house and you are inclined to accept, you should go (1 Corinthians 10:27). There is no scripture that teaches us that we should not have relationships with non-Christians and there are sufficient scriptures to encourage us to develop meaningful relationships.

- Invite Muslims to your homes.
- Accept their invitations during Salah.
- Go beyond just greetings to genuine conversations.
- Find out about their families.
- Become genuine friends not just casual acquaintances.

It is only as we develop relationships that we will be able to break down the mistrust that exists between us and we will be able to move forward.

### **We Must Engage in Positive Actions Not Just Defensive Dialogue.**

For the past ten years I have helped to develop and implement a faith-based approach to doing HIV/AIDS work. The HIV virus affects Christians and Muslims exactly the same

way. The AIDS pandemic is an equal threat to both Christians and Muslims so it is a common enemy. Therefore, it only makes sense to fight this battle together. Thus, ten years ago, I invited my senior Muslim colleague in the Department of Religion and Philosophy to my house and we jointly created five additional themes for the CRE and Islamic studies curriculum. Since that time, we have traveled thousands of kilometers and sponsored at least 25 workshops that have included both Christian and Muslim resource persons and Christian and Muslim trainees. This has not only resulted in helping with the HIV/AIDS battle, but it has also resulted in helping to build positive relationships between Muslims and Christians.

A few years ago, I went with my Muslim colleagues from Juma'atu Nasril Islam to Gembu on the Mambilla Plateau where we conducted a workshop for the ministry of education that included CRK teachers and teachers of Islamic studies. This was on Tuesday and Wednesday of Easter week. I was later informed that on the day after our workshop concluded, a group of Muslims from a northern Nigeria city came to Gembu and started organizing the local Muslims to disrupt the upcoming Easter celebration. However, the Muslims who had just passed through our training went to them and told them that they were not welcome in the city. They informed them that they had just had a workshop with Christians and it was very clear that their Christian neighbors had the same problems they had and were not their enemies. Therefore, they were not going to tolerate anyone creating any kind of trouble in Gembu during that week. And there was no trouble. What was it that averted the trouble? It was just two days of positively working together.

I encourage you as pastors and future pastors to look for problems that plague both the Christian and Muslim communities and tackle them together.

- We can work together to solve sanitation problems.
- We can work together to solve the problems of the handicapped.
- We can work together to solve corruption problems.
- We can work together to solve security problems.
- We can work together to fill in the holes in our roads.

I challenge you to go beyond dialogue to active cooperation.

### **We Must Make Available Practical Training Not Just Academic Teaching.**

Obviously, we need to teach our people the truth of what God says. However, we must train our young people in how to respond to violence. We now know how these violent scenarios develop. Can we not develop appropriate responses to the various stages of these crises to stop them from happening?

For example, the first thing that often happens is a rumor start circulating. We hear a rumor about trouble in some part of the city. All of us know that rumors have killed hundreds of people. What should be our response in responding to a rumor? Could we not teach this response to our young people and then have them do some role playing so that this response gets reinforced in their mind? If we could simply stop the rumors or at least stop the reaction to false rumors, we will have solved a good percentage of our violent problems.

- What should people do when they hear other spreading rumors?
- What should people do when they see black smoke or hears gunfire?
- What should people do when they see a friend with a dangerous weapon?
- What should people do when they get a letter or text message that incites violence?

If we do not train our young people in the wise way of responding to these various parts of developing crises, they will respond based upon their traditional worldview and human instincts. And their traditional worldview and human instincts often tell them to respond to violence with violence.

### **We Must Provide Visionary Leadership Not Just Worthless Complaining.**

For reasons I do not fully understand, God has selected this particular generation to solve this problem. Your grandparent's generation got along well with the Muslims. There are lessons you can learn from them. However, your parents who are part of my generation have not done very well in solving this problem. Unfortunately, we are at the point of handing over the leadership of solving these crises to you, the next generation.

What we need is our Nigerian Nelson Mandela's and Martin Luther King's.

- We need visionary youth leaders who will think clearly and offer positive direction.
- We need leaders who will not worry about what is politically correct but what is ethical and right.
- We need leaders who will not just complain about the problem but who will tackle this problem head-on.

You may not be able to solve the problems all over the state but you can have an impact on your own community. You may not be able to control the actions and reactions of all the Christian youths but you can have some influence over your own congregation or those who are in your Sunday School class.

As I have demonstrated earlier, God has used various parts of the world including Rwanda, South Africa and the US to teach the rest of the world about solving social problems and reconciling conflicting parties. However, I cannot think of a part of the world where there has been a major conflict between Muslims and Christians where there were equal populations that has been resolved satisfactorily. Perhaps God is calling Jos to be that place and perhaps he has chosen this generation of Christian leaders to lead the way. If we can solve our problems in Jos, perhaps they can be solved in Bauchi and Kaduna and Maiduguri and even Kano. And if our problems can be solved or even reduced in Nigeria, perhaps that will help us solve similar problems in Sudan, and Pakistan and other places where there are underlying tensions or ongoing Christian-Muslim conflicts.

Will you be among those who stop complaining and start doing something?

## Questions Asked after the Presentation<sup>79</sup>

A half hour question and answer session followed my presentation.

### 1. Are our problems in Jos persecution or war?

*That is a good question. However, I am not quite sure that it matters. When your loved one is killed, he or she is dead, whether the violence was called war or persecution. However, let us assume that it was war. Many Christians accept the “just war theory” which was crafted by Augustine. This theory applies to nations who have the right and responsibility to provide security for their people. Obviously, there is not unanimous agreement about the legitimacy of the just war theory. My understanding of the just war theory is that when a nation believes that injustice or violence has reached an intolerable level, a sovereign nation, under the authority of a bona fide ruler may engage in war to render justice or establish peace. While engaged in war, enemies should be viewed with love; all promises made to opponents should be kept; non-combatants should be protected and there should be no burning or looting. I am not sure that our conditions in Jos fulfilled those “just war” conditions.*

*However, when a person is attacked because of his faith, whether it is part of a war or not, I believe that is indeed persecution. In what we call the Olivet Discourse, Jesus gave instructions about what to do when a person was caught up in the violence that was coming related to the destruction of the temple and violence that would come as a result of identity with Jesus. The first kind of violence had nothing to do with their faith but did have to do with their ethnicity. The second kind of violence was a result of their faith. One can hardly distinguish between Jesus’ answers to these two kinds of violence. However, in no case did Jesus encourage people to respond with violence.*

### 2. We have heard a lot from theologians about these things but what about missionaries? Is this not an opportunity for foreign missionaries? God obviously knew about these crises before he called missionaries to this place (Jos)? What should missionaries do when the Embassy calls them to go home?

*I am not exactly sure how to respond to your question. I can only tell you how I responded during our various crises. The US Embassy called me three times during the second crisis and told me that they were sending a vehicle to Jos that would be escorted by security agents and that we were to meet at a certain point if we wanted to leave. I told “Thank you for your concern but I am not interested.” I felt that my place during that time was with the people that God had called me to serve. And, yes, these times of crisis have proven to be an outstanding time of ministry. During these crises, I did not do what I was trained to do or thought I would be doing in Jos. However, we were able to get to know our neighbors and minister to needy people more during these times than any other times. I am not sure what others did but I felt that my place during these crises was right in the middle of where God had placed me.*

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<sup>79</sup> All of the questions were asked at one time. I took notes and then responded to them one by one. The questions are reconstructed reasonably close to the way I understood them though I am not quite sure that I understood all of them very precisely. I did not answer every part of every question. Those parts of questions that I did not respond to have been omitted. I attempted to reconstruct the answers to these questions as closely as I can remember my replies. The reconstruction was done about five hours after the session. Obviously, my written expressions may vary slightly from the oral answer given during the session but I think my answers are a fair reflection of the way I responded during the session.

*I will also add here that missionaries have more responsibilities than just to evangelize. I believe that God could call a missionary to be a peace maker. Whether you want to call the person a “missionary” or not, I think it would be wonderful if God called someone and that person responded to the call to be a person who would focus his or her full-time energies on helping to bring about peace and reconciliation in crises like this.*

**3. Here is a community who receives a stranger into their land. However, the strangers grow and expand until they push the original owners off of their land. What do you say about that?** (There were other indigene settler-question that were similar; I chose to treat them all together.)

*This is certainly one of the difficult questions that we have to address here in Jos. Let me first of all remind you that this is not just a Jos problem. The Igbos and Yorubas who live in the Sabon Gari in Kano face the same kinds of situations that Hausas face here in Jos except in reverse. Therefore, if we can find a way to solve our Jos indigene problem, perhaps we can help solve the similar problems in other parts of the country.*

*I will quickly concede, as I did in the first few sentences of this presentation, that I see these problems from a totally different perspective to most of you. I am an American and we do not have any kind of indigeneship. We have local and state citizenship. If you move from one state to another and get a driver’s license in the new state, you become a citizen of that state. Sometimes you might have to wait a year or two to get full state benefits (such as in-state tuition for a state university). Our system has served our mobile population quite well. We do not have any violence associated with moving from one part of the country to another or living in one place rather than another. Therefore, I think that you would be wise to at least take a look at ours and similar policies and see if there are things you can learn from them.*

*On the other hand, you do have a unique situation here in Africa. You have your traditional tribal relationships and your traditional institutions. These are good. There is no reason to throw them away. You do not have to create an American style democracy in Nigeria. It is good to preserve those traditional things that are distinctively African. And therefore, there needs to be some solution that will allow you to preserve those things.*

*I am not opposed to making some distinctions between people who are traditionally from a certain place and those who are not. Only those “original” people should participate in the traditional institutions and hold traditional titles. In addition, something needs to be done about the wealth of the traditional homelands. I have been told that the federal government owns everything six meters or more below the surface. That means the people in the riverine area who are producing the oil get very little from it because it belongs to the nation at large. I believe if they should discover huge deposits of coal in Plateau State, those people who have been recognized as the traditional owners of the land should be the people to primarily benefit from those assets. Those kinds of issues need to be identified, discussed and resolved.*

*Obviously, the indigene-settler problem is not working the way it is. We must have honest, thoughtful and courageous people who will sit down and look at these things and find out a Nigerian solution for the way forward. I would even encourage you to look at some of the other African nations and see how they have resolved this problem. And if no one has solved these things, now is the time for you here in Jos to find a solution.*



**4. We spend a lot of time talking about the New Testament. What about the Old Testament? Should we not pay more attention to what the Old Testament says about these things? What would you say about these things as a theologian?**

*I am a professor of Biblical theology and I would love to respond in detail to that question. Unfortunately, that would take us far beyond the time allotted to this session. However, I will just make a couple of comments. First of all, none of us believes or practices all of the things found in the Old Testament. Why not? The simple answer is that we believe that God has been using different institutions to accomplish his work here on this earth. During the Old Testament period, God was using a nation that was restricted to one geographical area and spoke one language to be his channel of operation at the time. However, when Jesus came, he introduced a new channel of operation which we call the church. This is a body that exists all around the world and speaks many different languages and, in fact, is superimposed on many different nations. Because the institution had a different structure and a different goal, Jesus gave new guidelines for how the people in that entity should operate.*

*Let me give you an example of the change. Many people think Christianity totally outlaws violence. I do not think that is correct. Christianity recognizes there is violence in the world and sometimes that violence must be stopped with superior violence. However, the difference between the Old Testament and New Testament periods is that in this period of time, God has removed that responsibility from individuals and given it to the individual nations. Paul is quite clear about this in Romans 13 when he says that the government does not bear the sword in vain. The sword is an instrument of violence. And governments do have the right to destroy those who are shedding innocent blood. However, we as individuals do not have that right. When a soldier puts on that uniform, he is acting as an agent of government and can do things that he cannot do when he removes that uniform and becomes a normal citizen again.*

*One of the major lessons the Old Testament teaches us is the importance of nations providing security and justice for their peoples. These are spelled out in specific legislation and demonstrated in specific examples in the Old Testament.*

**5. In the western world the civil rights leaders had access to courts that were fair. Our system is very corrupt. How can we benefit from a corrupt system?**

*It is true that sometimes we have problems with the judicial system in Nigeria. However, I believe more often than not we assume that there will be no justice so we do not try. I would encourage you to utilize the system and, if it proves to be broken, work on fixing it also. And you should also be aware that there was also a certain amount of corruption during the civil rights era—that was largely overcome with persistence. Many of the judges in the southern part of the US were also tainted. That is why cases were appealed to the higher courts which were more just.*

**6. Because the Bible talks about persecution, are we to just surrender to persecution and allow people to slaughter us?**

*I said during my presentation that we do not look for persecution and we do not pray for persecution, although there was a bit of that in the second and third centuries. Martyrs were so highly admired that some people went out of their way to make sure they would become martyrs. Fortunately, we have not seen anything like that in Jos. The point is simply this: The Bible warns us that we are likely to suffer persecution as Christian believers. We must be praying that it will not come but we must be prepared for it if it comes.*

*How should we respond to persecution when it comes? As I said in my presentation, we see the early Christians responding several ways. They prayed; they accepted supernatural miracles from God; sometimes they ran away; sometimes they appealed to the government agencies. However, in no case do we see the responding with violence.*

**7. Is it possible to live peacefully with Muslims? They claim to be people of peace but their peace only extends to their own people. To “infidels” they are commanded to go commit violence through jihad.**

*I think that most Muslims would concede that their religion tolerates violence more than the Christian religion. However, I want to give you a caution. A few years ago, I read an article in which the author pointed out 122 verses in the Qur’an that advocated violence. I am sure that his analysis was correct. However, if a diligent Muslim would go through our Bible, I am sure that he could find about that number of references to wars and violence in the Old Testament that were authorized by God. Of course, we would complain to them that that was in the Old Testament and we do not live by those standards today. They probably would not understand that. I mention this to caution us about just reading the Qur’an and thinking that we really understand Islamic teachings about violence just because we understand all of the words in the Qur’an.*

*However, in spite of their greater tolerance for violence, I believe that it is possible to live peacefully with Muslims. I am convinced that your grandparents did that. In addition, there are many places in the world where Muslims and Christians live peacefully. And ladies and gentleman, we have no choice. There are at least 50 million Muslims in this country. They are not going to go away. There are hundreds of thousands of Muslims in Jos. They are not going to go away. We must find a way to live peacefully with our neighbors who are of a different religion than we are. We just have to do it. There is no other alternative.*

**8. Why and how did Islam take over Northern Nigeria? Islam is like the HIV virus. A few of the viruses do not hurt you but when they multiply, they will kill you.**

*I am going to take my authority as a pastor and correct that statement. My friend, there is no place in our Christianity for statements like that. That statement is inciting. It is derogatory to Muslims, who are human beings made in the image of God. Your statement is designed to make fun of them. It is harmful not helpful. I plead with you, ladies and gentlemen, to purge this kind of language from your lives. We should be making statements that will help, not statements that will further cause our friends to think negative thoughts about Islam. Please do not allow yourselves to be caught up in this negative kind of thinking and talking. Let us watch our tongue. Let us speak only words that will help to solve this problem not words that will further complicate it.*

**9. If it is because of God’s sovereignty that Christians are brutally murdered and this same God places a high value on life, how do you explain that?**

*This is a very good question. It is a very difficult question. In fact, it is the most difficult question that I and other teachers of the Bible are ever asked. Obviously, we do not have enough time in this forum to really address it properly. However, I would encourage you to try to understand this question: Why would a good God—one who is all powerful and one who is all loving, allow bad things to happen to good people or innocent people? You had better be asking that question to your theology teachers because all of you who are studying to be pastors are going to be asked that question the rest of your lives. It is a very good and*

*relevant question but, unfortunately, it is much more profound and would require much more time than has been designated for this question-and-answer session.*

*God's sovereignty is exhibiting many ways in the Bible and even in our own lives. Actually, there are many reasons why God allows bad things to happen to good people and then brings good out of them. In the case of Joseph, God allowed him to suffer at the hands of his brothers and later the Egyptians to give him direction. He needed to be in Egypt to save his family in the future. In the case of Job, his troubles were allowed by God to put on display how a man of God would react to conditions he considered unfair. In Paul's case, he experienced a thorn in the flesh, which he considered a messenger of Satan but God used it in his life to make him perfect in his weakness. The Bible actually reveals many reasons why God allowed his people to experience negative things. All of these are indeed demonstrations of the sovereignty of God in our lives.*

**10. I have a word of hope I would like for you to comment on. God obviously solved the problem between the Israelites and the Arabs. Is this a picture of what is going to happen between Christians and Muslims?**

*I am not sure what you are referring to when you say God has solved the problem between the Israelites and the Arabs. There is a relative amount of peace in the Mid-East right now for which we all should be grateful. To the extent there is peace, I am sure God is happy. However, I will go a step beyond that. I am a Christian. I believe the Bible which says that one day "every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord." I believe that event is going to happen some day in the future. Is it going to happen next week? Probably not. Is it going to happen in my lifetime? Probably not. However, we do believe that in the future, God is going to resolve all of these problems and the whole world is going to submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ. That will be the time when there will be real peace.*

## Chapter Nine

### Violence and Peace Understood in Light of Biblical Progressive Revelation

This address was presented to the Peace Building Meeting of Christians and Muslims at the Women Multi-Purpose Development Centre, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria on 27 July 2011. To use Christian theology and particularly the fairly sophisticated concept of progressive revelation to explain the Christian concept of peace to half of the audience who were Muslims forced me to be quite simple and un-theologian like in the presentation. Unfortunately, this presentation was further complicated by the fact that I was in Lagos at that time so this address was presented on my behalf by Dr. Katrina Korb. The following is a statement that she read for me before the presentation was made: *This presentation is my attempt to speak as a Christian theologian about the issues of violence and peace in Jos from a Biblical theological perspective. The presentation is a bit tedious but I trust that it will clarify the issues related to violence and peace in the minds of both my fellow Christians and my Muslim friends and colleagues. The paper is not a comprehensive presentation of the theology of peace but it does demonstrate that there is consistency in the violence and peace message using the Biblical theological methodology.*

#### Introduction

“I only have two cheeks. Now that I have been slapped on both cheeks, I have no more cheeks to turn and so now I am free to respond in a way my enemies will understand.”

“Near the end of his ministry, Jesus encouraged his disciples to buy swords. This statement justifies the right of Christians to buy and use weapons.”

These are two of the arguments often used by some Christians to justify responding to violence with violence. Have our Christian brothers properly reflected the teachings of Jesus when they defend their actions with the “no second cheek” or the “buying a sword” arguments?<sup>80</sup> I will attempt in this presentation to demonstrate that the Christian teachings about violence and peace are progressive—they focus more on peace and less on violence in the New Testament than in the Old Testament and they are also comprehensive—they are taken from all parts of the New Testament and they are also uniform—they are consistently interpreted and applied from the time of Christ to the end of the New Testament.

Christians believe in “progressive revelation,” a study that is a part of Biblical theology which follows a specific methodology.<sup>81</sup> In order to understand progressive revelation we must understand both of these words.

Revelation refers to truth that is communicated to a person that could not be known otherwise. We human beings can learn to count; we can learn to read and write; we can learn to ride a bicycle through normal learning techniques. We can even learn sophisticated concepts of physics like the law of gravity and the law of aerodynamics through observation

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<sup>80</sup> It is beyond the scope of this presentation to address all of the specific verses related to peace and violence. The purpose of the present paper is to address issues of violence and peace as they progressively unfold from many parts of the Bible and particularly the New Testament and not focus on individual controversial texts.

<sup>81</sup> The Biblical Theological methodology exams doctrines as they chronologically and progressively unfold in the Bible and limits its conclusions to those that can be clearly deduced from exegesis and observation.

and experimentation. However, it is impossible to learn too much about God through normal means because God exists in the realm of the spirit world which is beyond our ability to observe or experiment or even comprehend through ordinary means of learning. Therefore, when it comes to the nature of God and the things that please and displease him, such things have to be revealed to humanity through means other than our physical senses.

The word “progressive” means something that takes place gradually. If I go to the market, I can buy a yam instantly. One moment the yam belongs to the trader; the next moment it belongs to me. However, for a farmer to get a yam, he has to select the place where he will plant, prepare the soil, plant a small piece of yam or a yam vine, cultivate and then wait for months while the yam develops. Finally, he is able to dig around the yam and harvest it. That is a progressive process.

What progressive revelation means is that God did not reveal everything we need to know about himself and his values at the beginning of creation or even in the first few millennia of human history. God has gradually revealed these important truths about himself to humankind and a record of the revelation has been given to us in the Bible.

Although the initial revelation came to the prophets and apostles and others who received those messages through the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit, the subsequent communication of these revealed truths has passed down to us through normal communication means. God directed that these revelations should be placed in writing and these writings have been preserved for us for thousands of years.<sup>82</sup>

Although revelation was given to us differently from the way we normally learn, the progressive part is indeed similar to our normal learning processes. That means that we have gained knowledge about God a little bit at a time. Thus, the Bible, including the Old Testament, is a progressive unfolding of what God wants humanity to know about himself and his creation.

- God revealed some important eternal truths to Abraham.
- God expanded that revelation through his interactions with Moses.
- God revealed even more truths about himself through David and Solomon.
- God provided completely different perspectives about himself through the prophets.

When Jesus came into the world, he was the savior of the world and, as such, it was necessary for him to reveal many more things to us. When we look at the New Testament, we see a major portion of it is about Jesus, describing both what Jesus taught and what he did.

However, even though Jesus revealed to us many important things, truth continued to be revealed even after Jesus departed from this world. We believe that the apostles and their associates understood the truths Jesus taught more than anyone else. They in turn had the

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<sup>82</sup> The process of how this was done is known as the doctrine of inspiration and is beyond the scope of this presentation. For a simple approach to inspiration, see my book *We Believe I*, (Africa Christian Textbooks, Bukuru, 2004), Chapter Three entitled “Inspiration of Scriptures” (pages 39-51). Included in that process of transferring truth to subsequent generations is the hand copying of ancient manuscripts and the passing down of those manuscripts from one generation to the next. This topic is known as Textual Criticism. A simple overview of this topic is found in the book I co-authored with Craig Keener entitled, *Understanding and Applying the Scriptures*, (Africa Christian Textbooks, Bukuru, 2008). See specifically the chapter entitled “Textual Criticism,” (pages 47-60).

responsibility to explain and apply the truths Jesus had taught to the next generation. We believe they were guided in this process by the Holy Spirit.

The book of Acts describes the historical development of the church from the time Jesus ascended to heaven through the first 30 years of Christian history. In this historical book, we see examples of the way the church interpreted and applied the teachings that had been revealed earlier, particularly through the teachings and example of Jesus. The epistles were written by the apostles to people or specific churches to help them understand and apply the things Jesus taught and practiced.

When you look at all of the teachings about a certain topic in the Bible, you see a progressive unfolding of that doctrine. Even within the 60 years covered by New Testament era after Pentecost, there are ongoing refinements and explanations about the teachings and examples that Jesus gave. Therefore, no Christian doctrine should be taken from just one passage of Scripture or even one section of the Bible. Every Christian doctrine must be interpreted in light of the way it has been progressively revealed in the Sacred Scriptures. It is only in this way that one can have a comprehensive view of any Christian doctrine.

### **The Unfolding Doctrine of Violence in the Bible**

Violence is an important topic in the Bible. The word “war” and its cognates are found 249 in the NIV translation of the Bible. The word “battle” is found 206; “fight” is found 226; “destroy” is found 579; and “enemy” is found 379. Interestingly the word “pray” and its cognates are found only 347 times. “Worship” is found 243; “repent” is found 72; and “confess” is found only 36 times. What this suggests is that, even though some of this is metaphorical, warfare and fighting and violence constitute a major theme in the Bible. If that is true, we need to examine how the issue of violence developed in Scriptures and what a comprehensive view of violence looks like.<sup>83</sup>

### **The Teachings of the Old Testament about Violence and Peace**

In the Old Testament era, God was working on this earth through the offspring of Abraham and particularly through the Jewish nation that had descended through him. Thus, God set up rules and guidelines for human living based upon a nation model. The Old Testament contains the promise given to Abram in Genesis 12:2-3 to build a great nation through him and the long difficult 1000-year process of God building that nation. The Mosaic writings contain the laws of the nation God was building and the specific by-laws that were necessary for that nation to live in peace and prosperity, including laws about violence.

The Old Testament, particularly the historical books, contains a record of the various wars and conflicts that the nation of Israel experienced. Some nations were occupying or tried to occupy the homeland God had promised Abraham’s descendants so, at times, the Israelites initiated offensive wars to claim or reclaim that which God had given to them.<sup>84</sup> Some nearby nations threatened their existence and, as a nation, the Israelites fought defensive wars to

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<sup>83</sup> The first example of violence in the Bible is when Cain killed his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8). There are several other examples of personal violence in the Bible. For the purpose of this paper, I have chosen not to focus on personal violence but more group or ethnic or national violence.

<sup>84</sup> The battle against Jericho (Joshua 6:1-26) and all of the wars fought in the first half of the book of Joshua were offensive wars designed to capture and occupy the land that had been promised them.

protect themselves.<sup>85</sup> At times, various Jewish kings initiated foolish wars of aggression or retaliation that cannot be justified.<sup>86</sup> The leaders of the nations of Israel and Judah were weak and imperfect human beings who did not always know or follow the will of God for their lives. These things are also faithfully and accurately recorded in the Holy Scriptures. The fact that an event is documented in the Bible does not mean that God authorized that event, even when done by his “chosen people.”

Though the “*eye for an eye*” policy in the Old Testament was primarily part of the judicial system which was implemented by recognized judges (Exodus 21:22-25; Leviticus 24:17-22; Deuteronomy 19:16-21), the individual citizen could participate at some level in this kind of justice (Numbers 35:6-15). These policies and practices were all part of the nation of Israel and an official part of their constitution and bylaws. Individuals, even in the Old Testament period, did not have the right to take the law into their own hands.

Therefore, except for a few personal incidences of violence and a few inappropriate violent campaigns perpetuated by self-centered and irresponsible leaders, the issues of violence and peace found in the Old Testament are nearly all related to national issues and most of those were related to a sovereign nation protecting its people and national integrity.

### **Jesus’ Teachings about Violence and Peace**

Jesus came into this world to expand the revelation that God had given earlier. This revelation was to demonstrate God’s care and concern for all the peoples of the earth not just one nation. This should not surprise us. God was and is concerned about all of the people in the world. Jesus came to explain and implement God’s plan to the whole world.

However, since God was planning to bless and work with all the people of the world, this would require a different structure than the nation which he had used in the earlier era. God wanted to create a body that would truly be international.

- This entity would not be restricted to one geographical area.
- This entity would not be restricted to one ethnic group.
- This entity would not speak only one language.

Jesus introduced this new body by saying to Peter and the other disciplines, “*You are Peter and upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:18). In this sentence Jesus made two points. First, he declared that he was going to use Peter and the apostles to build this new entity. Second, he stated that this body would be so successful the pagan gods would not be able to stop its powerful advance.

This new body was to be known as the “church” (*ecclesia*). This church would primarily be made up of those who followed the teachings and example of Jesus. This church would be universal in the sense that all of the followers of Jesus in the whole world would be a part of it. However, it would have a local identity in that those individuals in one geographical area would be considered to be part of a local church.

An important question is this: How does this new church relate to the former nation? In other words, what are the similarities and differences between the church and ancient

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<sup>85</sup> The war that Gideon fought against the Midianites was a defensive war (Judges 6:11-7:24). Many other wars fought in the book of Judges were defensive in nature.

<sup>86</sup> The war Jehoshaphat and Ahab initiated against Ramoth Gilead fits into this category. See 1 Kings 22:1-38.

Israel? We know that there are certain differences because in perhaps the most important speech Jesus ever made, the Sermon on the Mount, he said five times, “*you have heard that it is said . . . but I say unto you.*” These verses suggest that even though the nature of God never changes and cannot change, God does use different structures and different strategies as he accomplishes different objectives in this world.

In the university, there are many different sub-groups. Each one has different rules and guidelines. The Senate of the university is operated differently from a small admissions committee and both are run different from the way a lecturer supervises his or her classroom. Although all are under the sovereign control of the university, each sub-group has its own purpose and therefore, functions a bit different from the others.

In a similar way, God has created several different entities in this world, including the family, the nation, and the church. All of these have their own individual purposes and therefore, their own individual ways of doing things. The head of a nation may not treat his citizens like he would treat the members of his family. These differences are easily understood and acceptable in society.

When Jesus came into this world and created the new organization—the church, he created new guidelines that would govern that particular entity and the people associated with it. Interestingly one of the changes Jesus initiated was related to the issue of violence. In fact, three of the five sections where Jesus gave new instructions are related to violence.

- Matthew 5:21-22: “*You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that **anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.** Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.*”
- Matthew 5:38-39: “*You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, **Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.***”
- Matthew 5:43-48: “*You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,** that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**”*

The following are two brief observations about violence from these passages:

***Jesus removed from the individual the right and responsibility of personal justice.***

The “*eye for an eye*” principle no longer applied to individuals. Interestingly, Jesus did not remove this principle from the world. Nations now have the responsibility for implementing justice. The Apostle Paul, expanding Jesus’ teaching on this issue, said, “*For he (the government) is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer*” (Romans 13:4). Perhaps because it was going to be a voluntary entity, Jesus demanded higher standards of the individuals who would make up the



church than those who made up the nation. And one of those issues was the issue of personal retaliation. It was tolerated in the nation but not in the church.

***Jesus raised the standard related to violence from physical reactions to internal attitudes.***

In the nation period, people were restricted from murder but in this new age, Jesus insisted that his followers should not be angry or hate or even slander others. Relationships were governed to some extent in the earlier period but in this new period, there should be love and harmony and peace between people and not hatred and bitterness and slander and anger and violence.

How well did Jesus observe his own teachings personally? When he was arrested and Peter tried to defend him with a sword, Jesus said to him, “*Put your sword back in its place*” (Matthew 26:52). At the end of a day filled with ridicule and torture, Jesus said, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*” (Luke 23:34). There is no example of Jesus lashing out with angry words or deeds against those who treated him so harshly. Jesus indeed lived up to the standards of forgiveness and love and peace that he had taught.

Two possible exceptions have been noted by various individuals so I will address those issues as well.

***Cleansing the Temple.*** While in Jerusalem, Jesus went into the temple, took ropes, and made them into a whip and drove out the corrupt businessmen and money changers from the Temple (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; John 2:14-17). Some would interpret this as violence. However, I do not believe this should be considered violence for several reasons.

- No property was destroyed (though some things were scattered) and no one was seriously injured or killed in this confrontation.
- The incident was designed as a display of Jesus’ anger more than the actual punishment of law breakers. It was a visual sermon to his disciples and all who were in the Temple at that time of the sacredness of prayer and worship and it spoke volumes about the commercialization of the things of God.
- This incident was an example of corporeal punishment not capital punishment. The Old Testament allowed for corporeal punishment of both children as a part of the family (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14) and adults as a part of the judicial system (Deuteronomy 25:2-4).
- Jesus was upholding the original laws related to the Temple and challenging the corrupt practices that were being tolerated by Jewish leaders.
- Jesus was doing what he was doing in the authority of his Father with whom he had intimate and immediate access.

In light of these observations, it is quite clear that this was not an example of violence in which the lives and property of people were destroyed.

***Buying a Sword.*** The second issue was the time Jesus supposedly ordered his disciples to buy swords. During Jesus’ last night on this earth, he discussed many things with his disciples. He introduced the ceremony of Holy Communion (Matthew 22:13-20); He warned about one who would betray him (22:21-23). He corrected the disciples as they were arguing over which would be the greatest in the kingdom (22:24-30). He warned Peter that he would betray him (22:31-34). He offered the disciples assurances that they were going to have all they needed after he was gone. He reminded them that when they went out on their

earlier short-term outreaches they lacked nothing even though they took no extra provisions (22:35). Jesus then explained to them that the guidelines for short-term projects were lifted. Before, they had been working in their own homeland among their own people. Now, they would be going internationally. They would now be allowed to take a purse and a bag and even a sword. In fact, Jesus said to them, “*But now if you have a purse (for money), take it, and also a bag (for extra clothing); and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one*” (22:36). Note these facts about this incident:

The word for sword in this context was *machaira* which was a short sword or long knife that was used primarily as a weapon but also as a “common personal implement.”<sup>87</sup> The following are some observations about this incident:

- The primary focus of this statement was to encourage the disciples that in the future they would travel with their normal attire and equipment. It is likely that the typical Jew, especially fishermen like several of the disciples carried small knives with them for their protection and their work.<sup>88</sup> Jesus was actually saying to them that their training period was over and now things would return to normal. They would dress and travel as normal travelers would.
- Jesus was not encouraging the violent use of swords because when Peter declared that they already had “*two swords,*” Jesus declared, “*That is enough*” (2:28). Jesus obviously knew that the Jewish hierarchy as well as the Roman military would be arrayed against his followers in a few hours. Two swords would certainly not be enough to fight them in a military sense. So, Jesus must have meant something else when referring to the swords.
- The fact that not more than three or four hours later, when Peter attempted to defend Jesus with a sword (22:49-50), he was rebuked by Jesus with the rather blunt words “*No more of this*” (22:51)<sup>89</sup> It is quite amazing that Jesus concluded his long teaching session that day and in fact his entire three-year training program with his disciples with a rebuke about using a sword. This rebuke was reinforced by Jesus healing the man, thus undoing the trauma to his enemy that had been caused by his disciple.
- The fact that Jesus never retaliated or encouraged retaliation or the use of the sword either before or after this incident demonstrates that this statement was not given to encourage violence.
- The fact that nowhere in the book of Acts did any of the followers of Jesus use any kind of violence or even violent language against those who opposed them demonstrates that Jesus’ final teaching to them was well understood.

All of these facts taken together demonstrate that Jesus’ statement about buying a sword was not something to be taken literally. This was almost certainly a common Semitic figure of speech known as metonymy which is an idea that is used to refer to an associated idea. It can be a cause for an effect or *vice versa*.<sup>90</sup> The statement about the sword was simply a warning to them to prepare for violence to be exercised against them.

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<sup>87</sup> Custer, Stewart, *A Treasury of New Testament Synonyms*, (Bob Jones University Press, Greenville, SC. 1975), p.69

<sup>88</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; See on Luke 22:38 where he says, “The Galileans generally travelled with swords.” Taken from e-Sword collection.

<sup>89</sup> The *English Standard Version* says, “*No more of this.*” The *Good News Bible* says, “*Enough of this.*” This was a rather strong statement of displeasure.

<sup>90</sup> McCain, Danny and Craig Keener, *Understanding and Applying the Scriptures*, (Africa Christian Textbooks, Bukuru, 2008), p. 193.

## **Violence and Peace in the Acts of the Apostles**

What the Old Testament and Jesus taught and practiced about violence continued to be practiced during the first 30 years of Christianity as reflected in the Acts of the Apostles.

The Acts of the Apostles provides a good snapshot of the early church, including several examples of violence propagated against the early Christians. Peter and John were the first to be arrested. They boldly proclaimed their allegiance to Jesus and were threatened by Jewish officials (Acts 4:21). Stephen was arrested and eventually killed by a mob. Shortly before he died, with the stones still raining down on his head, he said, “*Lord, do not hold this sin against them*” (Acts 7:60). Stephen certainly was following the example of his master.

Immediately after the stoning of Stephen, “*great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem*” but there was no retaliation and not even any slander or abuse heaped upon those who were persecuting them (Acts 9:1). The early Christians were indeed following the teachings and example of Jesus. After James was executed, Peter was later arrested and beaten (Acts 12:2). He was miraculously released but again there was nothing but thanksgiving and prayer that came out of him or the church.<sup>91</sup>

The Apostle Paul demonstrated that same kind of attitude toward violence. He accepted beatings and imprisonment with little complaint and no retaliation (Acts 16:22; 21:31-33; 2 Corinthians 6:5, 9; 11:25). Paul did, however, respond a bit different on two occasions. After being jailed and beaten publicly in Philippi, Paul refused to be released from prison until those responsible for his arrest and beating came and personally released him (Acts 16:36-39). Although there was no violence, Paul did insist through legal means that people who violated the law and used illegal violence must be held responsible for their actions. Also, when Paul heard about the threat on his life in Jerusalem, he reported the matter to the proper government officials and accepted state protection (Acts 22:12-21).

The bottom line is that for the first 30 years of church history, the church practiced responding to violence exactly like their master Jesus did.

- There was no retaliation.
- There was no acquisition of weapons.
- There was no angry denunciation of their oppressors.
- There was gentleness toward their “enemies” and a calm acceptance of persecution.

## **Violence and Peace in the Epistles**

The epistles represent the final revelations found in the Bible. Epistles are basically informational letters that various apostles wrote to individuals and churches explaining what to believe and how to apply the teachings of Jesus and the earlier revelations. What did the apostles write about the issues of violence and peace in the epistles?

James is the first of the epistles to be written. This book was written by the brother of Jesus who later became the leader of the church at Jerusalem. James does not address the issue of violence and peace directly but he does make some key related points.

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<sup>91</sup> In the prayer associated with Peter’s first imprisonment, the enemies were mentioned but the real focus of the prayer was for boldness for the believers. “*Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness*” (Acts 4:29).

## *Peace: Its Challenges and Benefits*

- ***Trials.*** 1:2-4: *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*
- ***Anger.*** 1:19-20: *Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.*
- ***Peace.*** 3:17-18: *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*
- ***Fighting.*** 4:1: *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?*

James stresses the importance of being joyful in times of persecution and recognizing the positive side of what that produces in our lives. He also warns that followers of Jesus should not yield to anger because that does not promote God's righteousness. James also supports Jesus' teachings that his followers must be peace-loving and peacemakers whenever there is conflict because fighting and quarreling are not consistent with the work of God.

The Apostle Paul is the most prolific of the New Testament writers. He also addresses the issue of violence and peace. Perhaps Paul's most comprehensive discussion of the issue of conflict and peace is found in Romans 12:14-20:

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*

This passage makes several important points about those perceived to be enemies.

- The followers of Jesus will be persecuted but should respond with blessing.
- The followers of Jesus should not repay anyone evil for evil.
- The followers of Jesus should live at peace with all men, as much as it is possible.
- The followers of Jesus should not take revenge but allow God to bring justice.
- The followers of Jesus should feed and give drink to those considered to be enemies.

All of these instructions are consistent with or logical outgrowths of the things Jesus taught.

Right at the end of his life, when Paul was in prison and about to face the executioner's sword, he wrote his final instructions and observations about the Christian faith. I have selected certain phrases from this last epistle that address violence related issues:

- ***Suffering.*** 1:8: *So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.*
- ***Pursuing Peace.*** 2:22-23: *Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don't*

*have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.*

- **Quarreling or Kindness.** 2:24: *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*
- **Characteristics of the Last Day Evils.** 3:1-3: *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good . . .*
- **The Lord's Deliverance.** 3:10-11: *You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.*
- **Persecution.** 3:12 *Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. . .*

These passages, given right at the end of Paul's life, reinforce many things taught and practiced by Jesus and his first followers:

- Being a good Christian is consistent with imprisonment, suffering and persecution.
- Peace is one of the important things the Christian must pursue.
- Quarreling and being resentful are incompatible with the Christian faith.
- The last days will be characterized by lack of love, lack of forgiveness, lack of self-control, slander, brutality, and the failure to love good things.

The book of Hebrews was written 30 to 40 years after Jesus departed from this world. It therefore reflects a second-generation perception of what Jesus taught and practiced. It was also written after Christians had been experiencing discrimination and persecution for a number of years. The book of Hebrews was written to a group of Jewish Christians who apparently were facing various kinds of opposition and persecution. The writer then writes about the way that they are expected to respond.

Hebrews 12:14 makes a significant statement about peace: *"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."* This passage suggests that we are to live in peace. The word here is the word *eirene* which is the Greek equivalent of *shalom*, the comprehensive Hebrew word that described peace in all parts of life. Since these were Jews we can assume that peace was a concept that they understood very well. The following are three observations based upon this verse:

***We must make every effort to live in peace.*** Peace should be a top priority for the Christian believer. The phrase *"make every effort"* is the word often translated "pursue." It was a word that was used of a wild animal like a lion pursuing its prey. Such animals use the greatest care in planning and enormous energy in pursuing and catching their prey. Animals do not pursue their prey casually or lazily. They do it with concentration and commitment because their very existence depends upon it. This is a lesson for those of us seeking peace.

***We must make every effort to live at peace with all people.*** The word "all" implies that we are to be at peace with every person in the world, including Christians and non-Christians, people from our tribe or ethnic group and those from other tribes and other groups, those we are naturally drawn to and those we are repulsed by. As followers of Christ, we have a sacred duty to pursue peace with all people.

***We must pursue peace and holiness.*** The Greek conjunction *kai* links two compatible and normally similar concepts. In this verse holiness is linked with peace. Holiness is a characteristic of God and thus is the ultimate goal of human beings. Leviticus 11:44 says, “*be holy, because I am holy.*” The implication of this passage is that a part of our holiness is the ability to have total peace in our lives. To say this another way, our peace is inseparably connected to our holiness. It appears there can be little or no holiness without also experiencing peace. Both Christians and Muslims fulfill much of the demands of their faith in order to conform to the holiness of God. It is a strange application of our faith indeed when we spend enormous amounts of our time and energy pursuing holiness and then fail to also pursue peace that is so naturally linked with it.

## **Summary of New Testament Teachings about Violence and Peace**

The following is a summary of the teaching about violence and peace in the Bible.

***Because of the different structure and purposes of the nation of Israel and the church, Jesus initiated a deliberate and public shift away from violence and toward peace.*** This is consistent with the doctrine of progressive revelation. Jesus’ teachings on the issues of violence and peace are like a supreme court ruling. All lower court decisions, early judicial rulings, prior legislation, and previously acceptable practices that are contrary to the teachings of Jesus are null and void and all future teaching, practices and legislation must conform to his teachings. These teachings are the final authority on issues related to violence and peace.

***Jesus’ teachings and practices related to non-violence and peace were consistently taught and practiced by the apostles and the early church.*** The followers of Jesus practiced forgiveness towards those who initiated violence against them. They prayed for God to deliver them. They sometimes ran away or appealed to authorities for protection. They continued to model the spirit and letter of the example Jesus had provided which included godly attitudes during suffering and death.

***There are no examples of Christians participating in violence in the New Testament era.*** In fact, we do not even find any examples of Christians praying against those who abused them. The early followers of Jesus practiced what Jesus had taught them—that they were to love their neighbors like they loved themselves, even if those neighbors were hostile or unloving.

## **Implications for Modern Christians**

In light of these observations, what are the implications of these things for contemporary followers of Jesus?

***Those who identify themselves as followers of Jesus should believe and practice what Jesus taught about violence and peace.*** We Christians do not have the right to decide which of Jesus’ rules and principles we will observe and which we will ignore. This is what Jesus said about those who would follow him: “*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it*” (Matthew 16:24-25). The early disciples responded positively to this appeal. The people who followed the way of Jesus were first called “Christians” at Antioch (Acts 11:26) because they were imitators of Christ and promoters of what he taught and practiced.

***Because of the consistent pattern of peace and the absence of violence associated with Jesus and his followers, Christian leaders should publicly and clearly renounce violence.*** Paul said to the young pastor Timothy, “*Command and teach these things*” (1 Timothy 4:11). It is the duty of Christian leaders to clearly teach the truths Jesus taught. There should be no confusion in our churches or among our members about what Jesus taught and practiced about violence and peace and what he expects of us. If we fail to teach our people the truth Jesus taught, in a time of stress, they may fall back to their traditional worldviews which, as we all know, practiced an “eye for an eye” philosophy. Our pastors and teachers must not be silent and they must not be ambiguous about violence and peace. They must sound the trumpet clearly to warn those who might otherwise do the wrong thing (Ezekiel 33:6-7).

***Christians who have failed to follow the teachings and practices of Jesus related to violence and peace should repent.*** No one has ever followed the teachings of Jesus perfectly. The appropriate response to any deviation from what Jesus taught or practiced is confession and repentance. As far back as the time of Solomon, we were told: “*He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy*” (Proverbs 28:13). I believe that wherein we have failed to uphold the teachings of Jesus, we must confess to God and seek his forgiveness. I further believe that where we have misled our people either through wrong teachings, wrong activities or silence, we must acknowledge such shortcomings to our people and commit ourselves publicly to lead them in the right direction. In addition, I believe that where we have abused the rights of others, either individually or corporately, including those of another ethnic group or religion, we should seek their forgiveness and attempt reconciliation as much as possible.

The message of Jesus is unambiguous. It is a message of repentance for those who have strayed, reconciliation for those who have been estranged and love for all. If we are to be Christians, let us be followers of Jesus. If we are not willing to follow the teachings of Jesus, let us have the integrity to disassociate ourselves from the name “Christian.”

## **Conclusion**

Those with only a causal understanding of the Bible often complain that the teachings of the Bible about violence are inconsistent and confusing. If one reads the Bible as if it were a theology textbook written by one person at one time period, that might be true. However, when one understands that the Bible is the progressive unfolding of the teachings and practices of God’s people in several different ages being applied in groups as different as a national body like Israel, an international entity like the church, and individuals like the Christian believers, these truths about violence become clear and provide a good basis for contemporary application.

In light of these progressively unfolding truths, I appeal to Christians to clearly and unambiguously identify with the teachings of Jesus about violence and peace and renounce all violence and bitterness and anger. Truly following Jesus’ teachings and practice about peace is not only the first step but the last step in restoring peace to Nigeria.

## **Chapter Ten**

### **Interacting with Muslims**

### **Rebuilding a Positive Image of Christianity**

This was the only presentation in this book given in a classroom. Dr. David Erber asked me to present a lecture to his Lutheran MA students on “Christians Interacting with Muslims” for his class entitled “Outreach Ministry in Context.” The lecture took place in Jos on 24 September 2009. The chapter is a modified version of what I presented to that class.

#### **Introduction**

Before I began the substantive part of the presentation, I will make a few miscellaneous preliminary statements.

#### **Preliminary Statements**

*I am not an expert on Islam.*

I have not read a lot of books on the subject. One book that I did read about attempting to convert Muslims was, in my opinion, so radical and harsh that I am not sure it has much value in evangelism.<sup>92</sup> Most of what I know about Islam I have learned through observation and interaction with Muslims.

*I am not an evangelist.*

Although all Christians are called to witness for Christ, not all are gifted with the gift of evangelism. I am not. As far as I know, I have never led a Muslim to Christ though I have been involved in the process in at least two cases. Therefore, if you want a good formula for Muslim evangelism, I am the wrong person to come to.

*Muslims are not enemies.*

Muslims are normal human beings with the normal ambitions and fears and goals that all human beings have. Obviously, there are times when they radicalize and become enemies of the Christian faith. However, you will find that most Muslims are kind, polite, honest, hardworking, and respectful. The typical stereotype view of Muslims that many people have is not consistent with my experiences. We must remember that Muslims have the same rights to their religious practices in Nigeria as Christians and we must respect those rights as we expect our own rights to be respected.

*We share many things in common with Muslims.*

We are much closer theologically to the Muslims than we are to pagans.

- We both believe in one God.
- We both believe in prayer and fasting.

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<sup>92</sup> Don Richardson, *The Secrets of the Koran: Revealing Insights into Islam's Holy Bible*, Regal Publishers, 2008. Richardson's earlier books on missions are wonderful but I feel that this one went a bit too far.



- We both believe in reading and studying sacred scriptures.
- We both believe in morally upright lives.
- We both believe in the sacredness of life.
- We both believe that peace is one of the most important things in life.
- We both believe in taking care of the weak and vulnerable in society.
- We both believe in giving offerings.
- We both believe in the importance of family.
- We both believe in spreading our beliefs to others and trying to get converts.
- We both believe in such basic truths as the creation, angels, demons and Satan, heaven and hell, the judgment, the sacredness of sex and marriage, that Jesus was born of a virgin and did miracles and many other things.

I have colleagues who are working in Russia and China, places that have been greatly influenced by communism which is officially atheistic. My friends who work in those places find that they share a whole lot in common and that they are much closer to Muslims than they are the atheists.

***One of the biggest problems with Muslim interaction and evangelism is perception.***

We misunderstand Muslims and they misunderstand us. We tend to learn about each other from our own experts. They have experts who have studied the Bible and try to convert or at least confront us. We have our experts who tell us what Muslims believe. Because we do not interact with each other enough, we are often more suspicious than curious.

You have probably noticed that Yoruba Christians and Muslims do not have the kinds of hostility and violence that Muslims and Christians in the north have. Why? At least one of the reasons is because Muslims and Christians have lived together for many years and know much more about each other. They are not segregated. They interact freely. Therefore, they are not as influenced by rumors and innuendoes as those in other places of the country and other parts of the world.

## **Personal Background**

### ***Family***

I was raised in a typical American family that had almost no interaction with foreigners much less those of other religions. I am not sure that I ever met a Muslim until I came to Nigeria.

### ***Living in Port Harcourt***

My interaction with Muslims during the three years that I lived in Port Harcourt was largely listening to their mosques call the prayers in some distant place in the city and seeing them pray in public places like immigration and customs offices.

### ***Living in Jos***

In 1991 I moved to Jos and started teaching in the Department of Religious Studies (now the Department of Religion and Philosophy). In this department, we had both Muslims and Christians. I was busy with my work and had little interaction with most of the Nigeria Muslims. However, one of my colleagues was a Muslim from Iraq. Because we were both

expatriates, we had some things in common and so I got to know him very well. He eventually became my HOD. He invited me to his salahs and would get angry at me if I did not come. One Easter Sunday, the only person to come to my house and wish me a happy Easter was this Muslim man. We became very good friends and had some very good conversations together. When he got sick, I even volunteered to take him to a hospital in London once where he could get better medical care. It did not work out but I would have been very happy to help my friend do this.

### ***Dialogue Conferences***

After being in Jos a year or two, I started attending dialogue conferences between Christians and Muslims. It was good to hear about certain Muslim practices directly from them rather than through the filter of a Christian worldview. However, I never really felt very comfortable in these and do not think that they ever accomplished very much. It seemed to me that these meetings were usually defensive in nature in the sense that the main reason we came together was to defend our own positions not really to learn from one another.

### ***Doing HIV/AIDS Work***

In 1999 I became involved in developing a faith-based HIV/AIDS project for the secondary schools of Nigeria. At the very beginning I realized that if we are going to work with government, we had to take everyone with us. Therefore, I invited my senior colleague in the department of religious studies to come to my house where I presented my plan to him and asked him to join us in our faith-based approach to HIV/AIDS. The Muslims joined us.

- We developed curriculum together.
- We developed training materials together.
- We traveled together to negotiate with UNICEF, UBE, and the government.
- We conducted training workshops which involved a lot of traveling and teaching and listening to each other.

This experience, more than anything else, has given me an opportunity to interact with Muslims and learn about them in an unguarded manner.

### ***Experiencing Christian-Muslim Conflict***

On September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the city of Jos exploded in violence in clashes between the Hausas and the local people. This was not first of all a religious crisis but an ethnic crisis where 95 percent of the Hausas were Muslims and 95 percent of the non-Hausas were Christians. Therefore, the conflict took upon itself a religious feeling in that churches and mosques were targeted. Four days later, my country was attacked by radical Muslims and 3000 people died in that attack. My country has gone to war twice since that, primary against Muslim extremists to try to make our country safe again. Another crisis began in November 2008. This was looked and felt just about like the early one.

These crises, in my opinion, have brought out the best and the worst of people. The best was brought out of both Christians and Muslims when they hid each other and helped each other and tried to defend each other. The worst was brought out in that people who were good church members became bitter and angry and expressed the worst kind of hatred for their Muslim neighbors. Some of the things that were done in the name of Christ were horrible and painful to those of us who take the words of Jesus seriously.

It was helpful for me to go through these various crises because it has given me an understanding of how people think in these stressful times and it has also given me a little bit of credibility when I speak about these things.

### **Comments on Evangelism**

In this presentation, I will discuss things that go beyond our normal view of evangelism and outreach. I believe the things I will talk about are a part of our evangelism but they may not be taught in our courses on evangelism in our seminaries. I am committed to evangelism—that is presenting the gospel so that people will give up their other religions or non-religious status and become followers of Jesus. Evangelism is obviously one of the fundamental responsibilities that we will have as we move to the culmination of all things. However, there is an interim step we need to understand. Before we can get to the point of evangelism, we nearly always have to do some additional things.

You were invited to come to Jos for this course. There are several ways that you could have come. For some, one way is better; for others, another way might be better. The point is that there is not just one way to do God's work or to reach out to people like Muslims.

### **International Christian – Muslim Tension**

For all Americans, September 11, 2001 was one of the most memorable days in our recent history. It was the day terrorists attacked the Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon in the Washington DC, killing almost 3000 people in one day.

However, for us who were in Jos then, September 11<sup>th</sup> was not a big issue because we were all involved in our own crisis that started four days earlier, on September 7<sup>th</sup>. That was certainly one of the most traumatic weeks in the lives of those who lived through those experiences. It was a week mixed with terror, amazement, anger, shock, revulsion, disgust, a little bit of humor, and many other emotions. I personally got involved in running a camp for displaced people at my house for a week. We fed about 150 to 200 people every day and there were as many as 70 sleeping in my house at night. We were not taught in seminary how to run an IDP camp so we made up the rules as we went along. However, we made it through.

What has happened since that time? The US has gone to war twice since September 11<sup>th</sup> to try to stop terrorism. Unfortunately, the reaction of the US government has not always been understood or appreciated by Muslim communities. In fact, with the increasing presence on satellite TV, the US and other western countries are becoming more and more unpopular in the Arab and Muslims world. America is often viewed as an evil place and the enemy. And here is the evidence as delivered into the homes of Muslims by satellite TV.

- Millions of pieces of pornography are pouring out of the US all over the world.
- Many of the American movies show immorality as if it a normal way of life. There is little sacredness of marriage. The kind of life that is portrayed by Hollywood is a sensual, selfish life that makes religious people look foolish and old-fashioned. Although this does not reflect reality, this is the perception that is believed by many in the Islamic world. America and other western nations are morally bankrupt.
- Many in the US and many other western countries accept homosexuality as a normal way of life and even authorize homosexual marriages.
- The US government is portrayed as being arrogant and proud and self-centered and uninterested in the people of other nations.

Because of these things, the US is more and more viewed as anti-Muslim. Whether or not these things are true or the whole truth, these are the perceptions in the Muslim world and many other parts of the world.

And it must be remembered that the US and other countries that are allowing these practices are viewed in the Muslim world as “Christian countries.” Therefore, in some sense of the word, Christianity is viewed as being the source of pornography, sex in the movies, homosexuality, arrogance and self-centered. If you were a Muslim, would you want to become a Christian if that were your image of Christianity?

What has happened in Jos and in Northern Nigeria since our crisis and similar ones? First, there has been much greater suspicion and fear and anger at Christians. From their point of view, it was “Christians” who burned mosques and destroyed homes and businesses and killed their relatives. Many Muslims no longer feel safe living in “Christian” communities because they believe that if another crisis comes along, they may be the next ones to be slaughtered by the Christians. Whether we like it or not, Christians in many parts of northern Nigeria are viewed as violent and hateful.

In addition, Christians are viewed as being the ones who promote secularism, which is the removal of religion from public life. Although Christians claim that Sharia is only a political tool to manipulate people, that is not the perception of the average Muslim. And the typical Muslim cannot comprehend why Christians would resist laws that would discourage alcoholism and prostitution and modesty. It is an unfortunate reality that it is the “Christians” in northern Nigeria that are defending the right to buy and sell alcohol. The ongoing and sometimes violent resistance of violence is viewed as another evidence of the moral bankruptcy of Christianity.

### **Perception of Christianity in Nigeria**

From a Muslim point of view, there is real evidence that Christianity is taking the country down the wrong road.

- It was from the “Christian” world that the “Miss World” contest came that was supposed to be held in Abuja.
- One of the recent Nigerian commercials on CNN showed a lady in a very skimpy bikini walking on the beach before the Christian president came on and said, “Welcome to Nigeria, the heartbeat of Africa.”
- It is Christian parts of Nigeria that have suffered most from HIV/AIDS. This is viewed by many as a direct indication of the moral bankruptcy of Christianity.

In addition, the average Muslim cannot comprehend why Christians would resist the Sharia laws that would reduce alcoholism and prostitution and encourage modesty. Most Muslims believe that Christianity is taking the country down the wrong road.

- It is the Christian girls in our universities who dress immodestly and provocatively.
- It was from Christian America that movies come that include sex and nudity.
- It is Christians who insist on their right to buy and sell alcohol.
- It is Christian parts of Nigeria that are suffering most from HIV/AIDS. This is viewed by many as a direct indication of the moral bankruptcy of Christianity.

I overheard a conversation once in which two Christian drivers were complaining that states that have Muslim governors have really helped their states but many states with Christian governors have just gone backwards because the governors are either incompetent or corrupt. Whether this is the actual reality or not, this is the perception at the grassroots.

We in the Christian community are able to distinguish between “true Christians” and those who are culturally Christians.

- We know a true Christian would not take up a cutlass and kill his Muslim neighbor.
- We know a true Christian would not steal money from the government.
- We know the kinds of movies that are sometimes found on DSTV and the kinds of music that sometimes are broadcast from Nigerian radio stations by artists with Christian names do not reflect what Christians believe or who Christians are.

However, whether these things are all true or not, these are the *perceptions* that many Muslims have of Christians in Nigeria and of Christians around the world. Christians are now viewed as immodest, immoral, violent, and corrupt drunkards.

This is certainly not a fair picture of Christianity. However, our Muslim friends have developed this perception in part because many who claim to be Christians have helped to create such an image. To be specific would the Muslims in Jos North Local Government Area view Christians as generous, kind, thoughtful, forgiving, and good people? I doubt it. Thus, we have an “image” problem or a perception problem in Christianity. I believe the image of Christianity around the world and here in Nigeria needs rehabilitation.

Therefore, we have an “image” problem in Christianity. I believe the image of Christianity around the world and also here in Nigeria needs rehabilitation. There is nothing wrong with Christianity. Christianity is the most noble, generous, compassionate forgiving and truthful religion in the world. The problem is the perception of Christianity. And, unfortunately, the perception of Christianity is often influenced by the way we Christians live our lives.

### **Correct Image of Christianity**

What should be the correct image of our Christianity? Let me give you a couple of important scriptures that will start us thinking.

#### ***1 Peter 2:11-12***

Peter declares,

*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us (1 Peter 2:11-12).*

***This passage deals with the perception of Christians from both an internal and external point of view.***

From an internal viewpoint, we should view ourselves as aliens in this world. This is not our permanent home. We are just temporarily here. This, we do not put down deep roots.

From an external view, people should tell something about us from our deeds. We are urged to live good lives so that others can see our good deeds and glorify God on our behalf.

We Christians are grateful for the Protestant reformation and Martin Luther who helped us all better understand that we are not justified by weighing our good deeds against our bad deeds. However, the people who are outside of Christianity do measure Christianity by that standard. Non-Christians look at our good deeds and our bad deeds and they make a judgment about the goodness or badness of the religion we follow.

Whereas our good deeds do not determine our salvation, they may influence the salvation of others because whether or not a person comes to Christ is going to be determined by how attractive Christianity is to them. And the attractiveness of Christianity is directly proportionate to the way outsiders view the Christian faith.

***This passage also deals with Christianity from a positive and negative viewpoint.***

From a negative point of view, we must avoid those things that bring reproach to Christianity—particularly the *“sinful desires which war against your soul.”* This statement suggests several things.

- Our sins war against our own soul.
- Our sins war against our testimony. They affect the way people view us.

We know that God is a gracious and forgiving God. When we sin and confess our sins, he will forgive us. However, human beings, particularly unbelievers are not quite so forgiving. When a Christian kills a Muslim during a time of religious tension, God may forgive him but it is unlikely the Muslim is going to forgive him and the bitterness and anger created by the Christian act will pass on to the whole family and many generations. So, in some ways, our sins have a more troubling consequence on our influence than they do on our souls.

From a positive point of view, we must do those things that will cause the non-Christians to glorify God. We must *“live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”* There is enough truth in that statement for another day. However, let me just point out a couple of things.

We should live good lives not just to please God but to impress the unbelievers. Living lives before the pagans implies integration and engagement—we live where they can see us. We must not so separate ourselves from unbelievers that they cannot see our good works. Our good deeds may not be good enough to earn us salvation but they certainly earn us respect among those we are wishing to evangelize. Good human deeds point to and glorify the God the person serves.

I went to Khartoum a few years ago. I was obviously prejudiced against the people from Northern Sudan because they were the ones who attempted to force Islam on Southern Sudan and had been responsible for so much havoc both in Southern Sudan and in Darfur. However, when I got there, I found the people to be very warm, friendly, and hospitable. Regardless of what I think about their politics or their wars, I could not deny that these were friendly hospitable gracious people. Their friendliness and hospitality helped to partially erase the negative image I had had of them before.

I am convinced that we as Christians need a much greater focus on the positive deeds in our lives so that our non-Christians neighbors will see our good deeds and glorify our father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). That is the way Peter is calling on Christians to live.

- He is calling on us to avoid negative things in life and focus on the positive.
- He is calling on us to be concerned about the perception of our faith outside of Christianity.

#### **Acts 2:43-47**

Here is a summary of Christianity from the book of Acts 2:43-47:

*Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and **enjoying the favor of all the people**. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

This passage refers to the very early days of Christianity. There were only a few Christians in the world then. Everyone else was an unbeliever. Therefore, most of the people the Christians had contact with in those early days were unbelievers. And even though many of the Jews could not understand this new doctrine or understand many things about this new faith, they were impressed by the Christians themselves. And Luke says that these early Christians were “*enjoying the favor of all the people.*” Somehow, the unbelieving Jews were impressed and pleased with these people who were following the man named Jesus.

It is true that Christianity did not always continue to enjoy that favor among unbelievers. However, it is significant that the first impressions of Christianity were positive. I think the reason for that was because of the positive way Christians lived. Later people were able to learn some of the beliefs of Christians and these offended them. However, they could not find fault with the positive lives of those who claimed to be following Jesus.

There is a lesson there for us and examples that parts of Christianity are attractive to non-Christians. I have heard that some Muslims in the Yoruba land are now doing some new things. They are getting married with white wedding dresses like Christians. They are now teaching their young people choruses and singing them like the Christians. There are rumors that some Muslims are now even having all night vigils.

Some time ago, one of my students brought a Muslim to visit one of the churches in Jos where I was preaching. That night he made a decision to become a follower of Christ. Going to that church was certainly not the only fact in his decision to become a Christian. However, in his long journey, seeing the joy and blessing and worship of these Christian people was a very positive final step that helped push him in the direction of Christianity.

In these cases, Muslims are seeing our good deeds—the attractive things about our faith and are having to respond to them—either by accepting them as their own or adjusting their own faith to accommodate these things.

Here is the truth: Our ability to evangelize and spread Christianity “*to the ends of the earth*” is going to be directly proportionate to the way others see our faith. If our non-

Christian friends see our faith as something that is self-centered and leads to immorality and injustice, they are not going to want any of it. However, if they see our good and wholesome deeds, some of them are going to want to become followers of this Jesus we are following.

## **Approach**

What I have attempted to do so far is to establish the fact that we have a perception problem in our Christianity, both in Nigeria and outside. What should be our response to this issue? How can we rehabilitate a proper Christian image among our Muslim friends and colleagues and other non-Christians with whom we come in contact?

This is not the first time that Christians have had image problems. Christianity was not very popular in the early years of Christianity. Therefore, the Biblical writers had to address this issue. I am going to suggest several different ways that we can start to rebuild the Christian image based upon observations primarily from the New Testament. I will do this by answering the question: How should we respond to unbelievers and particularly to Muslims to rehabilitate the image of Christianity and lay a foundation for evangelism?<sup>93</sup>

## **We Should Respond with *Friendship*.**

### **Exposition**

Earlier in this book, I pointed out Paul's instructions to Christians about what to do if an unbeliever invited them for a meal (1 Corinthians 10:27). This teaching clearly established the fact that Paul considered it appropriate to interact socially with unbelievers. Jesus had earlier said, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). This was obviously a figure of speech suggesting the way the followers of Jesus should interact with others. They were not to segregate themselves but integrate themselves with others so that they could have the maximum amount of influence.

Yes, James does indeed warn us that if we are to be a friend of the world, we are the enemy of God (James 4:4). However, the word "world" there is referring to the systems of the world and the attitudes and the behavior of the world. The immediately preceding contexts mentions fighting, quarrels, coveting, wrong motives, and adultery. The "world" that we are to avoid are those sinful attitudes and actions. We are to love the people of the world as God does (John 3:16) and loving them implies developing friendships with them and spending time with them.

### **Application**

Some years ago, we did an HIV/AIDS workshop for the Kaduna State Ministry of Education in Zaria. The majority of the participants were Muslims. It was a very successful two-day training workshop. During the workshop, we had given out some good training material. There was a lot of material about the disease but also some specific material for Christians and other material for Muslims. At the end of the workshop, one of the senior Muslim trainees came up to me and said, "Sir, would you give me a copy of the Christian material. I want to go back to my village and meet the pastor and give him this material and then see if we can work together to fight this disease." If the Muslims and Christians worked

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<sup>93</sup> In Chapter three, I described three additional ways that we should respond to non-Christians. Only one of them overlaps with the suggestions in this chapter.



together in that village to fight HIV/AIDS, it is highly unlikely that they would later be drawn into fighting each other. This kind of cooperation not only helps the community win the war against HIV but also helps to establish and maintain peace.

I may never be successful in seeing any of these people be converted to Christianity. However, I do want to create a positive image of Christianity among them so that they will not have the excuse of a negative understanding of Christianity.

Our Muslim and other non-Christian friends may never come to a worship service. However, they may come to a Christian wedding or even a special Christmas service, if invited. If while attending one of these special programs, they see the joy of the Lord and the beauty of Christian worship, they will be exposed to one of the most beautiful blessings of our Christian faith.

I was in Bauchi some years ago preaching at the university chapel. A Christian student had been killed by radicals on that campus less than six months before this service. As I sat on the platform that Sunday morning, I was moved to tears by the joy and ecstasy and beauty of the worship in that chapel. The thought I had at that moment was: "Islam does not have a chance." Islam has many admirable moral qualities and generates incredible discipline and commitment but it has nothing as powerful and joyful and soul-satisfying as the genuine praise and worship that arises to God in our worship services. Paul addresses this issue in Note 1 Corinthians 14:22-25, where he describes the scenario of an unbeliever coming to a Christian worship service.

*So if the whole church comes together and . . . an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"*

This passage tells us that one of the ways that unbelievers will come to the Lord is when they come to our worship services and see that God is really among us.

The point is that we need to have as much interaction with non-Christians as possible so they can really see who we are and what we really believe not what their friends have told them we are like and what we believe.

### **We Should Respond by *Giving Up Our Rights.***

#### **Exposition**

Acts 6 tells about the Christians who were taking care of their own widows. Here is a question: Why did Peter not insist that the Christian widows continue to have access to the welfare they had been enjoying before from the official Jewish welfare agency? After all, all of them were still Jews. Interestingly, Peter was willing to allow the Christians to give up that right to welfare from the regular Jewish circles. In fact, he apparently was instrumental in getting Christians to create their own welfare system that was paid for by themselves.

Paul demonstrates a most remarkable example of giving up his rights in Philippi. When he was arrested and taken to the prison, he and Silas were beaten very seriously. However, if you go forward a few years, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and the soldiers were stripping him and preparing to beat him. Paul asked them if it were lawful for them to beat an

un-condemned Roman citizen. They immediately suspended the beating. The question is: why did Paul not point out that he was a Roman citizen in Philippi? My own opinion is that Paul was willing to give up this right and suffer this beating so that he would be an example to the young Philippian Christians. If their teacher could take a beating, they should also be able to take a beating for their faith.

The point is that the new Christians did not always insist on their rights being upheld. They were willing to give up rights in order to promote peace and gain an opportunity to win some of these people to Christ.

### **Application**

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul gives some interesting instructions. Apparently, there were Christians who had such severe disputes that they were going to law against one another.

Paul wrote this to them:

*I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another—and **this in front of unbelievers!** The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? (1 Corinthians 6:5-7).*

What was Paul saying here? He was saying that it would be better to give up your rights rather than to disgrace your Christian faith before unbelievers.

We Christians have been baptized with a great emphasis on justice. And that is good because God is a God of justice. However, in so emphasizing our rights, we have tended to ignore the rights of others and we have certainly not presented a positive image of Christianity with Jesus' emphasis on self-denial and sacrifice.

The Jerusalem Council actually offers an interesting illustration of this principle. Here was the situation: All of the early Christians were Jews and therefore, all of the first Christians were cultural Jews. However, as Christianity began to spread to non-Jews, the Jewish Christian leaders had to make a decision about whether they would continue to require non-Jews to be circumcised and observe certain other Jewish customs and practices. The Christian leaders met in Jerusalem, as described in Acts 15, and they made a decision. They were going to give up some of their own Jewish rights by not requiring circumcision of these Jewish Christians. However, they did ask the new Gentile Christians to give up some of their rights as well. Here is the record of the results of that meeting. James was summarizing the consensus of the meeting and said:

*It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath (Acts 15:19-21).*

Note these observations.

The Christian leader asked the believers to observe three rules related to the food they eat. They were not to eat food with blood in it, food that had been strangled and food that had been offered idols. James also explains why they were focusing on these regulations. He said, “*For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.*” James’ explanation is not quite clear. It could be explained several ways but I think he is saying something like this. We recognize that it is not necessary for Gentile believers to follow purely Jewish social and religious customs. However, there are Jews in nearly all of the cities where the gospel has reached so far. And Christianity cannot be separated from its Jewish roots. Therefore, Gentile Christian, do not offend the Jews where you are. The Jewish religion feels very strongly about eating meat that has not be slaughtered properly and about meat offered to idols so we ask you to give up that right so as not to offend the Jews you will be trying to reach with the gospel.

I do not believe this was a permanent injunction for all Christians. I doubt if most Christians in Africa have a regulation in their churches about eating meat that has blood in it.

And the fascinating thing about this instruction is that Paul essentially reversed it a few years later. When the Corinthians wrote to him about eating meat offered to idols, Paul wrote back and essentially said, “Don’t worry about it.” In fact, he specifically said (1 Corinthians 10:25): “*Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience.*” If they ate food that was sold in the market, they were going to be eating meat that was offered to idols. However, the difference was that there would be no Jews there to offend. Paul did warn that if eating this kind of meat would offend anyone, they should not do it but as long as there was no offense, there was no problem.

What does this passage teach? It explains that we should be sensitive to the religious convictions of other people. If a practice would offend the Jews with whom they were enjoying Christian fellowship and whom they were trying to reach, they should not do it. If something would cause a pagan to think that a Christian believer was joining in with his pagan worship, then that believer should not do it.

In other words, what Paul is discussing here is *perception more than reality*. The truth is that food does not make one more holy or less holy. However, it is very important the perception that you create in the minds of other people about your faith.

What does this mean practically? When we are in Muslim areas, ladies should dress properly so as not to offend. If eating certain foods would offend specific people, we should stop eating those foods, certainly when we are in the presence of those people. We should be prepared to give up our personal rights if that would help to create a positive relationship with a person of another faith and lay the groundwork for evangelism and good works. Note this powerful teaching from Paul:

*Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. **Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall**” (1 Corinthians 8:9-13).*

This statement was made about offending a Christian brother. However, it seems to me that it is even more important not to offend a person who is still an unbeliever. To offend unbelievers may confirm them in their unbelief and condemn them to an eternity apart from Christ. The more we give up our rights in order to honor and respect a person of another religion, the more we are rehabilitating the image of Christianity.

## **We Should Respond with *Apologies*.**

### **Exposition**

When Paul was taken before the Sanhedrin as a prisoner of the Roman commander, the high priest ordered someone to strike Paul. Paul was a person who believed in justice also so he quickly and sharply replied: *"God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!"* (Acts 23:3). When someone informed Paul that this was the high priest that he had just rebuked, Paul quickly said, *"Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'" In other words, Paul apologized to a man who probably needed to be rebuked. However, Paul did not want his faith to suffer or be abused because of his own actions. Thus, he apologized.*

There are times to apologize to our non-Christian friends because of the behavior of our fellow Christians. Contrary to what we tend to think, we never weaken ourselves when we acknowledge our faults and confess our sins. We are always strengthened by humility and apologizing for our misdeeds.

### **Application**

Have you ever apologized to someone of another religion? I did so on September 7, 2002. The office next to my office at the university at that time was occupied by a Muslim colleague. I walked in his office and there were two students there with him. I said, "Do you know what today is?" He could not think of the significance of the day. I said "Today is September 7<sup>th</sup>, the day that all of this trouble started in Jos." We talked about this for a couple of minutes and then I said to him and his two students, "I am very sorry for the way that some Christians reacted during this crisis. Anybody who killed a Muslim or reacted violently was not following the teachings and example of Jesus. And on behalf of all that your people suffered at the hands of Christians, I am very sorry." My Muslim colleague quickly said, "Our people did not respond correctly either. And we are very sorry for all of the injury our people caused to the Christian community." I am not sure how important my apology was in the big scheme of things. However, I do believe that in the minds of my Muslim colleague and his two students, the image of Christianity was rehabilitated just a little bit on that day.

Do you know of a person of another faith whom you may have offended in some way? Are you willing to go to that person and apologize? Are you willing to go to a person of another faith and apologize because of the offenses of Christians against him or people of his religion, whether real or perceived?

We must certainly not apologize for our Christian beliefs and practices. We will not need to apologize for our love and friendship and attempts at developing positive relationships with unbelievers. However, we must be willing to apologize when we do things that needlessly offend and antagonize the people we are trying to reach.

## **We Should Respond with *Positive Works*.**

### **Exposition**

One of the passages with which we began this chapter says, “*Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us*” (1 Peter 2:12). One of the ways we can rehabilitate the image of Christianity is to continue to do the many good works that Christians and Christian organizations have been known for.

When Peter went to the Temple to pray and saw a lame man begging, he did not force him to become a Christian before he healed him. When Paul went to a market in Lystra and saw a crippled man, again, he did not require a confession of faith and baptism before he assisted him. Genuine Christian compassion reached out to all those who are needy regardless of their faith. This is consistent with Christian practice. One of the very positive things about most Christian organizations is they do not restrict their good deeds just to Christians. They do acts of mercy to both Christians and non-Christians.

### **Application**

One of the things we must constantly be doing in our Christian faith is to keep the balance between our deeds and our words, between our theology and our practice. Jesus maintained that balance and is calling us to do the same.

I was told a story by missionary in Jos, a few years ago about a village in Kano State. One day a delegation of elders from one of the villages showed up at a church in Kano and declared that they wanted their village to become a Christian village and they needed to know how to do that. When the pastor inquired about why they were making this decision, they said that Christians had been coming there and helping them dig wells and start schools and helping them in so many other ways. They also claimed that no one from the other religion had done anything for them in all those years. Therefore, they wanted to identify with those people who had showed them so much love and compassion.

We do acts of mercy and compassion not just out of evangelism. However, successful evangelism is the ultimate result of these kinds of positive works.

## **We Should Respond with *Holy Character*.**

### **Exposition**

Perhaps the single best thing we can do to rebuild the image of Christianity is simply to live holy lives. Peter said we should “*abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live . . . good lives.*” When we do these things, we are going to make a positive impression on those watching us from the outside. I have referred earlier to the statement that the early church was “*enjoying the favor of all the people*” (Acts 2:47). Why did that happen? The preceding context describes what those people saw in the early Christians: teaching, fellowship, worship, prayer, miracles, community, selflessness, giving, gladness, sincerity, and praise. These are all positive qualities that grow out of a positive relationship with God. It is not surprising that the next statement after describing the favor that the early church was experiencing was: “*And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved*” (2:47). Successful evangelism was directly connected to godly living.

## **Application**

There is no more positive testimony of Christianity than the fruit of the Holy Spirit which is “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*” (Galatians 5:22-23).

When the Philippian jailor saw that the doors of the jail had been opened, he assumed everyone had escaped and he was preparing to kill himself. However, it was at that time that he met a real Christian—a person of kindness and gentleness and truth. And his reaction to meeting a real Christian in a very difficult context was, “*What must I do to be saved?*”

If we want to rehabilitate the image of Christianity in our communities and around the world, we need to start living up to the teachings given of Jesus and the apostles in the Bible.

### **We Should Respond by *Obeying the Teachings of Jesus about Violence.***

## **Exposition**

In light of the various crises, we have gone through in Jos and northern Nigeria and the potential for more violence, we need to make sure we are teaching our children and others for whom we are responsible that the correct response to violence is non-violence. We do not fight violence with violence but with love and peace. People produce many arguments why Jesus’ instructions about violence do not apply to our situation. However, if we ignore Jesus’ teaching about violence, we may as well give up his instruction about everything else we do not like or is not convenient for us. We never gain any permanent ground when we disobey or disregard the teachings of Jesus on any subject and certainly not on violence.

Let me expand this a bit more by looking at instruction Apostle Paul gave to the Roman Christians. Paul had learned very well the teachings of Jesus about responding to enemies and applied those teachings in specific detail to Christians who were in a completely different situation than those Palestinian disciples who first heard Jesus’ instructions.

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:15-21).*

What does this passage say our response to our enemies should be?

### ***Bless those who persecute you.***

“*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse*” (12:14). The word “bless” is the word *eulogeo* which comes from two Greek words. *Eu* means good. *Logeo* means to speak. So, this word literally means “to speak good” or “to say good things.” The verb form of the word “bless” is used several ways in the Bible:

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- Jesus blessed food (Matthew 14:19).
- Jesus placed his hands on little children and blessed them (Mark 10:16).
- Elizabeth blessed Mary saying, “*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!*” (Luke 1:42).

Paul is saying if you want to enjoy peace with those who would oppose and even want to harm you, say good things about them. There are two ways you can bless your enemies.

- You can say good things **about** them.
- You can say good things **to** them.

Three times in the New Testament, we are told to bless our enemies, including this passage:

- Luke 6:22-28: “*But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **bless** those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*”
- 1 Corinthians 4:12: “*We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we **bless**; when we are persecuted, we endure it.*”

We know about blessing our children and blessing food and we are good at that. However, it is contrary to human nature to speak well of those who speak evil or attempt evil against us. We can do this only in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“*. . . **bless and do not curse.***”

The word “curse” means to wish or pray bad things against other people. Paul is clear about our communication related to enemies. We are not to curse our enemies. Unfortunately, cursing our enemies has crept into the church in the last few years. This is based upon the prayers of some of the psalms that ask God to curse our enemies. We called these imprecatory psalms. For example, Psalm 3:7 says, “*Arise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked.*” It is argued that since these kinds of prayers are found in the Bible, we should feel free to use them against our enemies.

This type of cursing was for an early part of the history of the world. Paul says, “*When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me*” (1 Corinthians 13:11). Just as we as individuals change, the world changes as well. God’s kingdom on earth has moved from an earlier time period when God was working through a nation to a different period in which God is working through the church. Jesus says that cursing is no longer appropriate for us during this time. This is what he said: “*But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **bless** those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you*” (Luke 6:22-28). Blessing enemies rather than cursing them is the new normal for God’s kingdom today.

There were other practices of the earlier period that we do not accept or observe.

- We do not go need to go to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices.
- We do not worry about whether our clothing is mixed with wool or linen.
- We do not take multiple wives.
- We do not tolerate slavery.

Few of us want to go back to those old days when these things were practiced. Therefore, let us not take part of practices of that era that were specifically condemned by Jesus.

Have you been guilty of cursing your enemies? My challenge is that you leave the former things and move up into God's new kingdom and learn to bless your enemies.

***Do not repay anyone evil for evil.***

*"Do not repay anyone evil for evil"* (12:17). A law in physics says for every force there is an opposite and equal force. If you push one direction, something will push back from the other direction. There is something like a natural law of retaliation in human nature.

- If someone attacks you, you attack them back.
- If someone kills your brother, you kill his brother.
- If someone burns your house, you burn his house.

In other words, you will retaliate at least to the extent that someone has attacked you and, to teach that person a lesson of justice, you may retaliate even stronger. This is the official Israeli government policy. Anyone who attacks them will receive a much more severe response than was given.

In fact, this law was even enshrined in the Old Testament code of contact. Leviticus 20:19-20 says: *"If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured."* This system of an eye for an eye actually sounds fair. And, God has not annulled that law. The principle of an "eye for an eye" is still in place. However, God has removed the enforcement of that law from individuals and given it to government instead. And God has given the followers of Jesus a much higher law. It is the law of blessing those who want to harm you. It is the law of non-retaliation. Another way of saying this is: *"Do not take revenge"* (12:19a).

I recognize that this is a difficult saying. It is a hard principle to live by. However, this is the clear teaching of Jesus. And we must accept the fact that God knows what is best for us. So, whether we understand it or not or whether we like it or not, we must respond to circumstances the way Jesus said that we should.

***Leave room for God's wrath.***

*"Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord"* (12:19). The reason we do not take revenge is because the Lord is very capable of taking revenge. There are plenty examples of God bringing about justice. Here is only one:

God selected David as a young man to be the king. However, Saul tried to kill him several times. David never retaliated a single time and even refused to say anything negative against him. Even when he cut off a corner of his garments when he was sleeping, his conscience bothered him. Did Saul get by with all of the injustice he did to David? No, he eventually paid for his injustices on the battlefield when he was wounded and died.

God has many means at his disposal to punish people.

- He has even more wicked people who can punish less wicked (Habakkuk 1:12-14).
- He controls the earth which can swallow the wicked (Numbers 16:31-33).
- He has angelic armies who can bring judgment (2 Kings 6:17).
- He has conscience that torments people (Matthew 27:3-4).



Jonathan Edwards wrote a sermon two hundred years ago entitled, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” It was such a powerful sermon that people ran to the pillars of the church and held tight because they were fearful of falling into hell.

It is better to leave our enemies into the hands of God. He will make sure that they pay fully for their deeds. They may escape the hands of justice. They may even be honored in their communities for their violence. However, “*will not the judge of the earth do right?*” (Genesis 18:25). If the judge of the earth is going to take care of our enemies, there is no need for us to try to punish them.

***Treat enemies well.***

Not only must we say nice things to and about our enemies, we must also treat them well. Note these two statements in 12:20:

- “*If your enemy is hungry, feed him.*”
- “*If he is thirsty, give him something to drink.*”

Once again, this goes against all normal human reactions. If our enemy becomes hungry, the natural tendency is to smile and say, “That’s what he desires.” If we could see our enemy dying from thirst, we would have a silent sense of satisfaction in seeing him suffer. However, God raises this amazing standard and tells us that we must treat our enemies well.

Why should we treat our enemies well? Paul continues the quotation by saying, “*In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.*” What does this mean? This is obviously a figure of speech which is describing the man’s conscience. The burning coals are like the burning conscience in his mind. If he is trying to kill you and you leave him food, this has to make him wonder if he is doing the right thing. If he is saying wicked things about you and you are saying kind and gracious things about him, that is something that gets his attention and forces him to think about who you are and what you believe.

How do we apply all of this in our lives? There are several ways that have been tried.

- ***We can ignore it.*** That is what many people do.
- ***We can try to explain it away.*** Some people try to say Jesus did not really mean this because he urged Peter to get a sword. That is a misrepresentation of that passage.
- ***We can justify our actions.*** We can say, “Well, this is the only language these people understand.” Or “We know it is wrong but we just have to do this anyway.”

We have no other option than to obey and implement the teachings of Jesus and Paul.

Here is an important point: If we do not teach our church members how to respond to their enemies when they are attacked, they will do what comes naturally which is contrary to what Jesus taught.

Everyone in northern Nigeria is aware that he or she lives in a potentially volatile community. Therefore, I challenge you to prepare your people to respond to potential attacks. These responses could include any of those responses found in the Book of Acts including:

- Praying for supernatural intervention
- Running away to a safer place
- Appealing to the court system; taking advantage of the right of citizens

- Taking advantage of the security system

In light of the crises that many in Nigeria have gone through and the potential for more violence, we need to make sure we are teaching our children and also teaching those with whom we work that the appropriate response to violence is non-violence. We do not fight violence with violence but with love and peace.

There are many arguments why Jesus' instruction about violence does not apply to our particular situation. However, if we ignore Jesus' instruction about violence, we may as well give up his instruction about everything else that we do not like or does not seem to be convenient for us. We never gain any permanent ground when we disobey or disregard the teachings of Jesus on any subject and certainly not on violence.

### **We Should Respond by *Correcting Misbehaving Christians.***

#### **Explanation**

Leaders are never hesitant to correct misbehaving people, including leaders. When David committed adultery, the prophet Nathan looked him in the face and said, "You are the man!" (2 Samuel 12:1-14). One of the major purposes of 1 Corinthians was to correct misbehavior, including squabbles over leadership that resulted in division in the church (1-4), immorality in the church (5), brothers going to law against each other (6), wrong concepts of marriage (7), eating meat offered to idols, abuses in worship (11) and other things. One of the responsibilities that Paul gave the young pastor Timothy was to correct and rebuke (2 Timothy 4:2).

#### **Application**

Correcting our Christian brothers is probably the least favorite responsibility that we as leaders have. However, it is something that we have to do. In addition, receiving correction from a superior or a brother is also one of the least favorite things that we can receive. However, correction from a brother can have lasting effects. I can remember well over 50 years later the stinging words of one of my pastors, "Danny, I am disappointed in you." That rebuke probably did more good than a dozen lectures on the topic.

- Do we have the courage to rebuke those who spread unfounded rumors?
- Do we have the courage to correct those who are using violent language?
- Do we have the courage to remind our people to love their enemies?

#### **Conclusion**

Here is one more key verse: "*And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit*" (2 Corinthians 3:18). There are many things we could say about the verse. However, very simply this passage is saying that our lives should be like a mirror. However, the mirror should be like a mirror that is at an angle reflecting not what is directly in front of it but reflecting something from another direction. Our lives should be like a mirror that it held up at a 45-degree angle. In other words, our lives should be like a mirror that is reflecting what is above us. People should be able to look into our lives and see God being reflected in our lives. When this happens, people will be attracted to Christianity.

*Peace: Its Challenges and Benefits*

Before a person can ever evangelize someone, that person must have respect for the one doing the evangelism. I believe that in some ways, before we can start to evangelize Muslims, we must rebuild the image of Christianity. We must show to the Muslim world and the non-Christian world what genuine Christianity is.

Here are some questions for our consideration:

- What can your church or denomination or mission do to promote peace?
- What can you individuals and families do to demonstrate true Christianity?
- What can we all collectively do to rehabilitate the image of Christianity?

## **Chapter Eleven**

### **Testing our Faith and Understanding: A Journal of Reflections from the Jos Crisis**

This chapter was written and published as an article under the title, “Faith Under Fire: A Journal of Reflections from the Jos Crisis,” in the *TCNN Research Bulletin*, Number 38, August 2002. It has been given a new name and modified from that original publication.

The true nature of any religion is demonstrated and tested during crisis. In a crisis situation, a person responds in the most basic way possible. Core values come to the surface and are reflected by the words and actions of the person under stress. Because religion is supposed to create and influence the core values of a person, the practical value of any religion is seriously evaluated during a crisis.

One of the common criticisms of African Christianity is that it has not yet penetrated the core value system or become part of the African worldview. Though I do not accept this criticism, Christianity in Africa is sometimes said to be “a mile wide and an inch deep.” It has also been said, “Scratch an African Christian and he will bleed pagan blood.” Christian leaders have often complained that in times of crisis, African Christians have returned to the juju shrine. Although these converts had taken on a veneer of Christianity, they fell back to their old belief systems in a crisis situation.

This chapter attempts to point out lessons that we can learn from examples during a time of crisis. The first major Jos Crisis helped to reveal some important things about the Christian faith.

#### **The Jos Crisis**

##### **Friday, September 7, 2001**

Most people of the world remember September 11, 2001 as the day the terrorists stuck the United States. For most Americans, this was the most serious crisis that many of them had ever faced. Unfortunately, those living in Jos in Northern Nigeria at that time were so busy with their own crisis that they hardly had time to think about what was going on in New York City and Washington DC. Four days before that, Friday, September 7, 2001, was the day that serious violence broke out on the city of Jos. The violence in Jos had many dimensions with ethnic and political issues probably being more basic than religious issues. However, because the different ethnic groups primarily fell into different religious camps, the violence did have religious undertones. Both churches and mosques were burned. People were determined to be friends or foes based upon their ability to quote religious creeds. Religious leaders were called upon to try to bring an end to the carnage. Even traditional northern Hausa type clothing identified a person as a Muslim while western clothes identified a person as a Christian.

Violence began that Friday afternoon near at the time of the *Salatul-Jumu'ah* (Friday Prayer) as a result of a dispute between a Christian young lady and the security guards of the mosque. Both parties felt aggrieved and began attacking people, property, and symbols of the other side. Hundreds of people of both faiths were killed and many churches and mosques

were burned. By Sunday, the crisis had spread to other parts of Plateau State. By Tuesday afternoon, things calmed down a bit. It was on that same Tuesday afternoon (Nigeria time) that the terrorist attack in America took place. The next day, trouble flared up again in Jos and hundreds more people died. There were still occasional attacks and burnings for several more days. However, by the second Sunday of the crisis, some Christians felt safe enough to return to church.

The crisis impacted the University of Jos very seriously. Although there are no definitive statistics, I believe that we lost approximately ten staff and more than 20 students. It affected all of our campuses including the Senior Staff Quarters where I live. One of my former colleagues, Rev. Musa Bot, a local pastor, and former inspector of Christian Religious Knowledge for the Plateau State Ministry of Education was dragged from his car and killed on the second day of the crisis. Before the crisis ended, dozens of churches and mosques were burned. Hundreds of homes and businesses were burned or destroyed. The streets of Jos and its surrounding areas were littered with hundreds of burned vehicles. No one has an accurate estimate of the number of people who died but the best guess is that between 1000 and 2000 people lost their lives during this crisis.

The crisis began for me about 3:00 PM on that Friday afternoon when one of my colleagues stopped by the house and said, “If you were planning to go into town, please don’t go this afternoon. There is some kind of trouble in town.” We have lived through various student riots and a minor religious conflict before, but Jos has normally been a peaceful place so we did not think that this would be a serious problem. Not long before, Kaduna had experienced a major crisis so we were aware that things could be bad. By mid-morning on Saturday, we knew that Jos was experiencing something that she had never experienced before. For the next several days, I stood on the balcony off my bedroom and watched the smoke rise from all parts of the city. I watched a mosque burn for three days about one kilometer from my house, right across the river from us. I heard gunfire all hours of the day and night for the next week. I saw people who had been shot and stabbed and burned and beaten. Perhaps the most gut-wrenching scenes were parents who came to our house with pictures of their children, asking if anyone had seen them. It was a time of incredible pain and suffering and yet it was a time in which many people demonstrated the grace of God.

It has been said that wars include long stretches of boredom interspersed by moments of terror. That is a good description of the first Jos Crisis. Because all normal academic activities were suspended and all my other responsibilities were greatly curtailed, I had quite a bit of extra time on my hands. Therefore, during the crisis, I kept a detailed journal of activities and personal observations about what was going on. I would usually sit down at my computer four or five times a day and write what I was seeing, hearing, and feeling. (I will say more about this later.)

I am including in this document a sample of those journal entries that directly relate to how Christian beliefs were applied during the crisis. How did Christians respond when their faith was under fire? To what extent were their Christian teachings reflected in this crisis? I have included in this chapter observations from two perspectives. First, I have written about the reaction of women to this crisis. These were people with no theological training other than what they had received in a Hausa-speaking church. Second, I have written about the leadership of a pastor who had had only two years of theological education at the time. These thoughts are preserved exactly as I wrote them in the midst of this crisis, except for minor editorial corrections.

Although there is a darker side of the crisis that must also be addressed, these notes reflect that the theology that had been taught before the crisis by many Christian pastors was applied very well at least in these instances. Christians had been taught to pray. They prayed. Pastors had been taught how to lead their churches. Some of them provided excellent leadership. These writings challenge the thesis stated above that African Christians will often respond to crisis as traditionalists. The responses of Christians to this crisis were not always exactly as Jesus taught. However, in moments of pressure, the unrehearsed spontaneous reactions of the Christians as reflected in these journal notes demonstrate that Christianity has taken firm root in Africa among both the clergy and laity.

The comments in normal type are the words of explanation in this chapter. The words in italics are the words from my journal as they were being recorded.

### **Hearing Effective Prayer**

On Saturday, September 8, 2001, the second day of the crisis, many members of Emmanuel Baptist Church and other residents of the Anguwar Rimi area fled into the University of Jos Permanent Site area to get away from the violence. I met several of them at our university clinic where I had gone to help. I invited some of them to come to my house to wait out the violence. Many of these people had lost all their possessions so it quickly became obvious that we needed to assist them. By noon, Saturday, our house had been turned into a refuge for internally displaced persons (IDPs). We began preparing food and fed about 150 the first night. They had no place to go so we kept many of them in my house and distributed the others out to neighbors. We continued to provide food and shelter for these refugees for about a week. We turned most of our first floor over to the refugees and kept several other expatriate neighbors upstairs in various rooms.

The journal below describes what I experienced the first morning after these people came to my house, which was the third day of the crisis. I type very fast so I sat down in front of my computer with the door of my office propped open, typed the date and time and then started typing what I was hearing only a few meters from where I was sitting.

#### ***Sunday September 9, 2001; 5:34 AM***

*I came downstairs from my bedroom and as I was walking down the steps, I heard a noise. It was the sound of women singing quietly. At the present time (5:34 AM), they are still singing. They began by singing "Good morning Jesus" and similar morning choruses. They sang "Mun gode Allah" ("We thank God"). They are now singing an Igbo chorus. One of the ladies is leading and the others are following as they normally do in church. Next chorus: "We have come again. Holy Ghost, we have come again, Holy Ghost, come and take control."*

*It is amazing that many of those ladies lost all of their possessions yesterday except what they could carry with them. Yet this morning they are singing praises to God with enthusiasm. Next chorus: another Hausa chorus (long burst of gunfire in the distance). Some lady is now leading in prayer in Hausa and at the appropriate places all of the ladies will say "ameeen." Now all of the ladies are praying out loud at one time, which is very common. I cannot hear everything but I continue to hear the phrase "thank God for . . . thank God for . . ." If I had just lost all my possessions and my husband and older sons had been gone for twenty-four hours and I did not know whether they were dead or alive, would I have that same spirit of thanksgiving and praise? Now the chorus: "Thank you, Jesus." After a period*

*of prayer: New chorus: “Oh, the Blood of Jesus. Oh the Blood of Jesus, Oh the Blood of Jesus, that washes white as snow.”*

*It is interesting that yesterday, I could not really detect any of the ladies who were taking charge of things except for one lady who was working in the kitchen. However, some lady is definitely taking charge of this prayer meeting. And there is no longer any attempt of restraint. They are singing seriously. (Several more bursts of gunfire in the distance). They are singing a Hausa chorus right now which I don't know. Here is another chorus: “When we come into your presence, I am so happy. When I come into your presence, I am so glad. In your presence, there is anointing with the Spirit all around us, with your presence there is anointing, Praise the Lord.” Another prayer, “We want to thank you . . .” This was another long passionate prayer in which the lady thanked the Lord for many things and then, in the prayer, encouraged everyone to call on the name of the Lord. She said, “our reverends have reminded us to call on the name of the Lord when we are in trouble. We are in trouble so we are calling on your name.” She asked for protection from their enemies—for everyone who is in the north, whether they are from the east or west or the north. She then urged everyone to pray again and so they prayed loudly for the next several minutes.*

*It is now 5:54 and we are just now beginning to see the first hints of light in the east. Thank you, Lord for the sunlight of another day. There is some kind of big bird that is singing very loudly outside right now. The roosters are crowing and so there are very positive morning sounds, mixed with gunfire.*

*One of the ladies is exhorting the women now. She talked to them briefly about death, that Jesus would be with them in death if God called them to die. She then urged them to pray for their children, their husbands or wives, for their country and for themselves. They then went into another season of rather moderately loud praying. While they are praying, one lady is singing quietly, “I surrender all.” The lady is exhorting again. She encouraged them to surrender everything to Jesus. Now everyone is singing the chorus “I surrender all. All to Jesus blessed Savior, I surrender all.” The lady is now leading in prayer again. “We surrender our lives; we surrender our properties to you. From this morning we surrender; our leaders we surrender; our bodies we surrender. We pray, O God that you will guide and protect us. Let us put our trust in you, O God.” Another minute of serious praying.*

*The lady then exhorting them to thank the Lord for the family who had taken them in and urged them to pray for us and ask God to bless us in many ways. There followed a serious volume of prayer. I type this with tears running down my cheek (literally), to think that these people are thinking of us, with our abundance when they have suffered so much. Another person was called on to pray who has an older voice. The lady is vigorously praying for us who welcomed them. She prayed that the Lord would give us the mind of peace and love. Because it is not easy to feed people like we have, she prayed that God would supply all our needs.*

*The original lady is now exhorting them that they have to take authority over the devil and the enemy and pray that the Lord will cancel all the plans of the enemy. She is urging them to pray that any weapon that people take up against them will not prosper. The group is now praying very loudly. (It is now 6:10 and good daylight.)*

*What an absolutely incredible experience—to sit here in my office and hear these people pray so earnestly who have just lost so much and who still face great danger and uncertainty. The leader is praying again. She is praying about the time that the disciples were in the boat and Jesus was sleeping but when he awoke, the wind had to stop blowing. She says, “Jesus, Pappa, we are reminding you that no weapon formed against us will prosper.*

*What is happening to us is not the plan of God. Any of our people that they are attacking right now, we pray that you would stop them. We come against them with the Word of God. We come against them in the name of Jesus. We come against them with the Holy Ghost. We bless your holy name. All that we have prayed, we pray with the blood of Jesus. All of our leaders, we cover with the blood of Jesus. All the Muslims, we pray that they will be confused. We thank you for the way you have kept us. We thank you from the east and from the west. Pappa, guide us and protect us. When they are at our front, be at our front; when they are at our back, be at our back. In Jesus mighty name.” And everyone quotes together, “And surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us.”*

### **Seeing Effective Pastoral Leadership**

On the first Sunday it was safe to go to church, we attended the Emmanuel Baptist Church, pastored by a former student, Pastor Sunday Gomna. He had recently completed the Diploma in Christian Studies at the University of Jos. The following is my summary of that service, written immediately after we returned home from church.

#### **Sunday, September 16, 2002; 1:14 PM**

*We went to church this morning. We decided that we would go to the Immanuel Baptist Church for several reasons. First, these are many of the people who have been in our house most of the week. Second, the pastor is one of my students. Third, this is the closest church to us. In a crisis like this, it seems reasonable that we should go to the church that is closest to us. Fourth, although it would be in Hausa, I thought it would give my mother-in-law a real flavor of a Nigerian church (she was visiting us from the US at the time). Fifth, it would be an honor to attend the first church service of a church whose church building had been burned by Muslim extremists. Sixth, we had some food items and clothing we wanted to give to the church elders for distribution.*

*We arrived right at 10:00 and the church service was already going. Because their church had been destroyed, they were meeting in a small community hall about one kilometer from their church. We were brought in and sat on one of the little low backless benches at the front of the church on the right side where the choir would normally sit. Fortunately, the bench was about six inches from the wall so I could lean back against the mud brick wall. Unfortunately, it was too far away from Mary and her mother to lean against the wall.*

*The service was a pretty typical service. It was all in Hausa though occasionally the leader would stop and explain things to us in English. It began with choruses and two or three prayers interspersed. The secretary read the announcements. One of the deacons then turned and spoke to us in English and profusely thanked us for the help we had rendered to their church members during the previous week. Pastor Sunday then gave a brief exhortation. Although I do not understand enough Hausa to understand a complete sermon, he threw enough English words and phrases in and I understood enough of the Hausa words to know that the essence of what he was saying. He said, “I am happy about three things related to this crisis. First, I am happy that none of my members killed anybody during the crisis. Second, I am happy that all of my things were also burnt during the crisis. If all of my things had been spared while you lost all of your things, then I would not know how to sympathize with you. However, God, in his infinite wisdom, allowed my things to be destroyed as well. Third, I am happy that they did not burn or destroy our church. Inasmuch as none of our members were killed, they did not burn our church. They only destroyed material things. The*



*church is still very alive and well.” After that, the choir sang. Their warm-up chorus was in English and simply said, “Never lose sight of Jesus; Never lose sight of your best friend.”*

*After that, the offering was taken up. The choir led in choruses and then each person marched forward and deposited his or her offering on a little table in front of the temporary pulpit. Occasionally, someone would stop and get change from the table.*

*Finally, Pastor Sunday spoke. He was very well prepared for his sermon and did an outstanding job. He began by reading two passages of scripture. The first was Matthew 10:16-24, 26-28*

*I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. . . So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

*He also read Esther 4:14; “For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” He also later read a passage from the Book of Job and used Job as his primary example of suffering during the sermon. The following are excerpts and summaries of various parts of the sermon. The sermon was not a three-point homiletically correct masterpiece. However, it addressed most of the key things that his people needed to hear that morning.*

*He began by talking about Mordecai and how he had been willing to do the right thing in a difficult time many years ago. He was unconcerned about his own safety. He also urged Esther to do right and reminded her that she had come to the kingdom for such an hour. He then told us that the title of his sermon was “Such a Time as This.”*

*He then shifted to the story of Job and pointed out that Job had many possessions but lost them all. And then he said, “Some Christians think they will live here forever but they will not so why are you focusing on material things?” He added, “God gave Job many material things and then sat back to see how he would handle them.” Job responded correctly.*

*He pointed out that all the suffering that they were experiencing was actually a complement to their Christianity. He said, “If the devil knows you are under his shadow, he will not bother you but if he knows God is proud of you, he will give you trouble.” As an illustration of this, he described how during the last two or three years, people had been admiring Emmanuel Baptist Church of Anguwar Rimi, even to the point of jealousy. In fact,*

*some pastors were even maneuvering to try to get invited to come there and pastor. This was now the response of the devil to the popularity and success of the church.*

*He encouraged his people that they had to be very committed in living for God. He said, "I will never stop being a Christian. In fact, even if they should destroy that church ten times and we have to rebuild it ten times, I will not leave this area."*

*He warned his people that even though things were a bit calm right now, "this is not the end of the devil. We must still stand firm against him." He warned that there were going to be additional problems in the future.*

*He did not want his people to get the wrong impression about suffering. Suffering and even death are not necessarily a proof that God is displeased with you. He said, "We are grateful that none of us were killed but that does not make us special. We are no better than those who were killed."*

*He pointed out that in the midst of this tragedy there were some bright spots. He said, "You should be grateful that some have taken you in and been willing to feed you and even to clothe you."*

*He was trying to give his people hope and to encourage them to move on past their current problems. He said, "Job lived another 150 years and forgot all those things that happened to him. Therefore, we need to look to the future and not the past."*

*He talked about their enemies for a bit. He said, "Those who burned our church—may God forgive them for they did not know what they were doing." He also mentioned that it is painful to love our enemies. He said, "We can pray very powerful prayers about loving our enemies but it is different in a time like this." He encouraged his people, "Pray for your enemies. They do not have the Spirit of God to comfort them."*

*He tried to encourage them not to allow this to shake their faith in Christianity. This is consistent with what many other Christians have suffered.*

*He also gave a very practical warning about greed as it relates to relief and reimbursement. He pointed out that they all knew that various agencies, including the government would try to help people who had been displaced during this time. He said, "Don't allow yourself to be used by the devil to try to receive any of these things. Only the EC (executive committee) can present the needs of the church. They will make a comprehensive list of all that we have suffered and submit it to the appropriate persons. So don't go to these people on your own and give them any list of things you have lost." I thought that was a very practical suggestion. It is not something I would have thought of. However, Sunday is their pastor and the Lord gave him what he needed to say.*

*Sunday concluded his service by having the group sing in Hausa:*

*We praise thee, O God, For the Son of thy love;  
For Jesus who died and is now gone above.  
Hallelujah! Thine the glory. Hallelujah! Amen.  
Hallelujah! Thine the glory. Revive us again.*

*He also sang another chorus:*

*Happy day, Happy day when Jesus washed my sins away.  
He taught me how to watch and pray and live rejoicing every day.  
Happy day. Happy day. When Jesus washed my sins away.*

*After these two songs, he had everyone get down on their knees and he prayed a very passionate prayer for them. After that, we stood up, Deacon Frimah (later killed in another crisis), the principal of Baptist High School, prayed the closing prayer and we were dismissed.*

*This was a moving service for me. Of course, I did not understand a whole lot of the Hausa. However, I understood the emotions. I understood that this was the first service these people had had since their church and parsonage were destroyed. I understood their hurt and anger and questions and I could sense that the Lord was ministering to them through this young but very good pastor.*

## **Observations and Reflections**

The following are miscellaneous observations about the things I saw during the crisis.

### **Prayer is a natural part of the Christian's response to crisis.**

Christians believe in an immanent God—that is a God who is interested in and involved with his creation. Prayer then must be the first response of God's people in a crisis. God urges us to “*call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me*” (Psalm 50:15). Certainly, God heard the prayers of the people in my house. You do not need any training or urging to pray during a time of crisis.

However, the content of prayers in a crisis are affected by the teachings that have preceded them. The prayers of these dedicated ladies who were staying in my house during this crisis did not arise from their traditional culture or religions or from what they had seen and heard in their pagan grandparents but from the Scriptures which had been taught to them. In this case, a Christian African was scratched and they bled godly scripture-soaked blood. Those prayers and the ladies who prayed them were a great source of inspiration to me and I am sure were an encouragement and a source of direction for the other ladies who heard their prayers. In addition, they give us some hint about what they had been taught.

These topics were found in their prayers:

- Thanksgiving
- Guidance and protection
- Submission to the will of God
- Faith and trust in God
- Courage in the face of death
- Supply of needs
- Power of the Word of God

These things were included in and a part of their prayers:

- Singing
- Quoting the Bible and referring to Biblical stories
- Individual and corporate prayers
- Exhortations

These are things that were absent in their prayers:

- No bitterness
- No complaints
- No blame
- No prayers for God to harm their enemies

If the content of our prayers reflects our theology, then the current and former pastors of Emmanuel Baptist had taught good theology.

Here is one additional observation about prayer. Prayer is not only a means of communicating with God, it is a means of communicating with one another as well. Christians believe that prayers are directed to God and are an appeal for him to hear and respond to our needs. However, though we do not often think about it, public prayer is also a means of communicating to one another. There are dozens of prayers recorded in the Bible. If those prayers were only directed to God, there would have been no need to write them down and they would have only needed to be prayed once. However, the fact that they are recorded for future generations means that these prayers teach us important lessons. They teach us about prayer; they teach us about God; they teach us about ourselves. David's prayer in Psalm 51 teaches us about repentance. Hezekiah's prayer in response to Sennacherib's intimidation teaches us how to respond when being threatened by enemies (Isaiah 37:15-20). Solomon's prayer of dedication of the temple teaches lessons about worship, humility, repentance, oaths, and many other things (1 Kings 8:22-53).

The prayers of these dedicated ladies who were staying in my house on the second morning of that crisis were a great source of inspiration to me and to many with whom I have shared this story. Obviously, these prayers were also an encouragement and a source of direction for those ladies who heard them that morning.

### **Strong pastoral leadership is essential for Christians to respond well in a crisis.**

I was very impressed by the way Pastor Sunday Gomna responded to the crisis and led his people. He was an encourager, a comforter, a direction giver, a decision maker, a caution provider and a model of restraint, compassion, forgiveness, and optimism. In fact, Pastor Sunday told me after the crisis that some of his Muslim neighbors came up to him and said, "Pastor, we want to thank you for the way you have taught your people. They did not harm us and refused to allow anyone else to harm us."

Paul says, "*And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others*" (2 Timothy 2:2). Pastor Sunday, during this crisis, shared what he had learned from his study of the Scripture and those who had gone before them. And future pastors who were young people during this crisis will be able to share what they learned from Pastor Sunday and others who were leading the church at that time.

I am sure there were other pastors who did not respond as well as Pastor Sunday. However, in every generation and in every place God provides good leaders. The Jos crisis proved that the current Christians in Jos are capable of leading their people in times of crisis.

### **The time to prepare for a crisis is before it begins.**

The strong pastoral leadership demonstrated during this period did not begin during the crisis. Pastor Sunday and other pastors had taught these people to pray long before the

crisis began. The fact that the members of Emmanuel Baptist Church responded in such a positive way is because their pastor had received good training before the crisis, including formal and non-formal training, and had provided good leadership before the crisis. Good leaders may come to the surface during a crisis but the foundation for strong leadership must be laid long before the trouble begins.

The Timothy passage, referred to above, is the foundational scripture upon which every seminary and Bible college lecturer has built his or her career. Those who train pastors must not only teach them how to exegete the Bible and construct well-organized sermons. They must also teach character and help develop latent leadership gifts within their students so that in times of crisis, those pastors will provide effective leadership.

We must remember that good theology is the foundation of a mature church. A crisis is to the church what an examination is to a student in school. It determines what has been learned and how well it has been learned. Most students know when their examinations are coming. Unfortunately, we never know when we are going to face crises in our lives. Therefore, we must teach our people well and trust they will “*always be prepared to give an answer*” (2 Peter 3:15) and leadership to all who need it.

### **Africans suffer well.**

Having lived in Nigeria since 1988, I have frequently thought Africans are the most patient people in the world. They wait for long periods of time; they put up with corruption and inefficiency; they forgive people who have taken advantage of them and injured them. However, during the Jos crisis I observed a new level of endurance and patience.

- I saw Nigerians who lost all their possessions and yet they were able to sing for joy.
- I saw Nigerians who lost their friends and family and yet bore the loss with faith and endurance.
- I saw Nigerians who had every reason to be bitter and angry and yet they demonstrated grace and forgiveness.
- I saw Nigerians who experience great tragedies and yet they never questioned God.

A crisis is to the church what an examination is to a student. It determines what has been learned and how well it has been learned. I was happy to see that many Nigerians passed the suffering examination very well. Even though they did not know the day of the exam or even the contents of the exam, they wrote excellent answers with their lips and their lives.

### **Final Thoughts**

I do not wish such a crisis on anyone and I have no desire to live through another one. However, in one sense, I am glad that I was able to experience this crisis. At times I was appalled and angered by what I saw and what I heard come out of the mouth of people who bear the name Christian. On the other hand, I was also overwhelmed to the point of tears by the way I saw people reach out to others and depend upon God. War brings out the worst and best of people. I am grateful I was able to see some of the best. The Apostle Paul urged the Corinthians, “*Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain*” (1 Corinthians 15:58b). I am happy that the work of so many good pastors and church leaders in Nigeria has not been in vain. Many, like Pastor Sunday Gomna, have trained their parishioners so well that they have passed the test of suffering and violence with excellent marks.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### SHAPING PEACE TOGETHER

This address was presented to a Roundtable Discussion with Community Stakeholders to commemorate Nigeria's 60<sup>th</sup> (Diamond) Independence at Plateau State Government House, Little Rayfield, Jos on 1 October 2020. October 1<sup>st</sup> is independence day and a holiday. The Plateau State governor and most of his administration were present at this celebration, as well as other senior people in the state. The audience included both Muslims and Christians and people from all parts of the state.

#### **Introduction**

I look forward to the day when peace is so common that celebrating peace will be considered a boring and unnecessary activity. However, we are nowhere near that place right now.

- Peace is something that we dream about.
- Peace is something that seems like it would be like heaven.
- Peace is something that we are willing to make great sacrifices to achieve.

From my position as the Director of the Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies at the University of Jos, it is rewarding to see the Plateau State government using this special holiday that celebrates the birthday of Nigeria as a platform to promote peace. This is most commendable and most appropriate.

When you received the invitation for this meeting, you discovered that the international theme for the International Day of Peace is “Shaping Peace Together.” The Plateau Peace Building Agency (PPBA) has slightly expanded that theme to “Shaping, Building and Deepening Inclusive, Peaceful and Secure Communities in Plateau State.”

- They have further defined “shaping” as building and deepening peace.
- They have added to the word “peace” the word “secure.”
- They have defined the word “together” to include the words “inclusive” and to include “communities in Plateau State.”

So even if nothing else is said about the international theme, the PPBA has already focused attention on several other issues related to peace. I will add my thoughts to the international theme of “shaping peace together” by exploring each of those three key words individually.

#### **Peace**

The word “peace” is the middle word of the theme. It is the most important word. This is the reason we are here today—to explore ways to initiate and expand and restore peace.

God originally created humans to live in a peaceful environment. When you read the early chapters of the book of Genesis, you read of scenes of peace and quietness and tranquility. There was nothing there to disturb the peace. Even the animal world was at peace with each other. However, when sin entered the human race, that wonderful peace was lost. Many things entered the world that day including confusion, frustration, suspicion,

accusations, deception, and many other problems that drove peace from humanity. And since the immediate fall of the human race, things have even gotten worse.

- We have ethnic fights.
- We have political battles.
- We have religious conflicts.
- We have inter-family quarrels.
- We have campus cultic clashes.
- We have inter-personal skirmishes.
- We have spiritual controversies.
- We have inter-church crises.
- We have gender disputes.
- We have cultural wars.
- We have class strife.

All of these things further destroy the peace among human beings and in our society. However, we do not just want to focus on the lack of peace. We want to understand the positive nature of peace.

The first thing you would expect an academic to do is to establish a definition of peace. So let me not disappoint you.

## **Definitions**

- Saleh Shahriah: Peace is a comprehensive and broad concept. At the macro parochial level, peace is the absence of conflict and war. At micro-level, peace is subjective, depending on the internal states of mind, body, and perceptions. Overall, peace is dependent on economic, political, religio-cultural, geographical, climatic, and international systems.<sup>94</sup>
- Johan Galtung: Peace is the sum of the satisfaction of these needs: survival needs (negation: death, mortality); well-being needs (negation: misery, morbidity); identity, learning needs (negation: alienation); and freedom needs (negation: repression).<sup>95</sup>
- Anderson Royce: “Peace is defined as a two-dimensional construct with both objective and subjective measures that must be studied within specific micro to macro contexts.”<sup>96</sup>

## **Practical Definition**

Did those definitions help you? I suspect they did not. I would guess you started thinking about lunch or something else when I got to the words “macro parochial level.” Let me try again to define or at least describe what peace really is here in Plateau State:

- Peace is being able to drive to Abuja without worrying about kidnapers and or running into a violent conflict.
- Peace is when we no longer hear sirens in the night and when the sound of gunfire has been forgotten.

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<sup>94</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/post/What\\_is\\_the\\_best\\_definition\\_of\\_peace](https://www.researchgate.net/post/What_is_the_best_definition_of_peace) Accessed 19 September 2020

<sup>95</sup> [https://www.jstor.org/stable/423472?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/423472?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents) Accessed 19 September 2020

<sup>96</sup> Anderson Royce, “A Definition of Peace,” 2004. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 10 (2), 101–116. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327949pac1002\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327949pac1002_2) Accessed 11 August 2022

- Peace is when we go to funerals because people have died from old age not because they have died in a violent crisis.
- Peace is not having to explain to our children why we cannot go into certain parts of Jos.
- Peace is when Christians and Muslims can once again live in the same neighborhoods without fear or suspicion.
- Peace is when Muslims are able to visit Christians during Christmas and when Christians are able to visit their Muslim friends during Salah.
- Peace is when Beroms enthusiastically support a Hausa student for a scholarship.
- Peace is when the Hausas in Jos North vote for an Anaguta man for LGA counselor.
- Peace is when “state of origin” is removed from applications and all Nigerians are treated with equality and respect all over the country.
- Peace is when the boys from the local mosque guard the church during Christmas and when the Boys' Brigade guard the mosque during Muslim celebrations.
- Peace is when farmers can go back to paying money for fertilizer rather than for security.
- Peace is when we vote for people because of how well they represent their people not whether or not their names are James or Abubakar.
- Peace is when we can get in our vehicles and travel to Lagos at night without fear of harm.
- Peace is when we no longer get text messages on our phone accusing the other side of committing horrible atrocities.
- Peace is when the University of Jos' Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies has to close its doors because there is no conflict to study or peace to achieve.

## **Summary**

I think that we can all understand and appreciate that definition of peace. And that kind of peace is possible. Although people have been saying it is impossible for 50 years, Israel and the UAE and Bahrain recently signed a peace accord. There are people in this room that remember some of the things that I just mentioned. Many of you have gone to the homes of a friend from another religion to celebrate a religious holiday. Even I have done that.

Some of you have worshipped in either the church or the mosque that is built side by side each other near terminus.

On this day that the world celebrates peace, we in Jos appreciate the level of peace we have been able to achieve but we look forward to a time when that peace will be expanded and comprehensive and permanent.

## **Together**

We have a proverb in my country that says, “It takes two to tango.” The “tango” was a famous Latin American dance that requires two people. Sometimes this proverb is used to mean that it takes two people to fight or quarrel. You do not fight by yourself. In addition, it will take at least two people to bring about peace. There is no such thing as a one-sided peace. Therefore, peace is something that must be done together.

I recently read an article about peace-making that focused almost exclusively on what one side needed to do. Peace will never be established if only one side wants it or works toward



it. It takes the desire and participation of all parties to produce peace. Since the establishing of and maintaining peace involves many people, there are some implications of that.

## **Principles**

### ***Shaping peace together always involves compromise.***

There is disagreement and conflict and violence because people have different beliefs about something. This is often viewed as an issue of justice or fairness. Let's take a particular illustration from here in Plateau State.

One group believes only those designated as indigenes should be entitled to scholarships, appointments, and other special "indigene" privileges. Another group believes anyone who permanently lives in the state and pays taxes in that state should be entitled to all the privileges of citizens of that state. Both sides believe anything other than what they believe would be unfair. However, there is no peace in which everyone gets everything they want.

Since these two positions are mutually exclusive, if there is going to be some kind of peace about that issue, either one side or the other has to give up their position or there must be some kind of compromise. Peace is always established together.

### ***Shaping peace together always includes forgiveness.***

There are always offenses in any conflict situation. If a disagreement lasts long enough and it is allowed to continue to grow, someone is going to get hurt, certainly emotionally and even physically. There are two ways we can try to solve the problem.

***We can retaliate.*** Retaliation is an attempt to bring about justice through your own means. An injustice has been done. The perception is that government has not or will not do anything about it. Therefore, I will do something to make that person feel the pain of his injustice. We humans have a built-in sense of justice so retaliation is a natural human reaction.

***We can forgive.*** Forgiveness does not ignore the injustice that has been done. It makes a deliberate decision that it will not seek any personal retaliation. It releases the offending person from the consequences of his or her harmful decisions.

Both Christianity and Islam teach the importance of forgiveness:

- *You who have believed, indeed, among your spouses and your children are enemies to you, so beware of them. But ...if you pardon and overlook and forgive - then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful* (Qur'an 64:14).
- *"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."* (Luke 6:37).

I think all of us know that if we continue to retaliate and seek to render justice individually to those who offend us, that is only going to lead to more conflict. However, if we forgive and overlook the fault of others, this will lead to reconciliation and peace. If we continue to insist on retaliation, we are not going to have peace. Therefore, let us forgive one another when we offend each other and leave justice up to the courts. Peace will always be achieved together.

### ***Shaping peace together always includes a multi-level response.***

- Government must be involved at all levels. We sometimes think that establishing and maintaining peace is the government's responsibility. That is true to a certain extent but government cannot bring about peace by itself.
- NGOs are doing their part. There are many NGOs in Jos and throughout Nigeria who are committed to peace. Many of these were founded and are funded by people who are not part of the conflict. If people in the UK or Saudi Arabia can give money for peace purposes, how much more should we who live here be willing to be involved.
- The religious communities must be involved. There are no more important or influential group than the grassroots religious leaders, the pastors, and imams. If these religious leaders would insist the worshippers they lead would follow the teachings of their respect religions, that would make peace much easier.
- The village heads and community leaders must be involved. They have great influence and are leaders who can persuade their people to be peaceful.
- Individuals and families must reach out to their friends on the other side. Every other group that I mentioned is made up of individuals. Peace starts at the personal level.

In the peace work I have done, I have found that the grassroots people are often more anxious to establish peace than the senior people. They tend to suffer more than their leaders.

***Shaping peace together always involves patience.***

Any time you work with other human beings, they are going to disappoint you. Therefore, you have to be patient with them. Can we be as patient with people on the other side as we are with our own people? Can we as patient with those who have different opinions as we hope that people will be with us? Peace-making is hard work. It takes time. It has many starts and stops. However, with perseverance, peace can be achieved.

### **Another Crisis in Plateau State**

In 1999, I learned of a major social problem that was developing in Nigeria that was just as deadly as the various violent conflicts we have experienced in Nigeria. In fact, more people have died from this crisis than in all of the violent conflicts we have experienced in Nigeria in the same period of time, including the Niger-Delta crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency, and the so-called farmer-herder conflict. I speak of the silent killer HIV that leads to AIDS.

I personally got involved in this crisis in 1999 by helping to create the Faith-Based AIDS Awareness Initiative. When I started the HIV rate in Nigeria was about 1.9 percent of the population between the ages of 15 and 49. By 2006 or so, the rate across the country had risen to 5.6 percent and Plateau State's rate was even higher. However, there were many people who worked together to stop this killer. The Ministry of Health led the way. The Ministry of Education developed a robust plan. The faith community got involved. Even the unions of truck drivers and organizations associated with prostitutes joined the effort. And the result is that by March 2019, the HIV prevalence rate had been reduced to 1.4 percent.<sup>97</sup>

At that time HIV/AIDS crisis was affecting the whole society. It was killing indiscriminately. Thus, the whole society got involved and that is what produced success.

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<sup>97</sup> UNAIDS Press Release, [https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2019/march/20190314\\_nigeria](https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2019/march/20190314_nigeria) Accessed 19 September 2020

The issue of violence and conflict has a more direct and immediate effect on us. Therefore, it should be easier to motivate people to work for peace. I challenge all who are here and whatever agencies or organization you represent to make sure that you lead the way in “shaping peace together.”

## **Shaping**

The word “shaping” means that you can do something about this peace. This is an active verb. It does not say the peace is “being shaped” as if this were some passive activity. It implies that people are working together to shape and build and deepen the peace. The sub-theme adds to shaping, the words building and deepening. What does this mean?

### **Principles**

*Shaping means this is initiated by human beings.*

Every pot you see was shaped by someone. Every vehicle you see was initiated and engineered by someone. No pot or vehicle or building was every created through just waiting for something to happen. Someone had an idea to create those things. The creators of these things had a vision of what they wanted to see. They initiated the shaping process and eventually they saw the end result. Nothing significant in this world just happens. Peace is not going to happen by itself. Some person or group of persons are going to have to get a vision for the peace and initiate the process and follow up until they see the finished product.

*Shaping means you have control over what the peace will look like.*

- Will it be a just peace? Will one side rejoice at the peace while the other side weeps?
- Has the peace taken into consideration the issues raised by all sides?
- Will it be a complete peace? Have all the issues been resolved?
- Will it be a permanent peace? Will this peace initiative last only a short time? Will our children have to renegotiate this peace again?
- Will it be a comprehensive peace?
  - Will it reach all parts of the community?
  - Will it deal with property issues?
  - Will it deal with agricultural issues?
  - Will it deal with government appointment and benefits?
  - Will it be a peace that provides opportunities for everyone?
  - Will it be a practical and achievable peace?
- Will it only be words on a paper or will it be something that actually changes society?

Is this a peace reached only so the peace makers will be happy or does this really solve problems at the grass roots?

*Shaping means work.*

Nothing ever gets shaped without someone spending time doing it.

- Shaping peace will take work.
- Shaping peace will take discipline.
- Shaping peace will take perseverance.
- Shaping peace will require regular adjustments.

Shaping peace is not for the lazy or the half-hearted or for those who are easily discouraged.

***Shaping means that the more skillful the shapers, the more beautiful and successful the end product will be.***

Nigeria is filled with beautiful craftsmen. The first time I came to Nigeria, I bought several beautiful black carvings made from mahogany. Over the years, my wife has bought many beautiful dresses and had experts make clothes for her. Go to the Jos museum and you will see carvings and statues and paintings and other beautiful artifacts that show the great talents and expertise of the Nigerian people.

In all of these crafts, the more skillful the worker at shaping things, the more beautiful and functional and durable the product is. Those craftsmen did not become experts immediately. They spoiled a lot of raw material before they became experts.

The point is obvious. What kind of peace do we want? If we want a lasting durable peace, it is going to take hard work; it is going to take suffering through some mistakes; it is going to mean getting our best people involved and working at it with all our energy. However, if we work hard and are patient we will eventually produce something that will be beautiful and functional and durable.

## **Conclusion**

I will conclude this chapter by telling a story that I heard at a peace and reconciliation meeting in Jos during March 2010. Unfortunately, I cannot remember the distinguished gentleman who told the story and for that I apologize. This was a meeting in which leaders on both sides were trying to bring about peace. This is the story:

Two brothers inherited a parcel of land from their father. They both built houses on their sides of land. Unfortunately, after some time, they quarreled. One day the senior brother saw that his brother had taken a bulldozer and dug a deep ditch between their two houses. The senior brother was so angry he called a carpenter and told him that he wanted him to build a mighty wall between his house and the brother's house. He wanted the wall to be so high that he could not see or hear anything from his brother. The materials were brought and he left to go on a journey. When he returned, he was disappointed to see that the wall had not been built. Instead, there was a bridge across the ditch. He was now very angry and was about to shout at the carpenter when his younger brother came rushing across the bridge and threw himself into his brother's arm. There was immediate reconciliation. The senior brother called the carpenter and said, "Thank you for building the bridge. I now have many other jobs for you." The carpenter said, "I am sorry. I have many other bridges to build."

After the story was told, the gentleman led the group in repeating the following statement:

We have hurt one another many times. Today, we forgive one another in honesty and humility and pledge never to use violence to resolve our problems. So, help us God.

## **Chapter Thirteen**

### **Making Peace in Jos**

One day I received a call from Rev. Yakubu Pam, an Assemblies of God pastor and CAN leader in northern Nigeria informing me that later that day there was going to be a meeting between youth representatives from the Beroms, Anagutas, Jarawas, Hausas, Fulanis, Yorubas and Igbos under the sponsorship of the Young Ambassadors for Community Peace and Inter-Faith Foundation (YACPIF) platform. I had a tight schedule but managed to get to the meeting shortly after it started. I was expecting about 60 participants. When I got there, I discovered that there was somewhere between 800 and 1000 youth from all these backgrounds. They were all tired of fighting and hungry for peace. Several people spoke. I was happy to be invited to make an extemporaneous presentation on peace to this group. It was such a successful meeting that Rev. Pam initiated a second one about ten days later in Bukuru, on 1 April 2010. That meeting also had about 1000 participants I actually had time to prepare for that meeting. The following presentation is the speech I gave to that group which was made up of half Muslim and half Christian youth who had been the active fighters in the Bukuru area. We had a total of eight presentations like this in the Jos area and I made a similar presentation at most of them. This meeting started with a lot of tension. However, the meeting seemed to break the anger and hatred that these groups had toward one another at least for this meeting. Amazing positive things came out of this meeting.

#### **Introduction**

Greetings to all of you. I am happy to see so many people gathered together for peace. I have lived in your country since 1988 and have lived in Jos since 1991. I have raised my family here and have been here so long, I have decided to apply for an indigeneship certificate (a little attempt at a joke since being recognized as an indigene—or official local resident, is one of the sticky issues in this conflict between the Hausas and the Beroms).

I am a professor in the Department of Religious Studies so I would like to start my remarks by telling two stories from our respective religions. In fact, these are two stories from the two founders of our religions, Christianity and Islam. I believe that these stories have a bearing on the purpose for our meeting today.

#### **Story about Jesus**

Today is Thursday of the Passion Week. On this day of the Passion Week, the day before Jesus was crucified on the cross, Jesus and his disciples were praying very late in the evening in the Garden of Gethsemane. A group of soldiers from the Temple came to arrest Jesus. Peter pulled out his sword and took a swing at the closest man to him, which happened to be the servant of the high priest whose name was Malchus. Apparently Malchus saw the sword coming so he ducked. However, he did not duck quite fast enough and the sword cut off his ear. If I had been there I am not sure what I would have done. Perhaps I would have been happy to see my enemy suffer. Perhaps I would have put my foot on the severed ear and twisted it in the ground. However, that is not what Jesus did. He did two things. First, he rebuked Peter. He said, *“Put your sword back in its place”* (Matthew 26:52). And then Jesus said to his other disciples, *“No more of this”* (Luke 22:51). Jesus did not want any of his followers to use violence. Then Jesus did something else. He reached down and took the ear and put it back on the head of the man and, instantly, the ear was completely healed.

This was the first life-threatening violence Jesus experienced in his ministry as far as we know. What did he do when he experienced violence? He corrected his disciples who wanted to respond to violence with violence. In addition, he used his supernatural ability to heal this wounded soldier who had come to arrest him. That tells you something about the attitude of Jesus toward violence and retaliation. When he began to experience the violence that would eventually kill him, his thought was on how he could help one of his “enemies” who had come to arrest him.

### **Story about Mohammed**

I have worked in the same department of religious studies at the University of Jos with my Muslim colleague, Professor M. T. Yahya, for the last 18 years. In addition, for the last 10 years we have been going to various places doing HIV/AIDS workshops together. I have heard Professor Yahya tell this story many times. I ask my Muslim friends to please forgive me if I do not get the details exactly right.

One day Mohammed left his house to go to the mosque. At a certain point, he passed a man who started abusing him and even throwing rubbish at him. However, the prophet did not harm him or even speak harshly to him. The next day, the prophet passed the same place and the man continued to abuse him and shout insults at him. This continued every day for months and perhaps even years. However, on another day, the prophet passed through that same area but the man was not there to shout at him. Mohammed was surprised and inquired about him. His companions said, “Have you not heard? The man is very sick.” The prophet stopped his trip to the mosque and said, “We must go and greet him.” Mohammed then went immediately to the man’s house where he met him in the bed and prayed for him. The man was very ashamed that the prophet who he had abused so many times had come to see him. But this act of kindness for the abuse he had done to him for so many years so impressed him that he turned from his pagan ways and was converted to Islam.

### **Two Lessons**

There are two lessons I would like to point out that come from these stories from the founders of Christianity and Islam. Both stories teach us a lesson about peace.

#### **We must forgive if we are to have peace.**

All of life is filled with one disagreement or another.

- You disagree with your relatives including your husband or wife and brothers.
- You disagree with your friends and mates.
- You disagree with your neighbors at times.
- You disagree with the people in the market and those sitting next to you on public transportation.
- You certainly disagree with those who are different from you—those from a different ethnic group, those from a different political party, those from a different religion and even those who like a different sports team.

There is no perfect human being. We all make mistakes and we often offend one another, either knowingly or unknowingly. Therefore, the only way to have peace is to simply forgive. What does that mean today?

- Has someone burned down your house? You can go burn his house and that might give you some temporary sense of satisfaction but it will not bring about peace. Unfortunately, it will bring about retaliation and revenge from the other side. Or you can choose to forgive. It takes a bigger man to forgive than to retaliate. Retaliation is a human response but forgiveness is a divine response.
- Has someone killed one of your relatives? This is a very painful thing. However, even when Jesus was hanging on the cross and the Romans were killing him, Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”* Again, you can hate that person and look for an opportunity to kill him or his brother but when you do that his brother will seek revenge which will cause even more problems. Or you can choose to forgive and stop the cycle of violence.

Are you willing to have that same attitude that Jesus and Mohammed had—an attitude of forgiveness? I assure you that if you forgive another person, God will give you peace in your heart and you will have peace with that other person. And if you can have peace with those who have abused and offended you and your family, you can have peace in Bukuru. And if we can have peace in Bukuru, we can have peace in Jos. And if we can have peace in Jos, we can have peace in Nigeria.

**A part of forgiveness is to look for good things to do to those who abuse us.**

It is one thing to say, “I forgive you.” It is another thing to do something good for someone who has treated you badly. When Jesus experienced violence, he first thought about the welfare of the other person. When Mohammed experienced violence he first thought about the health of the man who had been abusing him.

The way that we demonstrate our forgiveness is by doing deeds of goodness and kindness to those who have injured you or abused you or offended you.

Several years ago, I visited Sudan at the invitation of the former president of Sudan, President Jaafar Muhammad an-Nimeiry who is now an old man. I was met at the airport by a man who took care of the various protocols and then took me to the hotel. He continued to be with me and our group the whole time I was there. I visited Sudan a second time and this same man continued to be with us on that trip as well. Someone finally told me his story.

When Nimeiry was head of state, this man whose name is Mutalib was a soldier in the army. Several army officers decided to assassinate President Nimeiry and stage a coup. Mutalib was part of the assassination team. The team attempted the assassination but it failed and some were shot and others were captured. Mutalib was thrown in prison and condemned to die. However, shortly before he was to be executed, President Nimeiry called Mutalib into his office and said, “Young man, I am going to forgive you for what you tried to do to me and release you unconditionally. You are free to go.” Mutalib was shocked. He was happy for his freedom but after thinking about it for a while, he went back to President Nimeiry and said to him, “Sir, I deserve to die. You have spared my life which means I owe the rest of my life to you. Therefore, I am surrendering my life to you as your servant. The rest of my life is at your disposal. I will do anything you ask me to do.” That was almost 30 years ago. This man has been serving Nimeiry, almost like a slave for the last 30 years. Even after he ceased being president, Mutalib has continued to do anything the man has asked.

Now here is the question: Would Nimeiry have been better off enjoying the little bit of satisfaction knowing that his assassin had been killed or did he get more benefit from forgiving this man who tried to kill him? The answer is very obvious.

I challenge you to look for a way to do demonstrate your forgiveness by doing something good for the person or group who has caused you great harm. If you do that, you will be demonstrating the characteristics of the founders of your religions. And you will be doing what is ultimately the best for you, your family and your community.

## **Peace**

As I suggested earlier, forgiveness leads to peace. And peace is what we desperately need. We must have peace on the plateau. I want to have peace and I am sure that you also want to have peace. Peace has so many benefits.

- Peace will give you a chance to get a job.
- Peace will give you a chance for an education.
- Peace will give you a chance to make more friends.
- Peace will give you a chance to get married and have a family.
- Peace will give you a chance to do everything you have wanted to do in life.

However, fighting and killing and burning will take away everything you have wanted to do.

- It will rob you of an education and a job and a family and friends.
- It will rob you of sleep at night and a comfortable life
- It may even rob you of your life.

## **Your Turn**

For reasons I do not fully understand, God Almighty has chosen your generation to deal with this huge problem. In your grandfather's generation, there was peace on the plateau. No one cared whether a person was a Christian or a Muslim, a Hausa or Berom or Afizere or Anaguta or Yoruba or Igbo or an Oyebo (white man). That was when Plateau State was known as the home of peace and tourism. However, something has disturbed our peace. Your parents' generation spoiled things. Either because of their greed or their ignorance or something else, they lost the peace this city once enjoyed. And do you know what else they have done? Many of them are using you to fight their battles for them. You know better than I that often the *manya* people get the little people like you to fight their battles for them. And you are the ones who suffer.

However, it is time for the youth to say "It is enough. We are no longer going to fight the battles for the older generation." In fact, I am convinced that God Almighty allowed these problems to develop on the plateau at this time because God knew that you would be the best generation to know how to solve them. To be honest, I do not know the best way to solve these problems. However, I believe that God is going to give you the answers about how to solve these problems of violence and loss of peace. The question is will you rise to the challenge and reject the violence that is trying to destroy you and work hard for peace?

I challenge you to leave a legacy to your children and grandchildren who will know that it was this generation that solved the violence problems on the plateau.



## **The Voices**

Before I conclude, I want to tell you about some voices that I am hearing right now. Listen carefully. Do you hear those voices? I hear them. What are those voices? They are voices of children. In fact, they are the voices of your children—your future children and they are speaking to me and they are speaking to you. Do you know what they are saying? They are saying, “Tell our future parents not to participate in violence.” Did you hear that? They said, “Tell our future parents not to participate in violence because if they participate in violence, they may be killed. And if they are killed, they will never be able to get married and if they do not get married, they will never be able to give birth to us.” Therefore, on behalf of your future children, I am pleading with you not to engage in violence.

I know that some of you have probably said in the past, “Well, I don’t care what happens to me—whether I live or die. I am just going to deal with those people.” That is a nice pious-sounding statement which even sounds selfless on the surface. However, remember that if you die while participating in some violent action, all of the children that you would have given birth to and all of the children that they would have given birth to and all the subsequent generations will never be born. Do not deny your future children a chance to live by your anger and violent retaliations today.

## **Conclusion**

I am calling on each of you individually to establish peace with your neighbor and with those you have been battling. Establish peace so well, that you can get married some day and give birth to those children. Establish the kind of peace that will last so that one day, you can sit under the mango tree with your friends with whom you used to fight and tell your grandchildren and his grandchildren that there was a time that you fought each other but that you learned that peace is better than war. You learned that love is stronger than hate. You learned that forgiveness is better than retaliation. You learned that rejecting violence and embracing peace was what gave you a life that you lived until old age.

## **Chapter Fourteen**

### **Ten Days of Terror: A Journal of the Ethno-Religious Crisis in Jos, September 7 - 17, 2001**

The following pages are excerpts from my journal which were written during the first major Jos Crisis, starting 7 September 2001 and extending for ten days. The first few pages were all written on Friday evening, the first day of the crisis. After that, my practice was to sit down at my computer three or four times a day, note the day and time and then start writing what I had just seen and heard or, in some cases, what we were experiencing at the time. Some of the “rumors” that I recorded and some of the details were as accurate as I could record them at that time but only reflect the information that I had at the time and may not reflect the “whole truth.” In addition, the journal records opinions and many of my thoughts and emotions during the crisis. The original journal of this crisis was 51,502 words or 77 pages long. I have removed much of that information but left in as many details as possible to help the reader to get an idea of how these things unfold and to see and feel the emotions of the people during this time. The major editing I have done is to try remove those things that were repetitive or irrelevant to the goals I articulated above. Of course, I have done other minor editing to correct spelling, grammatical and other issues, but these journal entries are 99% the way I wrote them. In addition, in some cases, I have either removed names or changed the names in this section to protect the identity of people. In addition, those portions of the journal that are found in Chapter 11 were noted but omitted from this journal to save space.

#### **7 September 2001**

This afternoon, Margaret, one of the Fulbright scholars stopped by the house and said that there was trouble in town. If we needed to go anywhere, we should avoid the town center. She did not know exactly what the problem was. However, she had been down in town a day or two ago and saw a big crowd. Her driver wanted to see what was happening. He came back and told her that there was a man lying on the ground who was being beaten severely. Every time he tried to get up someone would beat him again. A few minutes later, Karen stopped by the house and also told us that there was trouble in town and that we should avoid the center of town. She did not know what the problem was.

A few minutes later, I heard a vehicle pull up outside. I went to see who it was and it was Apollos (a young man who had lived in our compound for the previous 10 years) and one of his workers. About the time I got outside, I saw another vehicle pulling in the driveway. Apollos looked a little guilty and explained that he was moving these vehicles from his shop because of the possibility of trouble. He has a mechanic workshop about a mile from the house on the main road. So, he had moved four or five cars to my compound which he hoped would be a bit safer in case of trouble. I asked him what was going on. He said that there was some kind of Muslim-Christian conflict. He said that some of the Muslims were unhappy that a Muslim had recently been removed from some political office. (I was later to learn that the opposite was the case: Some Christian indigenes were concerned that a Hausa Muslim had been appointed to head up the poverty alleviation program in Jos.) Anyway, there were some problems in town with some burning and other trouble.

I told Apollos that we were supposed to go into town and eat supper with a missionary family, Craig and Beth Ewaldt. He said that another missionary had just come through Farin Gada and many vehicles were turning back because many of the boys in Farin Gada were out

on the streets with sticks. Farin Gada is about a mile and a half from us and the closest commercial center to us.

We were supposed to leave to go to the Ewaldt's at 5:30. At 5:45, Mary asked me if I were ready to go. My watch was reading 5:20; it had apparently stopped. So, we hurried up and left. I knew that there was tension in town so decided not to take my big Hyundai Galloper (Jeep-like vehicle). If I get in a riot and get my vehicle burned, I would rather lose my Peugeot 505 rather than my big Jeep. Apollos had urged me to go around Ring Road but I decided to go through Farin Gada, which means that I would go around the western part of the town.

### **Traveling to Ewaldt's**

As we pulled out on the main road, outside of the university community, there was a police vehicle coming toward us loaded down with policemen. There were also a lot of people on the road. There appeared to be dozens of people walking away from Farin Gada. When we passed by the Student Village (a place with perhaps 200 small duplexes where perhaps a thousand students live), there were many students standing out by the edge of road, looking toward town. When we looked back toward the main part of town, we could see heavy black smoke rising up in several different places. We also noticed that most of the shops were shut in Farin Gada. My mother-in-law, Mrs. Louise McCoy had arrived earlier in the week to visit with us. I tried to calm her a bit by telling her that most of the smoke was coming from burning tires. However, there were some clouds of big black smoke that were much too big for burning tires.

When we got around on the Zaria Road, things appeared almost normal. There were a lot of people on the streets and many were standing around staring toward the center of the city. At one place, I saw two people sitting outside playing checkers as if nothing were happening. When we got to the Polo Ground, there were several hundred people ringing a small soccer field watching a soccer match. That was amazing. The riot or whatever it was, was taking place less than a mile away and here were people playing soccer. One interesting thing we noticed is that a big automobile dealer on Zaria Road which had 50 vehicles on his lot had moved nearly every one of them. The lot was almost empty. Another smaller car lot further down the road had removed all of their vehicles as well.

There had been no traffic wardens in Farin Gada or at the Gada Biyu Junction. However, when we got to the Hill Station Junction, the traffic wardens were working normally. The rest of the trip to the Ewaldt residence was uneventful.

When we arrived at the Ewaldt's, Ted met us outside and asked if everything was OK on the road. We went inside and Craig was talking to a Rev. Dung. He had come on business but briefed Craig a bit on the problem. His perspective was that this was definitely a Christian-Muslim problem and that it was caused by some kind of political appointment. As soon as the man left, Craig said, "I did not know whether or not you would be able to come." I said, "Well, I came because I gave my word but I really didn't know whether I should come or not." And then I added, "And Craig, unfortunately, I will not be able to stay very long. I don't want to be out too long. In fact, I am worried that there might be a curfew and I do not want to get stuck away from home." Craig said, "Well, maybe we had better turn on the radio and see what is happening. However, you know that you are more than welcome to stay here tonight if you need to. We have plenty of room."

Craig turned on the radio and within about five minutes, we heard an announcement that the acting governor Chief Martin Botman was going to make an address. The National Anthem was then played and then the deputy governor made this speech:

Fellow citizens of Plateau State

You are all aware of the recent uprising in the city of Jos. I hereby appeal to all citizens to remain calm as government is taking every step to ensure that normalcy returns to the city. At this juncture, I want to take this opportunity to warn—all security agents have been directed to deal ruthlessly with any individual or group that exploits this situation to foment further trouble. In the meantime, the state government has imposed a curfew on Jos and Bukuru Metropolis from 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM. There shall be no movement of people except the security agents. Thank you.

### **Traveling Back Home**

As soon as I heard the word “curfew from 6:00 PM until 6:00 AM” I immediately said, “OK, we have to go.” Mary and her mother were busy talking to Beth Ewaldt. I told them we would have to go and immediately go up and headed downstairs. Mary and her mom could hardly believe that this was this serious—that we would have to leave the food on the table. However, it was already 6:00 PM and I did not want to run any chances or give any security person any excuse to do something foolish. I figured it would be difficult for them to start implementing the curfew while people were trying to get home.

So, we got in the car and headed home. Things appeared to be almost normal. However, it was obvious that the vehicles were now hurrying everywhere, so that they could get off the road as quickly as possible. On the way home, Mary still thought I was a little rash in just rushing off without even eating a bite. I explained to her that we could not play with this situation. The most important thing we could do was to get home. The trip home was fairly routine, at least at first. We even stopped and bought some bread at one place because we did not know what we were going to eat when we got home.

### **Delay at Student Village**

When we turned the corner at Farin Gada and got past the vegetable market, we could see a traffic jam up ahead. Vehicles were turning around and going back. I knew that this was in front of the Student Village, a place where several hundred university students stay. I pulled up as close as I could get. As vehicles turned around and went the other way, this created space for me. Finally, we were close enough to have some contact with the students. One student came by and said, “Open your boot so we can see what is there.” Apparently they were searching for weapons. I looked at him and said, “I am a lecturer at the university.” He said, “Sorry, sir, go ahead.” I pulled up a little further and we could then see the students. Several hundred had blocked the road and were not allowing any traffic through.

I have been in some student riots before and when I have been in those situations, I was a bit afraid. However, this time, I was very happy to be surrounded by students. These people certainly weren't angry with me. About that time, a student recognized me and came up smiling and said, “Doctor, don't be annoyed. We are just checking things. You will get through in just a moment.” About that time, one of my current students saw me and came running over to me. He apologized also and repeated that I would get through soon. He said,

“If anyone stops you, just say, ‘Great Josites,’ and they will let you go. I told him, “Just stay with me until I get through this so you can verify to all the others that I am a lecturer.” He stayed with me about five minutes as we inched along. I asked him what was going on. He said, “Well, we really don’t know but we have heard they killed three of our students.” We were now only about three vehicles from the front of the bottleneck. Things were beginning to open up a bit and one vehicle passed through from the other side. About that time, another one of my students, named Ezra, spotted me, and came running over. He greeted me and then started shouting, to the other students, “This is a lecturer; let him through.” Several other students picked up the refrain and soon I was being escorted through the mob like a hero. Near the end of the crowd, I recognized several of my female students. They saw me and started cheering like I really was a hero.

Actually, there was a rather friendly atmosphere at that time. The students did not have much to do. They were just out on the street stopping vehicles because they did not have anything better to do. This was not their fight but I am always afraid of the reaction of students in times of tension.

We were able to pass on through the crowd and finally turn on the road that leads to our house. Just as we did that, I spotted one my colleagues trekking along. I stopped and picked him up. He said that he had heard that the trouble had started at the mosque today and that the Muslims had burned several churches, including the COCIN Church on Sarkin Mango Street. I have preached at that church at least twice in the last year or so. He also said that he had heard that several people had died and that several bodies had been lying around down in town. That was certainly not good news.

When we got back to the house, Adamu was there. (Adamu is a Fulani Muslim working as a private security guard for me.) He had started to work earlier in the afternoon but when he started climbing the hill, someone stopped him and told him he had better go back. So, he took his bicycle back to his house and took a vehicle to town. When they came to the Naraguta Village, there were many people out on the streets, carrying knives and big sticks. The vehicle in which they were riding was stopped and someone hit it with a stick. Apparently the driver drove over into the ditch and got around the roadblock and then continued on to Jos.

We still had electricity when we got to the house (electrical outages were very common at the time). However, while we were standing around talking to Adamu, NEPA took the lights (one of the many ways that we say the electricity went off). Five minutes later, when I was upstairs, the lights blinked on for one second and then went off. That made me suspicious that this was not a normal load sharing cut off. I suspect that either NEPA had turned off the light to try to further discourage people from moving around or that someone had vandalized some NEPA facility. In that case, we could be without lights for a long time.

### **BBC Broadcast**

While Mary was preparing some supper, I worked a bit and listened to the local FM radio. The statement by the deputy governor was played several times throughout the evening. It was also translated into Hausa and read by the Hausa speaker an equal number of times. We ate supper and then I went upstairs at 8:00 PM to see if this was on the BBC. When the BBC came on at 8:00 PM, the first words were, “Christians and Muslims Clash in the city of Jos in Northern Nigeria.” That was the headlines for the African News which would take place immediately after the world news. At 8:05, BBC came back to Africa news

and repeated the headline. The man said that the normally peaceful city of Jos had been wracked by riots between Christians and Muslims that afternoon. He then talked to some person on the phone who was a BBC correspondent in Jos. The man confirmed that there had been a serious clash between Muslims and Christians that day. When he was asked what caused it, he told this story.

He said that normally, every Friday, the Muslims block off the roads for their Friday prayers just like the Christians block off the roads on Sunday for church. Apparently, a Christian woman had gotten caught inside the barrier. She was abused by the guards mounting the roadblock. However, she eventually got out and went and reported this to someone else. In a little while, some of her people came back to the mosque with her and started a confrontation. The thing grew from there. When asked whether there had been any kind of build-up to this crisis, he said that a Hausa Muslim man had been appointed to be the chairman of the poverty alleviation board in the Jos area. However, the local indigenes did not want that person and so there had been tension growing for the past week or so.

When asked whether there was damage, he mentioned that both churches and mosques had been burned in the central part of the town and toward the eastern part of town. He said many people had been injured. He did not mention that some had died. He said that he had spoken to the police commissioner who had assured him that they had adequate police to keep everything under control.

A little while later I was working at my computer and heard noises from a long distance. I went up to the second floor of our house and walked out on our balcony. I could see fires burning at the front part of the student village. Apparently, they were just burning small fires as they stood around and chatted and occasionally shouted. Later, I went outside to check out things. Adamu told me that just about five minutes before I had come out, he had heard a series of gunshots back toward the Naraguta Village. It was at least ten gunshots from more than one gun.

Well, this is a sad situation. People are killing people and burning and destroying things in the name of their God. I am afraid that if the Muslims have indeed burned the COCIN Church at Sarkin Mango Street, that there is going to be much more trouble and the Muslims will probably get the worst end of it. Jos is about 80 percent Christian. However, the saddest thing is that many innocent people—people who had nothing to do with any of this will be hurt and even die.

So that is the update on the situation up until 10:02 PM of September 7, 2001.

### **Saturday, 8 September 2001; 6:30 AM**

I woke up about 5:00 AM hearing the Muslims call the prayers over a loud PA system back in Jos somewhere. Although these prayers are called in Arabic and I do not understand any of that, the caller seemed more agitated and excited than usual. His voice went up and down for about five minutes. About ten minutes later, there was another mosque that started calling the prayers. He got through about two or three calls, perhaps 30 seconds and then stopped. Two or three minutes later, there was a third mosque that started calling. He also called one or two times before stopping. I could not be sure but I am almost certain that these prayers were cut short. I suspect that one of two things happened. First, the security agents responsible for guarding these facilities may have told them to stop these prayers. Also, there may have been Christians in the area that came and forced them to stop the prayers.

A little later, I heard a very loud car horn blowing for a few seconds. A few seconds later, I heard an attempt to call the prayers and then the loud horn blowing again. What I immediately suspected was that another mosque was trying to call the prayers but that someone was trying to block the prayers with a car horn. I continued to hear the mosque call the prayers and the horn blowing off and on and not always in sequence for the next couple of minutes. In addition, at one time, I was quite certain that I could hear a Muslim calling the prayers without the aid of a PA system.

Eventually I got up and went outside to see Adamu. He said that things had been relatively calm during the night. There had been a lot of noise over around the student village around 11:00 PM as if the students were knocking something. Also, a vehicle full of policemen had passed by on the back side of our house and had apparently gone to the VC's lodge and dropped off some policemen. Other than that, things were relatively calm.

I decided to walk down to the road in front of our house so I could see the main road. When I got down there, I was able to see a couple of vehicles that were passing by. The first one I saw was driving very fast. Another one hit his brakes while he was coming up to the student village so I suspect that there was still some kind of a student presence there. I walked out on the road leading away from our house so I could see back toward the main part of town. That view is blocked at our house by trees. When I got to where I could see the skyline over the main part of the city, my heart sank. There were two columns of dark smoke pouring out of the city. I doubt very seriously if these were fires burning from the day before. I suspected that they were fires that had been started not long before which means that the trouble probably continued throughout the night.

### **Radio Nigeria 7:00 AM Broadcast**

On the 7:00 AM Radio Nigeria Broadcast, there was about a five-minute segment on the crisis in Jos. This is a network that uses very old equipment so it is difficult to understand. However, the lady reading the news talked to their correspondent in Jos. He said that the crisis had started in the Congo-Jos area over a misunderstanding between Christians and Muslims. He indicated that when the crisis started, many people moved out of that area to safer areas. He said that several churches had been burned and that at least two people had been confirmed to have been killed. He did not mention any mosques being burned. He also referred to the fact that there had been tension in Jos for the past two or three weeks over the appointment of a certain Mohammed as the chairman of the poverty alleviation program in Plateau State. He indicated that he had talked to the police commissioner who had assured him that everything was under control. He said that he had 3000 policemen on the streets to make sure that everything was safe. He also indicated that the crisis had taken upon an ethnic flavor. He reported what the state government had done so far to try to stop the crisis.

### **Saturday, 8:00 AM**

I walked out and took another look at things a little later on. When I walked around to the place where I could see the town, there was more smoke coming up from a place to the west of where it was before. I suspect that this fire was coming from Gada Biyu. Apollos and Amos (a man who worked for us and lived in our compound) came out and were heading up to check on Apollos' shop and Amos' church. I stopped them and cautioned them about going up there. Amos told me that the day before the Muslims were throwing stones at their church and he wanted to go check on it. While we were standing there, two men came walking by. They had come from the junction. They said that there was one house on fire—a

church. They also said, “They have killed an Igbo man right behind the junction.” They also said that three people had been brought to the university clinic wounded but there was no doctor to take care of them.

I walked about halfway to the junction, stopping and talking to anyone coming from that way. Most of them had simply walked up to see what was going on. On the way up there, I heard a couple of sounds that sounded like guns. I suspect that it was tear gas canisters being shot. I later cut through a farm over to the other road. I met Ezra one of my students whom I had seen in front of the student village the day before. He said that he had come out of the village just in time to see me go by on the way to wherever I was going. He was quite certain that I would not be gone too long so he thought he might ought to stay there and be there when I came back through, just in case there was any trouble. So, when I came back through he was happy to see that there was no trouble. He also said, “Do you remember what you taught us some weeks ago about rumors? Well, that is what happened yesterday. They told us that they had burned some rooms and killed three of our students at Anguwar Rogo. However, someone came from there this morning and said that nothing like that had happened. It was all just rumor.” Well, I certainly hope that people do not start responding to rumors.

When I was walking back to the house, Apollos and Amos came driving by. When I got back to the house, Apollos had a rather sad smile on his face and said, “Those stupid guys at the junction hit my vehicle.” He took me and showed me where someone had smacked a big stick on the hood of his car. It had left a big dent in it. I asked him who had done this and he said it was “the Christian guys.” If the “Christian guys” treat their fellow Christians this way, I wonder how they will treat the Muslims

### **Jos is on Fire; 10:47**

Things have seriously escalated during the last three hours. I went out an hour ago and saw several new fires. From the road in front of the house, we can right now see a mosque burning. I took a shower about that time because I never know when I might get another one. When I got out of the shower, I saw heavy black smoke pouring out of the place behind student village. I assume that is the Himma Filling Station in Farin Gada. The base of the smoke continued to expand so I assume that all Farin Gada is on fire. As I sit here and type this I am hearing regular gunfire. Some of it is heavy like tear gas canisters being fired. However, there is also the occasionally tapping sound of automatic weapon fire.

The Yilpets (our next-door neighbors) came over to the house a few minutes ago. Also, Martin and Anabelle (Junior Fulbright scholars) came over. The Yilpets are relatively calm but Anabelle is terrified. She started crying a few minutes ago and is constantly asking questions, seeking to be reassured. “How often do these things happen?” “How long do they last?” “Is it safe to stay here?” After I saw the heavy smoke from Farin Gada, I told all of them to go to their houses and get their passports and one or two other things and put them in one bag just in case they needed to get away quickly.

I also stood on the balcony and shot a few video clips. The gunfire continues. I would guess that it is between one mile and two miles from here. However, though there is a lot of fighting and burning going on, I do not feel really unsafe here. I do not think that anyone will come down into this community and disturb us.



Apollos apparently made another trip up to his shop. He reported that things are burning either in his compound or right next door. There is also a car on fire in the Agip Station. And all of this is being caused by the students, according to him.

In fact, I talked to another man who had his car parked in front of my house. He lives over near the Deeper Life Church just across the road from the University gate. He said that he lives among the Muslims. Last night they were all together. In fact, they were praying together. Some Muslims came to burn the Deeper Life Church. The local Muslims refused to allow them to burn it. However, this morning about 7:30, the students came down the road burning tires and started throwing stones at the local Muslims. The Muslims went inside their houses and got out their guns and knives and started shooting. This man, who was a Christian, was very bitter at the students who were causing the whole thing.

A few minutes later I spotted Jim Bartlett (an expatriate colleague who is sponsored by IICS and serving in our Department of Religious Studies) walking down the road. He was out for his morning walk, unaware that there was a problem. When he got up to the clinic, he stopped to see what was going on. Three truckloads of wounded people were brought it while he was there. One of the students told him that the mosque near the university was on fire and a church also.

A few minutes later, three men came walking by. I noticed that their trousers were wet so I asked them whether they are coming from the bush. The man, who is one of my neighbors and a lecturer, told me that he got stuck on the other side of Jos last night. He tried coming this morning and got as far as the Standard Building. He abandoned his car there at someone's house. He and his two companions then went out on the west side of Jos and trekked along the hills so he could get back here and check on his family. He said that the Agip Station at Gada Biyu was burned. He also said that all of the markets at Gada Biyu were gone.

It is a very serious situation right now. We don't know what is happening but it may get worse before it gets better.

### **Saturday, 11:53 AM**

My yard is now full of people. I decided to walk up to the clinic about a half hour ago. As I was going, a young lady stopped me and said, "Oga, dey burnt our church." I did not recognize her but knew she was talking about the church, which is closest to our house, the Emmanuel Baptist Church, which is pastored by Sunday Gomna, one of my students to which I am closest. I immediately told her to go to my house and tell my wife that she should stay there.

I then walked on to the clinic. When I got there, there were three or four people sitting out in the waiting room. I walked on into one of the areas and saw a trail of fresh blood on the floor. I met a young man with a white coat on. I asked him if there were doctors there. He said that one of the doctors had come and other staff were there. I then walked on around to where there were about six people sitting or lying on the floor. Ahead of me was a student who had a big bandage on his back and was walking with a limp and blood was still dripping out of him. One had blood all matted in his hair.

(Just as I was typing this, there was a heavy burst of automatic weapon fire which sounded like it was at the junction about a half-mile from the house. I ran upstairs to get out on our

balcony to try to get a better vantage point. The shooting continued for about a minute with perhaps 30 to 50 rounds being fired.)

Back to the clinic. There was one tall student sitting on the floor with a bad wound in his side. There was another student lying on the floor with an IV in his hand. He appeared to be unconscious. There was another person laying on a piece of cardboard with very severe burns over a large part of his body. The skin was off of most of one arm, a part of his chest and a large portion of his shoulder. There were several more injured people, sitting and lying around on the floor. The doctors and nurses were working on others in the rooms.

While I was looking at the wounded, a lady came up to me and greeted me. I recognized her as the wife of Sunday Gomna, the pastor of the Emmanuel Baptist Church. She said, "They burned our church and our house." She said that she had left the night before and went to her mother-in-law's house not too far away. And when the fighting came near there this morning, they had fled again into our University Senior Staff Quarters. She said her mother and some others were with her. I asked her if she wanted to go to my house and she said she would like to.

I had thought that I might stay at the clinic and help out there a little since I have had some emergency medical training. However, the things that needed to be done were beyond my abilities so I thought perhaps I could be more useful helping the "refugees." We went outside, found her mother, and waited a few minutes for them to round up their belongings and the other people who were with them. While I was waiting, I heard shouting out on the main road which is about 300 meters away. I saw about five or six vehicles, including vans and pickup trucks and vehicles a little bigger than pickup trucks. They were all filled with students standing up in the back of them. They were all holding up their sticks and other weapons and shouting like they were going to a sporting event. Apparently, they had commandeered these vehicles somewhere. We had a perfect view of the student village from the clinic. It is perhaps half a mile away across a valley and a river. When the vehicles pulled up to the students who were all standing out on the road, the students started cheering. Their warriors had gone out, got their vehicles and were coming back triumphantly.

After everyone was ready, we started slowly trekking back to my house. When we got to the house Mary and her mom were outside talking to the lady I had sent there earlier. When we turned into the house, several other people who were just standing around also followed us. One of the people with the pastor's wife was a girl who was paralyzed in her arms and legs. Someone had to carry her.

For a while most of the people stayed outside. However, when the shooting started that I referred to above, everybody outside started running. There had been perhaps 50 to 100 people sitting around on the curb outside my house and probably 30 or 40 in my yard. The people on the road started running away from the direction of the gunfire and all of the people in my yard rushed into my house.

So now, there are probably 50 people in my house. They are sitting on all the chairs and all over the floor in the living room, the dining room, the hall, and the stairs. We have no electricity right now so there are no fans and the place is getting a little close. Mary found a little bread and put some peanut butter on it and gave to all the children.

Martin and Anabelle had gone up to Marilyn's house for a little while. They heard a rumor up there that the Muslims were coming through the river. When they heard the shooting, they started running and came back to our house. Anabelle is still terrified.

I have now put my passport in my pocket.

### **Saturday, 1:25 PM**

Things may be improving slightly. About 15 minutes ago, the Lord sent a very heavy rainstorm. It is typical of this time of the year. No one would want to be out in this kind of storm, even to fight. The rain drove even more people into our house. I went around and counted a little while ago and got 60. However, when the rains started, at least 10 or 15 more adults rushed into the house

Shortly before the rain, Nanny, Mary's 80-year-old mother, had a good idea. She decided to gather all the children outside and read to them. She set them on the steps and she leaned back on my red Peugeot 505. She was able to read for maybe five or ten minutes before the rains came.

Mary and some of the ladies are now trying to fix food. Unfortunately, we do not have a lot of food in the house. We have maybe ten pounds of rice so they are going to try to cook some jollof rice. Several of the ladies are helping Mary right now. We are normally much better prepared for a crisis than we are right now. Mary really has not stocked up on the food since she got back to Jos from the US, just a few days ago. Fortunately, she got some meat yesterday at the market and we have a little rice. However, ordinarily we would have a hundred-pound bag of rice. I see we do have ten kilos of grits, which we can use for *tuwo* if we have to.

About 45 minutes ago, a load of students on a confiscated truck, came by the house singing. They appeared to be headed over to the Abuja hostels. This concerned me a little. While out before the rain, I had talked to John, one of our post graduate students who had been up at the clinic when the shooting started. He said the students had just brought a wounded person in. While they were there, someone brought another person from another part of town. The students were then confiscating all of the fuel from the second vehicle that had just come in. They were complaining that the police and soldiers were not helping matters. A rumor was circulating that the police had watched as the Muslims had butchered one of the students over at the other senior staff quarters. They also said that they were not finished with what they wanted to do. That is why they were trying to get more fuel. They did not have guns so their method was to take one of the confiscated vehicles and whenever they saw a group of Muslims, they would run into them trying to knock them down and kill as many as possible. They said that they were not going to stop as long as one student was still alive. They were full of bravado kind of talk.

The thing that concerns me a little is if these students come by my house they will see nine vehicles in my driveway. This would be a perfect place to come and confiscate vehicles. In addition, I have two barrels of fuel in my garage. If they knew it was here they would come and get it. I would not want my fuel to fall into the hands of anyone who was going to use it for destruction. Mary suggested that perhaps we ought to start the generator. However, I was afraid that that might draw attention to our house and we don't really need to do that.

All of the IICS (International Institute for Christian Studies – now Global Scholars) staff are here also. Roslyn and her children are upstairs in Daniel's old room with the Barlett's and Nanny. I think Nanny is working on her quilt at the present time now that the rain is pouring down. One of the things that concerns us a little is that Yoilah was supposed to arrive at Abuja from the US last night and come to Jos today. (Dr. Yoilah Yilpet is a lecturer associated with IICS and also serving in the Department of Religious Studies.) Thomas went down to pick him up. Obviously, he has gotten the word somewhere along the line and is now waiting somewhere until things calm down before completing the rest of his trip. We are praying that the Lord will be with him. I know that Roslyn and the kids must be concerned about him but there is little we can do right now but wait and pray. I know that Yoilah must also be very concerned about his family. There is no news on the radio about what is happening. There is no way to get news from this place to the other side of town where he may be so we just have to wait.

### **Saturday, 2:12 PM**

About six of the local boys just came from the Katako area to check on their wives and families. They reported to me that everything is calm now across the road from us where all the fighting took place this morning. They also reported that there are plenty of soldiers up there posted on the road, perhaps as many as 50. This is good. Before, the soldiers were just occasionally patrolling through the area and when they came in view, the combatants would hide. When they passed, they would come out and continue their fighting and burning. Now that they are in the area, hopefully that will help.

### **Saturday, 2:54 PM**

I just went out and greeted a couple of more local people who had come to check on their people. They also reported that things are calm outside the gate. A lady came by and said that one can move all the way to Gada Biyu right now. The pastor's wife came to tell me that she wanted to leave and go to her village which is about an hour's walk from here. Her oldest daughter was taken there yesterday. She knows that her people will be worried about her since they will know that the church has been burned.

However, we are still hearing gunfire. For the last 15 minutes there has been sporadic gunfire in the Farin Gada area. Also, we can hear some automatic weapon fire back toward Gada Biyu.

### **Saturday, 3:00 PM**

Praise the Lord. I just heard a Peugeot 504 pull up next door. That means that Yoilah is home. He got through the trouble.

I went over to see him and he is very happy to be back. There was one small casualty. The back window of the IICS Peugeot 504 was broken out. Yoilah said that he had heard last night that there was trouble in Jos and that there was a dusk to dawn curfew. However, he assumed things would be calm today. However, when they got to Bukuru, they started seeing these roving gangs on the road. So, he decided to divert to a friend's house in Bukuru. He stayed there for a while and then decided to come on. He passed by the A Division Police Headquarters. (More heavy shooting right now—heavy automatic weapon fire which sounds like it is coming from the Gada Biyu area.)

To continue with Yoilah's story: He said that there were hundreds of refugees at the Divisional Police Headquarters. Many of them were Ibgos from Tuden Wada who were afraid of being killed. He also confirmed that there is destruction everywhere. There are dozens if not hundreds of vehicles which have been burnt. There are houses and businesses which have been burned. There is incredible destruction.

The gunfire I referred to earlier continued off and on for the next 15 minutes. Much of it was not the rapid pop, pop, pop of the AK 47 but of a heavier machine gun. The gunfire came in bursts of three or four shoots within a one second period.

We just got a note from the DVC that there is going to be a meeting at his house at 4:00 PM and that all residents should come. I will plan to attend.

The biggest problem with all of this is no information. We have no telephones so we cannot call outside of the area to find out what is going on. The radio is not broadcasting anything. So, we just have to wait until things calm down and find out what actually happened. I am relieved that Yoilah is here but I am now concerned about what people outside will think when they hear of this. If this made BBC news, it is likely to make news in other agencies. Our people will be very concerned but there is no way that we can communicate with them until things calm down and we can move freely. I would like to send an email but we don't even know if the email service is in business.

No, I will have to correct myself. The biggest problem is not the lack of information or the inability to get out information. The biggest problem is that innocent people are dying and that the hard-earned property of people is being destroyed. Another major concern is for our staff. Adamu left this morning to return to his home. He had to pass through the Naraguta Village on his way home. That is where their vehicle was attacked yesterday. I am afraid that he will come back tonight to guard my house and will get here and some of these hot Christians may try to abuse him or even kill him. Also, we don't know about Andrew (my driver). Tuden Wada has apparently been very bad. I trust that he and his family are all well. Also, I don't know where Amos (another worker who lives in the compound) is. He left sometime this morning, probably to go up and see what he could do about his church. He lives right here but I don't know where he is. Also, what about James (a Liberian student who is working on a special CRK Teacher's Manual project) and his family? I hope they are all well. (More shooting right now.)

### **Saturday, 7:24 PM**

We received a notice that there was to be a meeting of all residents at the deputy vice chancellor's house at 4:00 PM. I decided to walk over there and when I walked out of the driveway, I met the former deputy vice chancellor (DVC). We walked together. He had gotten involved the night before in taking a load of wounded students to the Jos University Teaching Hospital.

We eventually gathered in the living room of the DVC. He welcomed us and said that it was only God who has spared our lives. He was also very full of praise for the students who had worked tirelessly on the security detail. He then raised several issues. The most serious was that the fact that a number of people had been spotted on the backside of the Permanent Site, as if they were observing. No one knew who these people were or why they were there but everyone was suspicious. The DVC recommended that we form ourselves into a vigilante group in order to protect ourselves during the night. It did not look as if the police or soldiers

were doing much. This was discussed and three suggestions were made. Some of us would need to go see the student leaders. Second, some would need to try to see the police and soldiers to try to coordinate security in the night. Third, we would need some kind of password during the night so that all of us would know ourselves. Someone suggested “alfa” and “tango.” However, we eventually settled on “rice” and “beans” as something simple.

The former DVC is very much of a leader and made several helpful suggestions. He suggested that perhaps “one of our American” friends would like to help them find the police since the presence of white people might give greater urgency to the situation. I immediately volunteered to go with any delegation to try to find help.

Finally, the DVC asked me to pray the closing prayer. I did so with a prayer like this: “Father, this is a day that you have made. It has been a difficult day for many of us. I am praying that you will take care of us tonight. Give us wisdom to know how to take care of ourselves. Help us to be strong and alert. But most of all, we pray that you will send your guardian angels to surround us and protect us. In the name of Jesus. Amen.”

Afterward, the DVC, the former DVC and one other man got in the DVC’s vehicle to see who we could find. We first of all stopped by the clinic. Apparently, they had transferred all of the cases to JUTH. The doctor who attended our meeting said that there had been as many as 200 people who had been seen and treated at the clinic that day. From there, we went up to the gate leading out of our compound. We found the other delegation of residents had stopped to talk to students. We stopped and joined them. There was one rather responsible looking student who seemed to be in charge. They told us that there was a police major who was at the student village and if we went there, we would find the fellow. When we asked them how we could help them, one of the students reached in his pocket and pulled out some bullets for an AK-47. He said they had managed to get a gun from someone but they had only eight bullets. He said, “Can you get us some of these?” Well, I am afraid that we could not help them much on that.

So, we got in the vehicle, went outside the university compound, and drove the half-mile to the student village. One of the students had decided to ride with us just in case the students did not recognize us. There were several hundred students all out in front of the student village. I would guess somewhere between 500 and 1000. We got out and they immediately started gathering around us. The DVC said he wanted to address them (more heavy gunfire outside). They gathered around and he said, “I want to thank all of you for what you have done. I have been told that if it had not been for you, maybe we would all be dead. You have defended us and we are grateful. We have been told about some suspicious looking people behind our permanent site so we are trying to coordinate our defense. That is why we are here. Keep up the good work.”

Someone said that the pay phones in the student village were working. Someone produced a phone card and the DVC went to try to call the VC. He later joined us and said that he had been unsuccessful. We went out and waited by the road to try to stop any policeman or soldier who came along. One vehicle soon approached with a soldier hanging out of it. However, it was only escorting the vehicle somewhere. A few minutes later, we spotted two soldiers walking toward us. We waited for them. When they came near us. One of them had a radio. I asked him if he could communicate with someone on our behalf. He said he could not because the radio was on one frequency. I asked him where his officer was. He said that he had gone to drop off some other soldiers but would come back soon. He said that I should write a note. I had my yellow note pad with me so I quickly wrote a note from

the DVC stating that we were very vulnerable and needed protection in the night. I furthermore requested that he come to the first house inside the permanent site and see us about the security matters.

While I was talking to these soldiers and writing the note, another vehicle pulled up that proved to be a police vehicle. There was also a police inspector inside though he was in plain clothes. The DVC took him aside and talked to him. I am not sure of all that they said but he said that the army and the air force would be coming to our area within an hour or so and that they would take charge of the security. After those two meetings, we were satisfied that we had done our best so we returned to the senior staff quarters.

When I got back the group at my house had grown considerably. There were well over a hundred people in my living room and sitting on the porch and standing around outside. The people in the kitchen were on their second big batch of jollof rice.

When I got back to the house, I was happy to spot Adamu. He was standing there in the midst of all these refugees looking very dejected. I asked him about his day. He said his people had all fled because they were afraid of the Naraguta people. He also said that someone had wanted to cut him in the village today but someone recognized him and stopped them. He had not slept all day so I took him to my office, got a little rug and put it on the floor and made him go to sleep. I told him that he would be more valuable later in the night. In addition, I wanted to get him away from these people. Some hotheaded person might try to kill him if they discovered that he was a Muslim.

Marylin is the other Fulbright scholar here on campus. She lives over on the backside of the quarters, near the place where people said they had spotted suspicious looking people. I did not want her to stay over there by herself so I walked over to her house with Martin and told her that she should come and stay with me. She was very happy to do so and agreed to come in a few minutes. I told her to tell the people in her boy's quarters that, as a representative of the US Embassy, I had ordered her to leave her house and come and stay with me.

On the way back, I spotted another professor who was an Anglican priest on his porch. I stopped to give a report to him of what we had done. He also gave me a report. He was with the group who went to see the students over on the other side. When they reported the suspicious looking people, the students said that they had seen them as well and had managed to catch four of them. They had weapons so they just dealt with them. He apparently meant that the students killed them. This really is getting bloody.

When I got back to the house, we were invited to go over to the Yilpets for supper. We had originally planned to have supper at our house that night as something of a going away part for Martin and Anabelle and a welcome for Yoilah. However, that was now impossible. Since some of the food had been cooked we went over there and ate right quick while the others continued their cooking.

After I got back from the Yilpets, I had Apollos assemble all the people and translated my speech into Hausa. I told them that we were going to break them up into three groups. Some of them would stay at our house; some would stay at Martin's house across the road and some would stay with the Bartlett's. However, we still needed to feed people.

Apollos has pretty well taken over the leadership of the local people. He made everyone go outside except the nursing mothers and later added the pregnant women. We fed them first. After that, he had all the children line up and he brought them in a few at a time. He would take three of them, sit them in a little circle, put the food between them and tell them to eat. However, after all of that rice was finished there were still probably fifty people who had not eaten. Therefore, he went out and found some yams in his house and also Roslyn went to her house to cook some rice.

### **Saturday, 8:37 PM**

I was outside trying to find three men would be responsible for the three different households when two vehicles passed by on the road outside. One of them turned into my driveway. It was filled with students. Eventually, another van came in so that after a few minutes, there were about 20 students there. I chatted with them a few at a time and then decided to address all of them. I asked them to gather around and they did. One apologized for the circumstances but I told him that I had been here ten years. I then thanked them for their willingness to help us. I told them what we were doing with the displaced person. I also apologized that we did not have any food to give them. However, I had a crate of minerals (soft drinks) which I would be glad to give them. They were happy about that. And then I told them I wanted to pray for them. They agreed. They all removed their hats and I prayed for them that the Lord would give them wisdom to know what to do and alertness and everything else they needed to do their job. I also prayed that the angels of the Lord would encamp around us and them during the night. They all shouted “Amen” when I was finished.

After a few more minutes, I decided it was time to start sending people away who had already eaten. So, I went inside and got one woman to translate for me that it was now time to go to another house. One woman said, “We don’t want to go anywhere. We want to just stay here.” I explained to her that there were many people outside who had not eaten and if they had eaten, they should be willing to go to another house which was just like this one. Finally, they started getting up one by one and followed me outside. I waited until we had about 20 adults before sending them off with Jim and Karen Bartlett. Several more later joined them so I suspect that there were at least 30 adults who went with them. A few minutes later, I assembled another group and took them over to Martin and Anabelle’s house. They have decided that they will stay here with us tonight so they were willing to give their entire house to the refugees. I took them over, unlocked the door and took them all inside. Of course, we still do not have any NEPA and we do not have too many candles. I picked out one lady who could speak English and gave her a tour of the house and told her that I was putting her in charge of the house. Apollos also came over after a while and explained everything to them in Hausa.

### **Saturday, 10:07 PM**

I am soaking wet. About twenty minutes ago, I took another group of displaced persons over to Martin’s house. I would guess that there are about 50 over there now. About ten minutes later, I took a group of about ten or twelve young men over to the Bartlett house. Just as we were getting over there, we ran into a group of people who challenged us with “Rice” and I shouted back “beans.” Just as we got there, it started to rain. Everyone had already gone to bed in the Bartlett household so I had to shout several times to get Jim’s attention. It was raining pretty hard when Apollos and I headed back to the house, about a quarter of a mile away. We were pretty wet by the time we got back.



Things have settled down a bit now. Everyone has had something to eat. I counted the people remaining in my house and there are at least sixty. And I do not know the name of a single one of them. However, they have all had something to eat and are now trying to settle down. Many of them are already asleep. I just turned the lights off in the living room and dining room but have left the hall light on for them. We are also running the generator right now. At our meeting this afternoon, the residents decided that it would probably not be best to run the generator. It would be easier to hear things without it. However, Mary complained that all of her food was going to spoil if we did not run the generator. So, I have decided to run it for a little while.

We have continued to hear shots in the evening. In fact, it almost sounds like New Year's night. There are occasional pops and louder bangs and some automatic gunfire. It is raining right now and the generator is running so I have not heard anything for a little while.

We made BBC again tonight. BBC said that there were still clashes between Muslims and Christians in Jos but the army spokesman said that things were some better. One reported claimed to have seen at least ten bodies in the street. If that is the case, then we know that at least 16 people have died. We know that there was one student killed over in the other quarters. Also, we lost one patient at the clinic this afternoon. In addition, the students apparently killed four people in the bush this afternoon. So, this has really become a very bloody matter.

Lord, the day is drawing to a close. Please protect us throughout the night and protect all of those people we have given shelter to. Thank you for the rain. May it continue to rain if that will cool things down. Amen.

### **Sunday, 9 September 2001; 5:24 AM**

We have survived the second night, thank the Lord. In fact, it was relatively quiet.

Somewhere around 11 PM Mary finally finished everything in the kitchen. She also began distributing blankets and sheets at that time. The weather is very cool this time of the year for Nigerians so we wanted all of them to have something.

The generator continued to run for a while. Finally, about 12 midnight, I decided that we needed to turn it off. I went down and woke up Adamu who had been asleep in my office since about 6:30. He woke up and put his shoes on. We then went outside. It was still raining slightly. We opened the door and the garage was filled with smoke. We let it clear out a few seconds before Adamu went in and turned off the generator.

When I got outside, I could see a fire up the road about a hundred meters from where we were with several people standing around. I assumed that this was the command post for the evening. So, Adamu and I went up there. I took my new little dog, Tega, with us. I wanted everyone to meet Adamu and understand that he is a legitimate person, even though he is a Muslim. When we got there, we discovered about ten people standing around the fire. They had taken an old tire and put several big pieces of firewood on top and the whole thing was burning very well. Everyone was in pretty good spirits. It was still raining slightly but they assured me that everything was under control.

I came back to the house and went to bed. I woke up at 4:30 AM. Everything was very quiet. I woke up again at 5:00. It was still quiet except for the normal morning sounds of

roosters crowing in the distance. I went downstairs and lit a candle so that people getting up before daylight could see. We had lit a candle the night before when we turned off the generator so that people would have a little light in house. The morning before, I had heard prayers being called from at least four different mosques. I listened and finally heard one person calling prayers but it sounded like he was doing so with the natural voice and without the aid of a PA system. Unfortunately, I was still hearing gunfire. Every once in a while I would hear a short burst of gunfire. Several of those were right out at the end of our road. I suspect that these were warning shots to just remind everyone that there is now a curfew from 4:00 PM to 7:00 AM.

The events related to the next 45 minutes are recorded in the chapter entitled, “A Violent Test to Determine the Level of our Faith: A Journal of Reflections from the Jos Crisis.” Therefore, I have chosen not to repeat them here.

### **Sunday, 7:35 AM**

Everybody is awake and moving around. There are many people in my compound right now. There are dozens of more standing in the road or sitting on the curb on the roads on both sides of my house.

I went outside earlier in the morning to check on things and when I did the blue van that has been carrying the students pulled up. They were interested in some fuel which I had promised to give them last night. I talked to two of them, their leaders. One was a tall fellow whom I have talked to several times. The other one is named Paul. He is a third-year student in architecture. He said he was an Igbo who was raised in Kaduna. He said, “I have had some experience in this before. I lost my house in Kaduna last May.” He then showed me a spot behind his ear and a wound in his side which were gunshot wounds he received on Friday. He said that the tall fellow, who was from Benue State, had received seven gunshot wounds on Friday, though apparently all of them were minor. Most of the guns that are being used by the Muslims in the conflict are homemade guns which often do not have the power of modern guns.

He also told me a little more about what they have been doing. During the night they had locked up the two gates to the university and patrolled those gates during the night. There had been no violence though they had shot a couple of times in the air to let people know they were there. He also told me what happened yesterday. He said that the Hausas had marched down the road from Farin Gada to attack the student village. They had gone out to meet them on the main road. And, fortunately for the students, they had managed to get two guns. He said that they had killed three of the attackers and driven the rest back to Farin Gada. They pursued them and that is when they burned the filling stations at Farin Gada market. They did so in response to the attack of these Hausas.

He said that they had also gone over to the other hostel to check on things. They had also reported that they had killed three people. Paul was not happy about that killing because he did not know who the people were or what they were doing. (another shot very close; it sounds almost like it was at the clinic but was probably out at the road.)

Paul said that they were going to try to get some rest. He said that these things usually last for four days so they wanted to be ready for tonight.

The firing continues. In fact, I have heard more gunshots during the last hour than during all of the conflict put together. A few minutes ago, I walked out to the road and had a chat with our Deputy Vice Chancellor, Jim Bartlett and one of our graduate students named John. While we were talking, two young fellows came from the junction. We stopped them and asked them if they were coming from outside. They confirmed that they were. We asked about the shooting. They said that the soldiers were shooting Hausas. This is what I was suspicious of. I strongly suspected that the soldiers were shooting anyone out on the street until 7:00 AM when the curfew was supposed to be lifted. However, the shooting continued after that. In fact, it has been pretty steady (currently several bursts of automatic weapons fire).

I also had a talk with Apollos. He said that he had talked to one of the husbands of our people who had been on patrol in that area all night last night. He said that the soldiers gave the Christian boys permission to patrol in their area and even in the Muslim area until 11:00 PM. In fact, some of the soldiers went with them. And every time they saw someone outside, particularly if he had a weapon, they shot him. Therefore, I strongly suspect that the Hausas are getting the worst end of this deal, by far.

Mary and her team have prepared some food and fed most of the people. I have not asked but it appears that she has cooked some grits. They are probably just plain grits but the children and others were eating them.

### **Sunday, 10:17 AM**

Things have calmed down a good bit. Most of the people have left the house. I would guess that we still have perhaps 30 or 40 around. Mary and her mom have all the children in the living room, doing a little Sunday School with them right now. There appear to be about 15 children in the room.

I just got back from a visit over to the student village. I have wanted to report to the American Embassy that we are all well. I prepared a fax this morning in case I could get somewhere where there is a fax machine. I gave them a few of the details of the crisis and all the names of the six American families at the university at that time and assured them that all of us were OK. I also informed them about our attempts of taking care of the displaced persons. I also asked them to call the IICS office in the US and assure them that all of their staff were OK.

The DVC suggested that I go over to the Vice Chancellor's at the other campus. A driver came by and assured me that the road was clear all the way to the other campus, as long as I stayed on the Ring Road. However, when we were getting in the vehicle, there was a fairly serious burst of automatic gunfire right up near the junction where we would be going out. I stopped some people who were walking from that direction and asked them what was going on. They said, "The Muslims are still trying to fight and the soldiers are still shooting them. Don't go through Katoko Junction." However, they thought that Ring Road might be OK. However, there was shooting back in the direction of the other campus. It was at that time I remembered that the Student Village has working pay phones. All you need is a phone card. I remembered we had two phone cards up in our bedroom. I did not know whether or not they were working but went and found them. I then got Apollos to go with me over to the Student Village.

When we got over there, things were very calm. There were no students out blocking the road as there had been the day before. I stopped at the entrance to the student village and asked one student where the pay phones were. He took me to the place where they were. I tried my first card but it was dead. However, my second card had 77 units left on it. I called the USA Embassy number in Abuja. However, when using a pay phone here, whenever the other person answers, you have to push a button to be able to talk. I forgot to do that until the person hung up the phone so I had to try again. This time I was a little smarter. I told the person answering the phone who I was and that I was calling from the University of Jos about the condition of the American citizens here. I told him I wanted to talk to whoever was in charge and to do it quickly because my card was running out. (several gunshots right now directly behind the Agip Station). After a minute or so the person came back on the phone and said that the duty officer was not around and suggested that he take the message. I then told him that all the American citizens at UNIJOS were OK and then I gave him all the names of the Americans who live on the permanent site. I then asked him to call a specific person in the USA and tell him that all IICS personnel were safe. He assured me he would pass the message on to the duty officer and they would take care of things. So, I hope that takes care of that. I know that family members can hear about this crisis and get very concerned, especially since they have no ability to contact us. They sometimes contact their congressmen and the congressmen contact the Embassy but, in this case, there was little the Embassy could do. Actually, there are a lot of American citizens in the Jos area so the Embassy could have been besieged with requests for information. The difference is that most of the people on the other side of town have phones and can communicate with one another and even out of the country. All of that buried cable in front of my house is encouraging but it has not produced any telephones yet.

One of the things that has bothered me a little during this crisis is the local FM radio station. When we woke up Saturday morning, the station was playing Christian music. During the afternoon, it was also playing Christian music. I am a Christian and very proud of it and am normally very happy to have Christian music played on the government owned station. However, to play such music in the midst of a very tense crisis between Muslims and Christians in my opinion is provocative. There is a time to play Christian music and there is a time to refrain from playing Christian music, and in my opinion, this is not the time to play Christian music.

### **Sunday, 10:40 AM**

At 10:40, the Plateau FM station played the following three broadcasts.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Brothers and Sisters in Christ. I am Rev. Immanuel Nwaje. I have just returned from attending the security meeting this morning, representing the Christians, I have the privilege to speak to you and it has become necessary to speak to you on the unfortunate situation that erupted yesterday. I am making a passionate appeal to all Christians to keep calm and to not engage in acts that will further escalate this situation. Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace and we want peace. We should all cooperate with the security agents and our neighbors in securing peace and ensuring that peace returns to Jos. I pray that the God who is the God of grace and peace will grant us that peace to enjoy our city and our state and our nation. I pray that God will bless you in Jesus' name.

A minute or so afterwards, someone spoke in Hausa from the Muslim point of view. He is apparently the secretary of Juma'atu Nasril Islam. With my limited understanding of Hausa, I could tell he was urging everyone to remain calm.

The Deputy Governor then spoke. The following is his speech.

Further to my broadcast yesterday, it has become necessary for me to address you again on the unfortunate situation that broke out in Jos. I want to inform all citizens that the government has taken additional steps to bring the situation under control. In addition to more mobile policemen from neighboring states, the Nigerian Army and the Nigeria Air Force have been called in to help. Furthermore, the curfew is extended from 4 PM to 7 AM until further notice. There will be no movement except for security forces and those on essential duty. In addition, there is to be no unauthorized gathering of people. Let me use this opportunity to urge everyone to remain calm and not engage in any action that will escalate the crisis.

### **Sunday, 11:48**

We have been discussing what needs to be done about the displaced persons. The situation is a bit uncertain right now. Most of the adults have gone back to check on their homes. However, many have left their children here. Several of the people indicated that they would probably come back for the night again this evening. They are still nervous about staying at home so near the Muslims. We have been uncertain about what to do about cooking lunch. Apollos came to the rescue and said that since they all had breakfast, that we should prepare supper for them. We have also decided to try to cook the next meal outside. Our gas in one of cylinders ran out yesterday. We have no idea when we can get more. And since we will be cooking for a big crowd, it would be better to cook outside in a big pot. We have gone around and found a couple of dead trees which are dry enough to use for firewood. It appears that all of our big knives around here have been confiscated for weapons.

There is still a disturbing amount of gunfire in the general area. Some of it is now coming from what appears to be Ring Road or very close to Ring Road. So, I am glad now that I did not try to go over to the VC's by taking the Ring Road.

### **Sunday, 1:33PM**

"They're coming; they're coming." This is what I heard from very excited voices. I was upstairs doing something with the video camera. I rushed downstairs and outside but before I could get there, Adamu was blowing his whistle very shrilly. That is an indication that there is some kind of trouble. Some person was talking very loudly. I went up to him and tried to ask him rather calmly what was going on. He said, "They are coming in from the back side." I asked him who had seen them but he did not give a clear answer. There were some people running on the road from the backside of the community and others who were talking very excitedly. I walked out toward the road to find out what was going on. A car filled with people came roaring down the road, heading for the front gate. I whistled at them loud enough to get their attention. They braked and I shouted, asking them what was going on. They pointed behind them and shouted, "They are coming."

I was not convinced that this was a genuine problem. However, when you have all these people's lives in your hands, you don't play around with their security. If "they" were coming from the back, then it would best for all of the displaced persons to head for the front

gate. There were many people milling around looking very confused. Many of them were crowding into the house. If these attackers were able to penetrate all the way to our house, I did not think it would be a good idea to have 150 people in the house. The house has security bars on all the windows so once you are in, there is no escape except through the doors. Someone could easily set the place on fire and burn everything and everyone inside. So, I decided that the people should head for the front gate. I stood up and shouted at them to stay calm but that they should go out of the house and move to the road behind our house and walk to the main road. People immediately started obeying. About that time Apollos came running up with his baseball bat and big knife. I threw him my keys and said, "Apollos, go to the junction and report this to the soldiers. Tell them that we are being attacked from the back and desperately need some help." He jumped in the car and roared off toward the front gate.

I handed the keys to my Jeep to Mary and said, "Mary, go get the passports, get all of our people in the Jeep and head for the front gate." I then ran upstairs and got the passports for Mary. I also grabbed two packages of emergency US currency which I keep in a special place and stuffed them in the passport case. Mary came upstairs also with her mother to get her mother's passport and an extra pair of underwear. I had kept my big heavy stick up there so I brought it back downstairs with me. When I got back downstairs, no one was in the house. As we were going out of the house, I remembered the computers. I said to Mary, "Let me get the computers." So, I ran back into my office. My little laptop computer was on. I did not take time to shut it off but simply closed the lid, unplugged it, and headed out. By this time, Mary had gotten the Jeep out from where it was parked and pulled it around in front of the house. Martin and Anabelle had come running across from the road on the other side. As she was running up the driveway, she slipped and apparently sprained her ankle. She was very upset by the time she got to the house.

I had decided to stay behind and try to keep things organized a bit around the house. I was not going to leave our compound until I saw "them" coming myself. Mary kept asking me where she should go. I told her that there some soldiers up at the end of the road because I could hear them shooting. If she got near them she should be OK but she should just a minute before she left. Someone had picked up my big heavy stick and I could not find it. I did not want to be stuck behind without my stick so I went back into the house, ran upstairs and then back downstairs. I saw the video camera that I had been using to take some footage. I picked it up but I still did not find my stick. I decided that I would turn off the electricity to the house while we were gone. I went back outside and handed the video camera to Martin who was in the vehicle. Mary started pulling off but I was still not ready for her to leave so I had Adamu stop her. Some other boys had shown up and were discussing the situation. I wanted to get the situation report from them before sending anyone away. I also figured that even if the attackers came over the hill 150 meters away, Mary would still have time to get out of the driveway and head for the front gate.

About that time, Margaret came from the front gate. She pulled in and handed Mary four loaves of bread. She then got in her vehicle and then went back toward her house. The Jeep was still running. Mary asked me again, "What should we do?" I said, "Just wait a bit. I think this is a false rumor but I want to be sure." I had put the locks in my doors but had not locked them because I did not have the keys in my pocket. I was planning to lock the door at the last minute if I had to but would keep them open until that time. I knew that Amos had a set of keys to our house but assumed he had run with some of the others to the back part of the campus.

A group of young men, from about 16 up to about 25 had been gathering up at the house. Many of them did not have any weapons to use to defend themselves. I got Adamu's garage key and opened up the garage. The boys went inside and picked shovels and a pickaxe and an iron piece of rebar and a rake with a metal handle and two or three other objects which they might be able to use as weapons. Just as they were gathering up their weapons, a young fellow of about the same age with a big stick came running by on the road, heading toward the front gate, in the opposite direction from the fight. His flip flops were making loud popping noises as he ran. One of the young men in my yard who appeared to be about 17 or 18 shouted at him, "Why are you running that way?" He then said to him and the other young men in the compound, "Come on. Let's go meet them before they can get this for." And then he led the group running across the compound to the north of us as fast as they could run. I stood there amazed at the courage of these young men. This was not a football match in which there was some friendly enemy that they would bump up against for a little while with the worse possible danger of getting a skinned knee. The enemies they were going to face had bows and arrows and spears and sticks and even guns. They had nothing but sticks and shovels and iron bars and other things and yet they were running toward them as fast as they could go. What would make these young men act in this way? They obviously had to know the dangers they were facing. It was the natural instinct of protection of one's family. Surely they must have been afraid but the instinctive desire to protect one's family overcame their fear.

About that time, Thomas, who lives in the boy's quarters of the house across the road from us came walking up. He had also heard all of the rumors. I asked him what he was doing and he said, "Nothing." I said, "Thomas, I want you to go back down the road to where these people are coming and come back and tell me what you have seen with your own eyes. I don't want any reports or rumors, only what you have personally seen." Thomas understood and took off toward the back of the campus which appeared to be the new "front."

In fact, this was one of the most emotional moments of the entire crisis up to that point. I had not had time to think too much about the worst-case scenarios. However, when I ran upstairs and got those passports, just before I walked out of the bedroom, I turned and looked at this wonderful place I had lived for ten years. The bed was there and the pictures hanging on the wall. Everything was very familiar and in its place. I ran downstairs and got the laptops from my office. I looked at my books in the bookshelves and my degrees hanging on the wall and all the things piled up on my desk. I wondered if I would ever see them again. I ran outside and handed the two computers to Martin who was sitting in the back seat and did not even have time to hug Mary goodbye. I turned away with the thought in my mind, "Is this the last time I will ever see my family? Is it possible that this could be the end?" For one fleeting moment, the thought crossed my mind that perhaps I should get in that vehicle and go with the others. However, I knew my place was to remain behind with the boys at the house. Those thoughts were fleeting and momentary but they were real. There was one other very brief thought that I had as I stood there beside that Jeep with its engine running and Mary inside behind the wheel and me on the outside. The thought went like this. "If this is it, I have no regrets. I am grateful that I have been able to serve God in Nigeria these years."

I did not have more than two or three seconds to wallow in those emotional thoughts. About that time, a Julius Berger truck came roaring by with probably 15 to 20 students standing up in the back brandishing their sticks and other weapons they had. They were shouted for the people in the road to get out of the way. They were also whooping and shouting as if they were going to a football match. The residents were very happy to see them

go by. At least the local boys would have some reinforcements. Again, what a remarkable demonstration of courage. They were not even defending their families and yet they were heading for the front lines with all the energy they could muster.

There were some more boys out on the road who were talking excitedly. I went out there to see what was going on. When I got there, there was a fierce burst of automatic weapons fire right in front of the student village. In fact, it was perhaps the most serious and prolonged burst of gunfire I had heard during the conflict so far. I thought to myself, “maybe these Hausas are really trying to do some damage. Perhaps they have a coordinated attack on student village and the senior staff quarters at the same time from two different directions.” In the meantime, vehicles were streaming by and people were running down the road. There was a very serious atmosphere in the air. However, as I was out on the road, someone kept saying, “the soldiers are coming. The soldiers are coming.”

I walked back toward the house with more automatic weapon fire coming from student village. Just about the time I got to the vehicle, someone point back toward the front gate and shouted, “They are coming; there they are.” My heart leaped into my throat for a moment. Were they now coming from both sides? I looked back toward our front gate and what I saw put a smile on my face. I could see two soldiers walking down the road with their guns ready. Behind them were six or eight soldiers, all walking up the road in front of my house, in combat formation. Behind them was a big green army truck with a man with a big gun sitting up on the cab. What a relief! At least for now, we were safe.

I knew that many of our own people had gone to the back part of our campus, the way the soldiers were going, to stop whoever was coming this way so I walked out to the road and said to the soldiers, “Our own boys are up there.” Two or three others were shouting the same thing so I hoped that they got the point. One of the soldiers passing by shouted toward us, “Someone give me a belt.” Apparently his ammunition belt had broken. Adamu was out there by the road with my dog, Tega, so he took the leash off of the dog and gave it to the soldier. That soldier is now wearing the best dog leash in Jos.

The firing was continuing over at student village. There is a river between us so we can look directly at the study village without anything blocking our vision. While the shooting was going on, I could see students running out from the hostels down toward the river. Again, I wondered if people were attacking the village on the other side. When people first started heading for the front gate, the first suggestion was that they should go to the student village. Certainly, no one would try to attack a thousand students. However, that theory was being challenged now in my mind.

Since we now had soldiers between us and the supposed attackers, I told Mary to get out of the vehicle and go on in the house. I thought things were under control.

The army truck stopped at the junction right in front of my house. I went out to greet the two soldiers. One was the truck driver and the other was the one sitting up on the cab of the truck. I greeted them in Hausa. The first one said, “Sorry, Oga for this wahalla.” I said, “Ba demwa” which means “no trouble.” There was a young soldier there who was very friendly. He said that they had been on duty at Kwararafa, near where the problem had started since 10:00 AM yesterday, over 24 hours without any food or rest. He said, “Kai, I nearly die-o. God really help me.” He told about some time in the last 24 hours when he got stuck in the midst of people with real weapons. The other soldier asked, “You did not shoot?” The young soldier said, “Dey were too many-o. I no go kill ‘em all so I just hide.” His English



was pretty poor so I never did quite figure out how he escaped. He also said that it had really been bad down where he had been. He said that there were many bodies lying around. I tried to ask him how many? "Up to ten?" He told me it was far more than ten.

Shortly after that, the blue van which carried the student leader from Benue came by. He pulled in my driveway. I wanted to know the situation. I told him that we had heard a report that the Hausas were coming in from the back side. He said that his boys had already gone there but he would go and get a situation report. I asked him about all the shooting over at student village. He said that the students had gathered up on the road again and the soldiers were just shooting to scare them back to the hostels. I was quite sure he was right.

A few minutes later I went in the house. There must have been 150 people inside. It was hot and stuffy. Several had been crying. Some were praying. One was praying the "Hail Mary, full of grace" prayer. Just as I got upstairs, I heard someone say, "The soldiers are coming into the compound." I immediately went downstairs and pushed my way through the crowd. There was a heavy-set looking soldier, holding a pistol in his right hand, standing right in front of my steps, shouting at the crowd, "Where are 'they?' Who said 'they' had come?" He looked very annoyed. I walked up to him and tried to calmly explain that our place was vulnerable and that when the people came running this direction shouting that the attackers were coming, everyone became afraid. He said, "Who are all these people?" I said, "These are people whose houses were burned at Anguwar Rimi. I have been keeping them here at my house trying to feed them." He said, "Do they live in here?" I said, "No, they live across the road but they fled into the university compound when they were attacked yesterday." He looked very annoyed.

After looking around a bit, he said, "Who are these people?" referring to the young boys with their clubs and knives. I said, "Sir, those are our boys who have been protecting this compound. Up until now, these are the first guns we have seen in this compound. We have been totally without any protection." He looked annoyed at that and said, "I have been patrolling in here. I came to the Vice Chancellor's lodge two days ago." I saw that there was no reason to argue with the man, especially since my statement might appear like I was criticizing the army. I said, "Sir, these are humble innocent people who just want to save their lives. You should not be annoyed if they get excited when they hear these rumors." He changed the subject by saying, "How far does this place go back?" I said, "About one kilometer." He said, "Is the road motorable?" I said, "Yes." He said, "How do I get there?" I said, "We can go in my vehicle. I will be glad to take you there." He said, "No, I have a vehicle. I just need to know how to get there." It was at that time that I realized that this was a different group of soldiers than had been through before. I looked and could see their vehicle over in front of Apollos' house on the road behind our house facing back toward the main road. They had apparently come through the main gate, gone around by Baptist High, and then turned back toward the senior staff quarters and approached our place from the rear.

We walked together back toward the truck. There were five or six soldiers shouting at the young men. About a half dozen were kneeling on the ground with their hands on their heads. The soldiers were shouting at them, "Who are you? How do we know you are telling the truth. Let someone could and identify you." I walked up and said, "These are all our boys. They are OK." The soldier softened his attitude a bit and gave the impression that it was OK so one of the boys stood up. The soldier barked, "Who told you that you could stand up?" and immediately the boy hit the ground again. About that time, several women came running out of my house holding their hands out and wailing toward the soldiers. I immediately ran back to where they were coming and said, "It's OK; don't worry. It's OK." The officer I was

talking to then told the boys to get up and go. He then asked me the best way to get around to the other road. I told him to go all the way back to the end of the road they were on and come back on the other road. About five minutes later, they passed by the house on the other road. The boys were really agitated. They were talking excitedly and, I am sure in the future, when they tell this story, it will include the words we have heard so much recently, “Only God helped us.” Perhaps they will add the words, “The bature (white man) helped us too.”

There were now two groups of soldiers between us and the back of our compound so I felt much more relaxed about the situation. I was just praying that the soldiers would not go back there and start shooting our boys. Thomas came back about that time and said that he had no seen anything out of the ordinary.

A few minutes later, I spotted the DVC out on the road in front of my house. I went out to see him. Also, it was about that time that my neighbor Immanuel showed up. He said that he was just coming from Abuja. He had gotten stuck at the forest last night and had slept there in his vehicle. He was concerned about his family who had apparently just fled a few minutes before. Immanuel had come around Ring Road and said that he has seen at least ten bodies on that road. While we were standing around and talking, one of the young men from the quarters came up and started talking to us. He said it was certainly true that they had spotted these people on the back side of the property but that they had gone back in the bush. I asked him, “Did you see these people yourself?” He assured me he had personally seen them?” I asked him, “How many did you see?” He didn’t know but it was many. I said, “Ten, fifteen, fifty.” He said, “It was many, Oga.” I asked, “Were they on this side of the river or the other side?” He said that they had not yet crossed the river. I asked him if he were close enough to see if they had weapons? He said, “They must have had weapons.”

About that time, the two big green army trucks with their soldiers came rolling up from the back of the campus. We stopped the first one who had a young captain in it. We wanted some information but he told us to ask the major behind us. He had left his post and needed to get back where he was supposed to be. We then talked to the next officer who was the one who had been in my front yard. The DVC asked him what was going on. The officer said, “Things are beginning to calm down a bit. People are now returning to their villages. I strongly suspect that the people that were seen were simply people who were returning to their village. I am right there at the Bauchi Junction. If you or your people see someone with weapons, then you should call me and I can come immediately.” The DVC then asked if it were possible to leave two of his soldiers to assist us. The officer said that he did not like to break up his rifle team. He wanted to keep all of them mobile so they could respond to any crisis anywhere with the maximum firepower. He assured us that he would be very close and would be willing to help us if we needed help. About that time the student leader came by. He said that they were going to try to get some sleep and would be back around at 5:00 PM or so.

So, it appears that the big scare we had was only a rumor. However, it certainly got our adrenaline going.

### **Sunday, 4:11 PM**

We have now entered the third day of curfew. However, the curfew for today is 4:00 PM rather than 6:00 PM. About 3:20, Mary brought some lasagna upstairs and said, “I think we need to eat a little.” So, Mary, Nanny and I sat around a little stool, eating Nigerian style—everyone eating out of the same dish. While we were eating, Jim Bartlett showed up. During all of the crisis around noon, he had picked up Karen and left, going to another part of

Jos where it was a bit more secure. Yoilah was ahead of him and Jim thought Yoilah knew where he was going so Jim just followed him. They wound up at the Evangel Hospital, the SIM/ECWA Hospital near the Polo Roundabout. Actually, Yoilah was taking his cousin to the hospital so that is why they were going that way. However, Jim figured that that was about as safe a place as any. He had come back over to our campus to see if things were safe so he could return. I encouraged him to come on back. Everything was safe.

I then went outside and visited a little with my neighbor, Emma. He has donated some yams for the refugees. He also sat up a big pot on a few stones and some ladies have been cooking the yams. Another set of ladies are also cooking some rice in a big black “missionary” pot. I hope there will be enough food tonight for everyone and that we want have to cook two or three times. The fact that we are cooking outside enables us to use the bigger pot and make more food.

Emma told me that he had talked to one lady who had been breaking rocks over near the Bauchi Road Senior Staff Quarters when the crisis started. She rushed this way. However, she has not heard from her husband or children since. She returned to her home today but the place was locked. There are dozens if not hundreds of families who are now separated due to the crisis.

While Emma and I were standing under the avocado tree talking, a young lady came up and stood under it quietly for a minute or so. Finally, she said, “Excuse me, sir. My children are missing. Can you help me find them?” She said that someone had seen them enter a vehicle. I questioned her and her daughter very carefully. The daughter who appeared to be about eight years old did not actually see them enter the vehicle but said someone else had. I was suspicious that this was just a rumor. However, in a few minutes, the young lady pointed out another lady who had seen them enter the vehicle. We called her over and she said that they had entered the vehicle with a “white woman.” I asked, “a fat one or skinny one.” She said, “a very fat one.” I doubt if Karen Bartlett will appreciate that remark. She was very certain of what had happened.

I was relieved. I told her, “OK, if that is correct, then your children will be here in ten minutes. The man who was driving that moto just came to my house at 3:30. He wanted to know if everything was clear. I assured him it was and that he should return home. He had taken his people to Evangel Hospital. He rushed back so he can get back here before the 4:00 PM curfew.” The lady did not seem very relieved. She said, “Please help me, sir.” I told her, “Don’t worry. Your children are safe. If you don’t see them in ten minutes, you will see them in the morning.” She did not seem too relieved.

I went back inside and went upstairs to try to get some news at the top of the hour. I had learned from someone that it has been confirmed that at least 70 people have died in Jos. However, the FM radio was so full of static from the network news that I could not understand it. I heard a vehicle pull up in front of the house. I looked out and there was Jim and Karen Bartlett. I rushed back downstairs to find the lady to tell her that her children were back. However, she was already out by the road where they stopped. She had a big smile on her face when she walked up the driveway to my house.

The Yilpets also came back. They had seen a couple of gunshot wounds come into the hospital while they were there from Tuden Wada. She said that apparently there was still a lot of fighting there this afternoon. This is the area where Andrew lives so I am very concerned about him.

One of the bright spots of today has been the return of NEPA. Our lights went off about 7:00 PM on the first night of the crisis. We were quite certain that they had turned them off for a purpose or else the power station had been vandalized. However, about 8:00 this morning, the lights came back on and they have been on ever since. Our battery system should be charged up pretty well now so even if they take the lights tonight we should be in better shape than we were last night.

There is a much more relaxed atmosphere around the house. The children are running and playing. The women are sitting around on wrappers outside. Those who are cooking are busy. Some are washing dishes in the kitchen. Everything seems to be in pretty good shape. However, I just heard another gunshot off in the distance. We certainly pray that the Lord will be with us tonight. It looks like we are going to have a full house again.

### **Sunday 9:21 PM**

About 4:45, I was told somebody was outside and wanted to see me. I went downstairs and saw the blue bus with the student leaders inside. They came by to tell me that they had heard that the soldiers were coming tonight and so they would not be patrolling. In fact, they were going to be turning in their weapons. They would not want to be caught with weapons so they were going to report to the DVC what they were going to do. I thanked them for their hard work and assured them that we would have some kind of thanksgiving celebration some day.

Just as they were leaving, someone in a blue Mercedes pulled in my driveway. The fellow came and said that we were having a resident's meeting at the DVC's house at 5:00 PM. I got in the car and went there with him. The meeting started pretty well on time. The DVC said that things had gone relatively well during the last 24 hours. He needed to go outside and talk to the students so he would turn over the meeting to the chairman of the Permanent Site Residents who is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. The professor then turned the meeting over to the Anglican priest/professor who had some information. He said that because they could not get good information from the local army officers, he had gone to Rukaba Barracks and seen the main officer in charge. This man had written a note to the major in charge of our area, telling him to cooperate with us and provide the necessary security. The priest had returned, met the major who had promised to come to the permanent site and meet with the community leaders, see the place, and make the necessary plans. His only request was that they had no vehicles. Apparently, the priest promised to provide them with a vehicle, petrol, and a driver. We took a few minutes and several people volunteered to give fuel for the night. In addition, they asked me if I could arrange for Thomas to be driving them around in the evening. I assured them that I thought it was possible.

After he finished that information, another one of the residents told a story. He is one of the three fellows I had gone with yesterday afternoon to the student village. He said that when he had heard the rumors of people coming in on the backside of our quarters, he had quickly rushed to the student village and picked up a couple of student leaders. They had then gone to Farin Gada and met the army people there. When they reported this matter to them, the soldiers promised that they would soon come. The resident then turned around and went back to the Student Village. He stopped there to let out the students he had taken with him. The soldiers that he had just talked to pulled up behind them and started shooting at them. This was the heavy burst of automatic weapon fire that I heard around 1:00 this afternoon, when Mary and her mom and others were sitting in the Jeep, and we were deciding what needed to be done. I mentioned that this was one of the heaviest bursts of gunfire we had

heard yet. One of the students had told me that they were shooting in the air but this resident said they were shooting at the students. He quickly turned his vehicle in to the student village and got away from the firing. He did not realize it at the time but his vehicle had been hit. He told us that it had been hit by at least two bullets. After the meeting, we went by his house to take a look at the vehicle. There was one bullet going right into the trunk. The bullet came through the back seat and then through the passenger seat, hit the door and then glanced up and hit the front windshield and broke it. We could see a second bullet hole in the back seat that also came through the passenger seat and just about heart level. However, the resident had not found the entry point yet. I looked and looked and finally found the hole immediately under the lid of the trunk. It had passed through the front seat and gone through the glove compartment. It did not pass through the firewall so it must still be in there somewhere. This was a very serious story. This demonstrates that these soldiers were firing indiscriminately. I am almost certain these are the same soldiers who later stopped at my house and yelled and abused the women and the young boys who had been helping us. When we later talked with them, the DVC asked the captain his name and he refused to tell him. That made the DVC suspicious that he was a Hausa man and would be sympathetic to the Hausas in this conflict. (It is now 9:46 and there is a good bit of gunfire far off in the distance, toward the south side of town.)

We changed our password for the night to J and U for University of Jos. We also agreed to be meeting every evening at 5:00 PM until the crisis was over. I prayed the closing prayer again. When we walked out of the house, there were several people at the bottom of the stairs, pointing north across the river. The DVC's house is on a loop that extends to the west and runs fairly close to the river. We are up on a little hill to the west of the river so you can see across the river into the flat open land on the other side of the river up to a mile away. I could see two herds of Fulani cows. One had about 100 in it and another one, which appeared to be about a quarter of mile behind it, was much smaller with perhaps 20 cattle. One of my neighbors was saying, "Those are men." I asked him which ones he was talking about and he said, "the upper ones." I said, "No, those are not men. Those are cattle. If you look closely, you can see the way their bodies are extended horizontally." I would guess that these cattle were perhaps three quarters of a mile away. I walked over and started talking to someone else and then took another look and then I could see what my neighbor was talking about. Slightly apart from the cattle, against a dark row of bushes, I could barely see about five or six small white specks which were standing upright. I went back over to my neighbor and said, "I see what you are talking about now. You are pointing to that row of bushes over to the left. I think you are right. Those are almost certainly the Fulani herders taking care of those cattle." They were within at least a hundred meters of the cattle so there was no reason to suspect that they were anyone other than Fulanis. One never sees a herd of cattle here without seeing the Fulanis.

Just as I was getting back to the house, I met Thomas and took him to meet the neighbor who was providing the vehicle for the night. When we got back from there, I met a big army truck full of soldiers. I had just come from seeing the vehicle that had been shot up by the soldiers so I was a bit suspicious of them. There were several people sitting around on the curb and standing around on the sidewalk. I told all of them to get away from the road while the soldiers were around. If they were sympathetic to the Hausa cause, they could accuse these people of breaking the curfew and also of unlawful assembly and could shoot them. We did not need to give anyone any excuse to be shooting.

When I got home, I found out that everyone had been fed and that many had already been dispatched to the Bartlett's. Apollos was also taking over the group to the house across the road. That still left about 70 at our house. Mary told me that we have two old ladies in the house, one in her eighties and one in her nineties, who were lifelong friends. They got in an argument over a sheet and one told the other she was not going to sleep with her because she had lice. (lots of shooting right now). So, the younger of the old ladies said, "Well, if that is the way you are going to be, I am just going to go home. If they kill me, they can just kill me" and she started hobbling toward the door. However, her granddaughter was there and managed to get her to go to another part of the room to sleep.

About 8:30, I went over to the dean of art's house to see what arrangements had been made for the soldiers but they had not yet come. I took three of the young boys who were sitting on my porch with me. As I talked to them on the way to the house, I found out that two of the three had had their houses burnt the day before. I saw one of the houses today. It was a house just inside the main gate of our University Permanent Site. I knew the house really well because it had an outside light that was always burning if NEPA was on. So, I always could tell whether NEPA would be on at my house by whether or not that light was burning. This person told me that about 60 Hausas came across the road, burned the front gate, and then burned this house. The students had come there to try to protect the area but they were driven back because the Hausas had guns. About fifteen people were injured including the brother of the boy who was with me. He had been shot in the leg by a bullet. I never did get the story of the other boy but he lived in Anguwar Rimi and his house had been burnt as well.

When we were walking back from the unfruitful visit to the dean's house, we met three people walking toward us in the dark. I did not recognize them in the dark, but the leader, who was a professor, recognized me. He had his daughter with him and said that she had definitely seen people on the other side of the river that afternoon. I questioned her very carefully and she said that all during the late afternoon, she had seen five or six people in long white caftans across the river. They appeared to have bows and arrows. They would look toward the senior staff quarters. When they saw her or someone else they would duck down as if they were trying to hide. We had heard this same story from several other people. I suggested to them that they were probably the Fulani cattle herders, which I had seen earlier in the evening. However, they were so concerned, they had moved from their house, which was the closest house to that area to the other end of the compound and were staying with some people there. When I got back to the house, Mary told me that we had received another displaced person, someone from the boy's quarters on the other end of the compound. This lady had seen these six suspicious looking characters all afternoon. In fact, she had watched them for three hours and could definitely tell that they had bows and arrows. However, this was still entirely consistent with the Fulani theory. Fulanis often carry bows and arrows with them as they take care of their cattle. And if they heard that there was tension in town, they would most certainly have their bows and arrows with them. As for as their continual looking at the senior staff quarters: We are the closest people to civilization and if they were going to have any trouble, it would come from our direction. So, I was not alarmed by this rumor, even though people continued to be very afraid. It is easy to understand how people can be afraid when there has already been so much killing and destruction.

When I got back to the house, there were still several young people sitting around on the porch chatting. However, by 9:00 PM or so, everyone had come inside and had gone to bed and all of them appear to be asleep right now.

It has been a long day. It has been a good day in some respects. The Lord has protected us. I think the violence has calmed down a bit. However, there are still many hurting and homeless people out there. On BBC at the 9:00 news, they said that at least 50 people had been killed. A Nigerian radio broadcast put the number at 70. Evangel Hospital said that they had had about 15 alone so it is likely that the number is in the hundreds. BBC talked lived to a British correspondent who was in the country. He said that most of the fighting is on the south side of town now. We live on the northern side of Jos.

We are praying that the Lord will take good care of us and we will have no violence tonight.

### **Monday, 10 September 2001; 6:04 AM**

We are grateful to God that we have survived another night. Actually, the night was pretty routine. Everyone in the house was “in bed” or asleep by 9:00 PM except the real residents. I worked on my computer until a little after 10:00 PM and then went to bed.

About 11:30, I was awakened by loud excited voices out in front of the house. I heard a woman’s voice telling Adamu that she was from Anguwar Rimi and that she had been on the run for two days. I could not hear all that she was saying. However, I heard the front door open and I knew that he was letting them in. I went downstairs to check on this. By the time I got downstairs, one of the two ladies was stretched out on the floor. The other one has sitting in a chair. I went outside to check with Adamu. He said that these ladies had come and were wanting to go to House # 1 which is at the other end of the compound. He had told them that there were people patrolling and that they should not be on the road at that time of the night. He had recommended that they go inside and wait until the next morning, which they eventually agreed to do.

About an hour later, I heard the sound of a vehicle racing its engine and then the unmistakable low whine of a big truck, which I suspected to be an army vehicle. I got up and looked out the window and saw the van, which had been donated by one of our residents for the soldiers to move around in, moving slowly up the road with an army truck behind it. It stopped in front of my neighbor’s house. So, I got up again, went downstairs and crossed over to my neighbor’s yard to see what was happening. The DVC was apparently staying there until he made contact with the soldiers. He said, “They have finally come.” He took me over to the van and introduced me to the person who was driving the vehicle. He said, “This is the captain and this is Professor McCain, one of our lecturers and a resident here.” I shook his hands and told him we were happy to see him. He said, “I must apologize for being late. The reason is that our major was called away for a consultation and only just got back so that we could be released for this duty.” I asked him and the DVC what would be the plan now? Did they want our boys to still be patrolling on the street or did they want them to be inside? The captain said, “We are here now and can handle the situation. It would probably be best for your boys to go inside.” I said, “Sir, please remember, at least tonight, we have a lot of boys out there patrolling. During these last two days, we have had to live by our wits.” He said, “Don’t worry. You are OK now. We have everything under control.” I then spoke to three or four of the soldiers who were standing around outside the van. They all appeared to be friendly but serious about their jobs. I went back upstairs. About 15 or 20 minutes later, I heard the vehicles make their way back to the front of the compound. Perhaps I slept very soundly but I did not hear the vehicles again until about 6:00 this morning. I hope we have not provided a vehicle so that the captain can have something to drive around Jos while sending his troops in to check on us every six hours. We will see.

The army vehicle that passed by about 6:00 AM passed back by at 6:31 AM. Also, I have continued to hear sporadic gunfire ever since I got up this morning. Fortunately, none of it is really close now. It sounds like it is at least two or three miles away. It is mainly one or two or three bursts of automatic gunfire.

The people had their devotions together this morning though they were not nearly as long or vigorous as the morning before.

### **Monday, 9:37 AM**

Pastor Sunday Gomna just arrived. He is the pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church. He left a month or so ago to become a student at the Baptist Seminary in Ogbomoso. He had decided to come home and check on things, not knowing that there was any trouble. He got to the forest about 4:00 PM on Saturday but the road was blocked and he could not get through. When Sunday left Ogbomoso, he was wearing the traditional Hausa clothing. However, when he got to the forest, he took that off and a Yoruba man gave him a regular western style shirt. The kinds of clothes you have on are important in these crises. By the next day, he was able to get to the Police College south of Jos. He spent several hours there. He was able to get in a vehicle owned by an army officer. They tried to pass through Bukuru once but the fighting was so intense he had to turn back.

Finally, yesterday they were able to pass through Bukuru. Apparently they tried to go through the main Bukuru town. However, Sunday said that the bodies were so many that they could not even pass. The vehicle was just bumping across the bodies in the street. The soldier was going to Rukaba Barracks so Sunday stayed with him until he got there. From there he trekked back to Gada Biyu, which would be about six miles. He was able to find one of his church members there and spent the night. From there, he passed through Farin Gada. He took a look at his church from the road. He heard what we were doing for his people and came here to thank us before going to check on his wife and family in the village.

### **Monday, 2:46 PM**

I needed to go into town to try to get some kind of communication through to our people. We did not know whether email was working. So, I prepared a fax to both the USA Embassy and IICS. I modified the Embassy fax to reflect the news of the additional day and asked the IICS to call our families and assure them we were OK.

When some of our neighbors found out that I was going to town, they asked to go along with me. I got Thomas to go with me because I wanted to have some local person with me. Margaret, one of the Fulbright scholars, Jim Bartlett, and Martin, the husband of the other Fulbright scholar, went along.

The trip into town was like riding into Jos for the first time because everything was different. The mosque right outside the University gate and across the bridge was still smoldering. The Farin Gada market was completely destroyed. That is about a mile from our house the way the crow flies. After we got out on Zaria Road, except for an occasional burnt car, things were pretty normal until we got to the Gada Biyu Market. Of course, there was like of broken glass and places where tires had been burnt on the road. The Gada Biyu market was not as bad as I had anticipated. We had one other small religious crisis here about seven years ago and that market, which is mainly Muslim, was totally burned to the ground. However, there was only selective burning this time. The small mosque was burnt and three



or four shops right next to it. Across the bridge toward Polo Ground, there were many burnt vehicles in and around the car park. There was a burnt vehicle in the roundabout at Polo Ground. From there to the Plateau Radio and TV, things were normal. However, there were a small group of houses between there and the police barracks which belonged to Muslims. There were totally broken down.

We had been told that there were as many as 6000 people who had taken refuge at the Division A Police Station. There were still hundreds of people there, outside and inside the police compound. There were many people with loads on their heads, heading back toward their homes.

The Hill Station Junction appeared normal. We turned there and went over past the Plateau Hotel. Everything was fine there. However, when we got to the bottom of the hill, there was a soldier there stopping and checking things. I saw him frisk several people looking for weapons. There were about four vehicles in front of us. He made the first three stop and open their trunks. He waved the vehicle in front of us on through. We pulled up. He looked intently at us and then said he wanted to look in the boot. Thomas got out and opened the trunk. I had put my computer there. He did not say anything about that but waved us on through.

Thomas had wanted to come this way to check on his family. His mother's compound was only about 100 meters from where the soldier stopped us. He spotted some of his "brothers" and pulled over. He spoke to them in his local language. Even though I did not understand the words, I understood the body language. Everything was OK. There was a traditional mud brick house broken down on the other side of the road but the area where Thomas's mother lived was fine.

We then went to the Christian Reformed Church compound. There are about eight missionary families who live inside it. When we pulled up in front of Sid Garland's house, he and Jean quickly came out of the house with concerned looks on their faces which turned to relief when I assured them that we were OK. They also assured us that all the missionaries were OK as far as they knew. They used to live in Bukuru and had been getting regular feedback from Bukuru and, according to their reports, things were as bad as Sunday had reported to me. I told them that we needed to use the phone to check email and I also needed to try to send a fax.

A displaced missionary from Bukuru came and greeted me and agreed to go see the CRC director to get the key to open the office. He came back a few minutes later and informed me that it was open. The good thing about the CRC office is they have an international line. That gave me a chance to send a fax to the IICS office. I also called the USA Embassy in Abuja and talked to a counselor officer named Mary Ann. I assured her that we were OK. I also got a fax number where we could send a fax to her with the updated fax. I also decided that I would try to give someone a call in the USA. It was about 12:00 by this time so I thought perhaps the best person to call would be my brother-in-law, Phil Horton. He knows our situation very well and would know how to communicate with everyone else. So, I called him. Unfortunately, I got the answering service. I left about a two a half-minute message trying to give most of the important information that they would need to know.

I also called the Baptist mission to ask them if they had any supplies at the hostel that we might be able to get. One of their missionaries came on the line and said that they had recently got a 50-kilo sack of sugar and should be able to spare some of it. He also said that

had 50 kilos of flour but Nigerians do not use much flour. When the CRC people heard me asking for food, they went out and gathered up several food items including some rice, some palm oil, soap, and other things. Later Jean sent a chicken with us.

We returned to Sid's to try to transfer our mail over to Sid's AOL account. I was able to download the fax and Mary's email to our family to the AOL account and Martin was able to do the same thing with his email. They all were sent out and it was a big relief to know that they were ready to be picked up before we left that office.

While we were there, Scott and Beth Cunningham showed up. I don't think they had any major problem at their compound. They were all very concerned about us. Also, Wiebe and Shelly came by. I was very happy to see her. They have been carrying for a lot of displaced persons as well in the compound where they are staying. I told Shelly if she got bored where she was, she could come over and help me. Wiebe teased her that everywhere she went there were displaced persons.

Sid and Jean were able to give us some very sad news. In addition to killing most of the Hausas in Bukuru, the Beroms had also gone on a rampage and killed many of the Fulanis. They also said that one old Hausa Baba who worked as a gate man at the Mountain View CRC Compound had stayed at the CRC for 48 hours. Finally, this morning, he decided that he would go and check on his family. He was killed when he got home this morning. When I hear these sad stories, there is something between disgust and anger and revulsion that wells up from the pit of my stomach. How can human beings treat other human beings like this who have done them no harm?

I wanted to go by NITEL to try to buy a phone card so we went by there. The vegetable market across the street from NITEL was completely scattered. The little sheds were still standing but all of the vegetables were scattered all over the ground in front of the place. There were hundreds of cabbages and onions and lemons and all other kinds of vegetables. The thought entered my mind that I should pick up some of these things and take them back to my people. It would be better than allowing them to rot. However, I resisted that temptation.

We decided to go on through town on the way home. Ahmadu Bello Way was fine. I saw very little destruction except a few vehicles which had been burnt. We passed the roundabout near Good News Church and then went passed the church itself. That street seemed fine except for a lot of broken glass. A soldier at the next junction assured us we could go anywhere we wanted to go. We turned and got back over on Bauchi road and headed toward the university. There is a section from the Yellow Market that runs for at least a mile and perhaps a mile and a half that is a total Muslim area. There was no damage there. When we got down to the junction of the road that leads to the Evangel Hospital, we saw our first damage. Thomas said that it was a store owned by a Christian friend of his. From there on, there was a good bit of damage. When we crossed over the bridge, we could look down in that area they call Congo Russia. There was a large building with the roof off of it. It may have been the mosque where the original trouble started. From there we went up to the Dogan Dutse Junction. Things were OK there except for some burnt cars. When we got up to the entrance of the University Senior Staff Quarters Bauchi Road, there was a lot of damage from there until we passed the car park. There must have been 50 cars out in front of the car park which were all burnt. All of the sheds in front of the car park were also burnt. We then passed the main campus of the university. The only damage we could see there was in the university staff school. Apparently someone had torn off part of the roof of one of the buildings. From

there, we moved out to Ring Road and then on down the hill to the Bauchi Junction. I was surprised that all of those Hausa filling stations had survived there.

We then came to the junction of the University of Jos Permanent Site. The Hausas had burnt the gate. However, it is mainly a concrete block structure so there was not much to burn. Across the street, they had burnt the business center which did photocopying right in front of Apollos' shop. From what we could see, Apollos' shop was still intact. There was a tanker in front of the Total Filling Station. It had been burnt. This is the only tanker that I saw burnt. There was lots of broken glass on the roads and some broken and burnt cars on the north side of the road as we went down the hill to finally turn into our lower permanent site gate.

The damage I saw, while terrible, was not as severe as what I had heard about. The reason is that the soldiers took over the main roads early in the conflict and were able to preserve most of the things on the main roads. However, the real damage was done inside the city and on the small side streets. We had not ventured in those areas.

On the positive side, hundreds and perhaps thousands of people were moving around. Many people had loads on their heads, heading back home. Perhaps the most encouraging thing I saw was in mixed areas where there were both Christians and Muslims, they seemed to be mixing together OK. That was very encouraging.

Shortly after we got back home, a group of men came from Emmanuel Baptist Church with all of their music instruments. Fortunately, these had been stored in one of the houses of one of the members whose house had not been harmed. However, they were still fearful that they may be attacked so they had brought them to my house for safekeeping. These included a set of drums, a keyboard, and an electric guitar.

Since being home, I have also read the emails which were picked up. About half of them had been sent before the crisis. However, several were related to the crisis. The first message was from Carmen. It brought tears to my eyes as I saw the big bold letters with the words:

*I just heard about the riots in Jos from my former classmate. I am still a little bit stunned. Mom, Dad, Yilpets, Ostiens, Jos folk, please send me an email and let me know that you're ok. I'm planning to return to Jos in three weeks.  
please pray.  
love, Carmen*

I can imagine the worry that Carmen and Daniel and Laura and my parents and other family members must have been going through when they heard about this and could get no information from us about what was going on. I am glad that they have since had an opportunity to get some relief, knowing that we are all OK.

I have had another good talk with Pastor Sunday Gomna, the pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church and the pastor of a large group of the displaced person that are staying here with us. He was able to visit his family in the village and found them OK. He was able to visit his burnt-out church and his home. The Muslims apparently made four attempts to burn the church. They finally had to break in one of the walls, go through and pour petrol over everything before they could get the building to burn. They also went into his house and looted and burned what they did not carry away. They took away his TV and VCR. They

took away his wife's box full of clothes. All the clothes she now has are the ones on her back. They took away all other things they could easily carry and burned the rest so that there is absolutely nothing to recover in the house.

Sunday also told me about meeting some of his Muslim neighbors today. He said that he has always had a good relationship with them. When he spanks his children and they cry some of them will come over and plead with him to stop. Sometimes when they have conflicts they will beg him to come over and solve the problems. When he saw them today they greeted him "Hello pastor." They also said, "Some of your church members spoke to us harshly." Sunday said, "Don't worry. We will all get over this." He also said jokingly, "I see that you people have been to work on my church." They said, "No, pastor, it was not us. We tried to defend your church. However, it was these Muslims from Anguwar Rogo who burned your church." He also went to see some of his church leaders in one place and the Muslims there came up and thanked him. They said, "Pastor, we now want to thank you for the way you have taught your people." This was in a predominantly Christian community. He said that the Muslim man said that the Christians in that area had protected them from those who wanted to kill them and did not even allow anyone to harm their houses. They were very grateful to him.

He told me about a meeting he had with another member of his church. He is an older man who lives near his church. While the Hausas were trying to break into his house, he shot one of them with an arrow. This really angered the attackers and the old man had to flee. They then burned down his compound.

It is amazing that Sunday is even here. He is in seminary in Ogbomoso. He said that he had a dream on Thursday that there was trouble at home. So, on Friday, he went to the authorities of the seminary to get permission to travel. They were reluctant to allow him to go so it was not until Saturday that he was able to travel. However, it was just the Lord who sent them here.

### **Monday, 6:37 PM**

I attended the security meeting at 5:00 PM. We had about 30 people there. The main items were: 1) there was going to be a senate meeting tomorrow to decide what to do about the university; 2) a briefing on the fact that 20 bags of garrie were supplied to the hostels today; 3) briefings from various residents about their experience in Jos today; 4) discussion of the security situation in our permanent site. This produced the most discussion. Many of the residents felt that we are still very vulnerable here. There is no wall around the compound. There is no security on the back side. People have been spotted coming through the quarters today who were Hausas. A large group was spotted over at the Muslim burial ground today which is about a half mile across from our permanent site. The biggest discussion was over the dissatisfaction with the work of the military. We had provided them with a vehicle and fuel for them to be patrolling in our compound. However, they leave here and come back every several hours. We are totally vulnerable while they were away. Because of this, we decided to resurrect the vigilante groups tonight so that they will be patrolling also. After the meeting, I stayed behind to discuss with the DVC, the chairman of the permanent site community, and the Anglican priest. We have become something of the unofficial executive committee. I tried to interpret what I was hearing from the residents to the DVC and strongly urged him to make these points to the soldiers when he met them tonight. I don't know whether it was just because I heard so much negative stuff in the meeting, but I had an uneasy feeling after the meeting. We are almost a little Christian island with a mass of Muslims

between us and town. Once the word gets to the Muslims of just how devastating the attacks of the Christians have been, based upon rumors we have heard, I am afraid that they are going to seek revenge. They know they cannot do much but they might be able to make a significant point by attacking such a significant community as the UNIJOS Permanent Site. However, we all know that our ultimate trust is in the Lord. The points that I suggested that he really needed to make to the officer was: 1) People are more important than buildings. Many of the soldiers are guarding buildings right now but we have nothing to protect the 500 human beings who live in this compound. 2) If the Muslims chose to get recruits from the north, either Bauchi or Kano and bring them to Jos to retaliate, we are right in the middle of where those two roads come together, about a mile from each. We could be the most immediate target and, in some ways, would be the most vulnerable. We are not as prepared to defend ourselves as the local people who live here permanently. 3) The soldiers have been working long hours with little food. Our people are very prepared to feed them while they are on duty in our place.

We came back to the house, just in time to go over to the Yilpets for supper. Apparently, the ladies have worked out an agreement that the Yilpets will be cooking for the Americans while the ladies are now cooking for themselves.

I guess I am getting a little weary. It would be nice if this thing would just go away. But I am afraid that it will not go away for a long time.

### **Monday; 9:06 PM**

I have just gone down to see our community chairman about the security situation. I have not been happy with the army situation. It was my understanding yesterday that we had agreed to supply a vehicle and fuel for the army in turn for them permanently placing people here in our quarters to protect. When I talked to the captain last night, he assured us that we were totally safe and that we should go to bed and sleep soundly. I went to bed but I did not go to sleep until after I heard the army vehicle and the van we had provided for them pull out of our compound and head for town.

This morning, I saw the green army vehicle come into the compound and leave about 30 minutes later. Adamu has told me that he has seen the van come into the compound twice today, once around 12:00 and a second time around 1:00. It was about 8:30 PM before I went to see the chairman. It appeared to me that we were getting shafted. They had our vehicle and were using it to run up and down, including going to Rukaba Barracks but were not providing any security for us. We could have all been slaughtered during the last seven hours and we have no way of alerting them in case of a problem.

The chairman said, "Well, there is another development that I need to tell you about. The major in charge of this section went to the Vice Chancellor today and complained that the residents of the permanent site had reported to him to his commander and he was very unhappy about it." It was he who had sent the two platoons earlier in the day yesterday. He was aware of our security needs and was taking good care of us. It now appeared that he was punishing us for what he considered an offense, while continuing to use our vehicle to patrol other areas.

This is absolutely disgusting. Here is a professional soldier who is sworn to protect and defend the citizens of Nigeria failing to provide the proper care for people because he has gotten his feelings hurt. Safety must be above personal feelings. Lord, please help me to

remember this lesson some time in the future when I need it. I should never allow my personal feelings to interfere with my duty, especially when that duty affects many other people. I should never punish many people for an offense I perceive on the part of their leaders.

One of the best pieces of news we heard today was that Andrew showed up and assured us that he and his family were fine. Apparently he had sent his family to a safe place when the fighting started. He and his brothers stayed back to try to defend his house. At one point, the Muslims were throwing stones on his roof. At another point, a Muslim was climbing over one part of his roof. There was a soldier with them and he shoot the man in the leg. Therefore, the house and all its contents were safe. Andrew also reported that the army, the Christian pastors and the Muslim mallams had all gotten together today and had worked out a peace arrangement. I wish more people could do the same.

Well, it has been another long day. I am tired. However, I am grateful once again to God to be alive, to have all my property still intact and to have the opportunity to help a few needy people. Lord, we are tired. We are defenseless. We need your divine supernatural assistance. We commit ourselves into your powerful hands and are going to bed. Amen.

### **Tuesday, 11 September 2001; 6:09 AM**

We have had another quiet night for which we are grateful to God. The devotions are going on in my living room right now. It is amazing and humbling to hear these dear ladies singing “Jesus stated with prayer and ended with prayer,” in the midst of such crisis. May God bless them all today. It is not likely that they are going to be blessed with material things but I pray that the Lord will bless them with the joy of the Lord.

I always write notes every morning when I have my quiet time. This morning I meditated on Psalm 108. The following are three of the key verses in the psalm that seemed especially appropriate for us right now and the prayer I wrote at the closing of my quiet time.

1. 108:6; *“Use your strong right arm to save me, and rescue your beloved people.”* That is our prayer, O Lord.
2. Here is another powerful verse which I and all of us really need during this time of crisis: Verse 12: *“Oh, please help us against our enemies, for all human help is useless.”*
3. The next verse is just as good. *“With God’s help we will do mighty things, for he will trample down our foes.”*
4. Lord, I certainly do not view Muslims or Hausas as my enemies. They are people for whom Jesus died. However, if they have any plans to attack my house or my family, I would assume that they would be my enemies. I have no interest in “trampling down” my enemies. I only want protection against any possible harm. Lord, so far, you have done a wonderful job at that. Continue to give us peace in this community and, even more important, peace in our hearts. Make it possible that there are no enemies in Jos but only friends. Forgive us for any negative attitudes we have or have had toward anyone. May the peace and forgiveness of Jesus be seen in us all throughout the day as we continue in this crisis. Amen.

I went out about 5:30 this morning and talked to Adamu. Everything had been very quiet during the night. He said that about 3:00 AM, there had been a little noise over around the student village and he heard one shot. While we were standing there, we heard a couple of

shots off in the distance. In addition, for the first time that can remember, I heard absolutely no Muslim calls to prayer in the city of Jos this morning. I assume this is because many of the mosques are destroyed and perhaps others have decided that it is not best to be so public with their prayers until this crisis calms down.

### **Tuesday; 7:16 AM**

Pastor Sunday just came to see me. He slept in Jim Bartlett's house last night. When I returned from the security meeting last night, I noticed that Sunday had gathered all the people into my living room and was talking to them. They were talking in Hausa so I did not stay. He told me this morning what he talked to them about. He said that he tried to encourage them. He told them, "They did not destroy our church. If they had killed any of our members, then they would have destroyed some of our church but since none of our people have died, our church is still intact. They have only destroyed the building." He also told them about all the things he had witnessed when coming to Jos. He said, "Many people have lost their husbands and their children and even their whole families. We have only lost property. We can replace that property but we can never replace human life. So, we must be thankful to God and move forward."

Sunday was very happy with the way he had seen his people responding to this crisis. He said, "We will be much stronger as a result of this. In fact, we are going to get many more members." About 70 percent of the people who have been here at my house are members of his church. He said that yesterday he had talked very seriously to some of the people who have been here who are not members of any church. He is convinced he is going to win these people for Christ.

Sunday is planning to meet with his elders sometime today to discuss where they go from here. His elders and other community leaders will have to determine when it is safe for them to move back to their houses. He does not feel like it is safe yet. Sunday will also talk to his elders about rebuilding the church building. He wants to build the church further up on the main rock. That has been their long-range plan all along. That will get the church further away from the main road. He also plans to build a wall around the church. He thinks if they had had a wall around the church building, the Muslims may not have been able to burn it.

I talked to Sunday a bit about the importance of demonstrating the peace and forgiveness of God. I also talked to him about the possibility of him and other Christian community leaders meeting some of the Muslim mallams in his area and trying to work out some peaceful agreement.

### **Tuesday, 2:44 PM**

Adamu came upstairs to see me and told me that a man was outside who was looking for his son. I went out to see him. Actually, there were two men and a lady. Their son, whose name was Immanuel, was a secondary school student. During this school holiday he had been working at a bakery in Farin Gada. His mother was some kind of cook at the university. About 1:00 PM on Friday he had come from the bakery to the university to get some food. He had then gone back to work. Later in the afternoon, one of his friends saw him with a group of persons near the Permanent Site gate. It is now Tuesday morning and he has not been seen or heard of since that time. They had heard that there were displaced persons in our house and were coming to see if they could find him. I asked them if they had tried the hospital yet. They had not. There had been no public transportation. In fact, they had walked

about five miles to get to my house. Adamu was going to take them to the university hostels to see if he could be there among students. This is a very sad story. There is a chance that he is alive but there is a much better chance that he is either in the hospital or more likely dead. I know that my family has been anxious about me but I cannot imagine the anxiety these parents must be having knowing that their son has been missing for these days. The longer he is missing, the less likelihood there is that he will be found alive. I wonder how many other hundreds of times that story is playing itself out in and around this city. If he is dead, they may never find his body because they are just taking these bodies out and doing mass burials.

Shortly after this, another young man came to see me. He said that he was on his way from Ogojo to Kano to see his brother. He just happened to be in Jos when this crisis started. He had started his journey with 700 Naira. He spent 500 Naira on the bus ticket and was going to use the other 200 Naira for food. However, he was now stuck without any money, without any food, without knowing a soul in Jos and no way to get home. I gave him enough money to buy food for a couple of days and encouraged him to see the Catholic chaplain.

In mid-morning, four students came to see me. I recognized them as being part of the blue van crew. One was from political science; one was from theater arts; I don't remember the departments of the others. They said that they were continuing the patrol but they had run out of food and had nothing to eat. I went inside, got four or five cups of rice, two onions, two magi cubes, a few tea bags, some salt, and sugar and 350 Naira. It was not much but until we are able to get some more food we have to hoard our food just a bit to make sure that we have something for this large crowd that is here.

When I gave them the food, I talked to them about a half hour about their experiences. They had all been seriously involved in the defense of the university. Two of them had suffered gunshot wounds. One showed me a wound on his hand and the other one had a wound on his chest. However, the boys were at the extreme end of the range of these locally made shotguns so the wounds were not too serious. The earlier version that I had heard was that some of the students provoked the confrontation at the gate. These boys seriously deny that. They said that they had no weapons and would have been foolish to provoke an attack. In fact, most of the students were called from the Abuja Hostel after the attack had begun. They estimated the number of Muslims to be about 200. Apollos had estimate about 300 though we had also heard estimates of about 60.

They also told me that there had been serious destruction in an area of Anguwar Rogo where many university students lived. This is a Muslim community where rent is cheaper. Several of them were wounded very seriously and they think as many as 20 may have been killed in there. They also have heard that there may be as many as 30 students who were killed altogether in the crisis. They told about one student who escaped in the night and crawled up on one of the roofs of these Muslim houses. These houses are built in the Kano design with flat mud roofs and are all joined together. This student stayed up there all night hoping for a heavy rain that would disguise the sound of him moving on the roof. However, about 5:30, the people started going to the mosque to pray and he used that as a means to escape.

I decided that it was safe enough and since Mary and her mom had been stuck here at the house for so long, it would be good for them to go out with me. Andrew had showed up and so I asked him to drive us around to the places we needed to go. We first of all went to the CRC compound to Sid Garland's but they were not home. So, we decided to go over to the Personaires. When you see your friends after this crisis and know that they are safe, it is a



great time of rejoicing. There were many hugs of joy. As soon as I got out of the car, Al said, “Daniel called on Saturday night and said, ‘Can you tell me anything about my parents?’” Unfortunately, at that time, no one on this side of town had heard from us. However, Al tried to reassure him that we were OK. Daniel wrote back a little later and said that he had gotten an email from us. When I hear these stories of the concern of my children, the tears well up in my eyes. I believe I would rather go through a crisis like this than to have one of my family members go through it and not be able to communicate with them. We have been so busy that we have not had time to think about all the worst possible scenarios. However, with no information, that is all they have been able to think of.

We were able to check mail and Jacie fixed some lunch for us. We were able to tell them a few of the “war stories.” From the people I have met so far, it appears that our experiences are the most extreme among the missionaries. And, to God be the glory, they have not been that bad.

I had heard from several sources that a colonel had also been killed. The details are still sketchy about where and who killed him. Al says that he is not dead but is in the hospital and has had surgery.

There were examples of restraint on both sides. Al told about Hassan, a Muslim who works for them in their house. The radical Muslims had come to his area and wanted to burn some Christian homes. Hassan stopped them and said, “These are our neighbors. Our homes are right behind theirs. If we burn their homes, ours will be burned as well.” Andrew told a very similar story. The young Christian boys had come through his area wanting to burn the Muslim homes behind him. He refused to allow them to do so, using almost the exact same argument that Hassan had used.

Andrew told about a group of young men who raided one of the very rich Muslim’s house in that area. When they got inside, they found three huge bags of money. These bags would be at least the size of a 100-pound bag of sugar. One of the boys wanted to take some of the money. However, their leader said, “If you touch one bit of that money, I will kill you. We have not come here to loot. We have come to destroy.” They poured petrol over all of the money and burnt every bit of it.

Andrew also said that at one point, he came out of his house with a big knife and apparently went out toward the road near his house. A soldier saw him and shouted at him. This knife is viewed as a weapon. The soldier demanded that he give him the weapon and demanded to know why he had it. Andrew said, He bowed very low and said, “Sorry, sir. Sorry, sir. I was just trying to protect my compound.” He then turned and went back to his house. A little later, he went back to the same soldier and said, “Sir, I am sorry about the knife but I need it to chop my wood.” The soldier told him that he had already showed it to his officer but Andrew begged him and he gave it back. Andrew was really laughing during this whole story. He was trying to illustrate that you have to humor these soldiers a bit by showing proper respect.

We left there and went through town. We stopped on Amadu Bello Way about bought several things, including some oil, some toilet paper, and a bunch of chicken wings. We then went down and stopped right at Terminus. The Christians and Muslims were mixing freely. We bought ten kilos of grits and a big hunk of meat. I wanted our people to have a good meal tonight. The rest of the journey home was uneventful.

**Tuesday, 6:58 PM**

We had our security meeting at 5:00 PM (12:00 Noon Eastern Standard Time). As I was walking over there, I joined with several of my colleagues. The former vice chancellor, Professor M. Para Mallum, is my good friend. He always talks really loud. When he saw me, he roared, "Danny, well done. I have heard about all you are doing to take care of those people. In fact, I was with the governor today and told him about what you are doing." He also told me that his senior brother had been killed the day before. He was trying to defend a Seventh Day Adventist Church in the Apata area when he was shot right in the center of his forehead.

As we were walking along, we were in a lighthearted mood and were joking about various things. One of my neighbors said to me, "McCain, how could your people allow that kind of terrorism to take place?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You haven't been watching CNN?" I said, "I live with the rest of you at the University of Jos. I don't have any CNN." He said, "There has been a major terrorist attack in the USA. The White House and the Pentagon have been attacked and the World Trade Center in New York City has been brought down. In addition, there have been two plane crashes. However, the president is in Florida and is safe."

I was stunned. We have had plenty of our Muslim Christian crises here in Nigeria but the USA had never experienced anything like that. However, I was skeptical of his report. Surely, this man must have not understood. No one would be able to knock down the World Trade Center. When we got to the house of the DVC where we have our meeting, he turned on his TV. He had the sound of CNN but the picture was scrambled. They were talking about the part of the Pentagon which was hit and who might have been there. After the meeting, I came back home, went upstairs, and turned on my little satellite radio which gets the audio from CNN. I listened for about 20 minutes. This is incredible. I still don't know much except apparently some terrorists flew planes into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center and perhaps some other places and that the president has been taken to an undisclosed place. I suppose we will have a long time to think about this. This crisis far overshadows the problems we are having here in Jos, at least from the viewpoint of the world.

Our security meeting was interesting. We were briefed by our chairman. There are more promises to get military personnel here. There was a report from the senate. They have decided not to send the students away. They are waiting until Friday to see what has happened. If all is calm, we will resume classes on Monday. After the senate meeting, the VC, the DVC, and the registrar went to see the deputy governor. He was thoroughly briefed on our needs, including the need for better military coverage at our permanent site. He promised to call the GOC in Rukaba immediately after the meeting and request military personnel be permanently stationed here, at least until the end of this crisis. There was also a report on the feeding of the students. The university is releasing a million Naira to feed the students for the next week.

There was also a discussion about the many people who pass through our quarters regularly. We have a very unique old swinging bridge over the river at the back part of our compound. The tin miners probably built it 50 years ago. It is a walking bridge. During the second night of the crisis, some of our vigilante group went there and attempted to burn it. However, it was raining so much they could not succeed. They tried another time, during the daytime, but some of the residents came along and begged them to stop. They were

Christians and said that they needed to use the bridge also. There was a pretty hot discussion about what to do with the bridge. Many people thought it left us vulnerable.

I thought the whole discussion was rather silly. I finally said, “Ladies and gentlemen, the bridge is not our problem. If you tear down the bridge, do you think that wading through knee-deep water is going to stop any person who wants to come into this compound to do violence? And besides, I believe it is better to have friends in Yelwa Village than to make enemies by tearing down the bridge and blocking off their access to the town. A better idea would be to go meet those people in Yelwa and impress on them how important it is for them to be our first line of defense and to give us information about any suspicious people on that side. A good friend is very valuable. In fact, I would rather have a good friend of the people in Yelwa than have ten people stationed on that end of the compound. I have a Fulani man who has worked for me for the past nine years and he would die for me. That is the value of friends.” Well, I don’t know if that helped or not but several people supported me. After the meeting as we were going home, I went up to one of the pro-bridge burners and said, “Mac, you really are a bridge burner, aren’t you?” We laughed and joked a while.

Right near the end of the meeting, one lady said, “I still don’t think our problems are over. Today, I heard that one of these Zamfara people came to JUTH dressed as a doctor. He was going through the hospital with an injection. However, some alert person spotted him and called the soldiers.” The DVC interrupted here and said, “Excuse me, Madam. Please we don’t want rumors that will just alarm people. Please don’t tell us anything unless you are absolutely sure it is true.” The lady said that she had heard the story from one of the doctors at the hospital. One of the other medical doctors there, also confirmed the report and said, “The soldiers finished him.”

Our displaced person population has been greatly reduced tonight. I don’t think we have much more than about 60 for supper. We have already sent over about 20 to the Bartletts and it appears that we have about 40 people here with us for the night. That is the smallest group we have had yet. And it appears that we are going to have plenty of food. We were able to give only a little food at first but I think tonight everyone will get all they want.

### **Wednesday, 12 September 2021; 7:03 AM**

We have had another quiet night. I was up at 5:30 this morning and went outside. Adamu said that the soldiers had come once last night, around 12:30. They had even pulled up in my driveway. I must have really been sleeping well because I did not hear them. I have been sleeping very lightly but was really tired last night. When I walked out to the road this morning, I could still hear periodic gunfire. I suspect some of this is just local people occasionally shooting to scare people away from their homes. However, between 6:00 and 7:00 I could hear an occasional burst of automatic weapon fire. I would guess that these are warning shots to remind everyone the curfew continues until 7:00 AM.

Last night, around 8:00 PM, Mary and Nannie and I went down to one of my neighbors who has CNN. We watched the unfolding tragedy in New York and Washington DC for an hour or so. We saw the picture of the second plane flying into the World Trade Centre and the pictures of the two buildings falling down—over and over. This is certainly the greatest terrorist attack of all times.

### **Wednesday 7:17 AM**

The tears are in my eyes again. Mary just walked in my office and said, “Rachael just came and said Jean Garland had received an email from Carmen who asked them to please assure her parents that she is OK.” Carmen had apparently responded to Jean’s AOL account from which we had sent out our first correspondence. Jean had called Rachael who lives only about a mile from here and has a telephone. Rachael said she came as soon after the curfew as she possibly could.

Although Carmen lived in New York City, I have tried not to worry about her. We have enough to worry about here and there is no reason to borrow trouble. However, uncertainty is a terrible thing. Carmen has worked in Manhattan for the past two years but resigned her job a couple of weeks ago to prepare to come to Nigeria on a Fulbright scholarship she had been awarded. However, I know that she has been going to the libraries in New York City and she indicated she was going to be visiting some universities around that area. There was a small chance that she could have been near that building. So, it is a huge relief to know that she is OK.

Our family has certainly been near the international news lately. Daniel was in Tallahassee right in the middle of all the Florida contested election problems. We have been in the midst of this international crisis here in Jos. And now Carmen is in New York City. We pray that Laura will have a rather boring life for a while. She is now a pre-med student in the US.

### **Wednesday 8:04 AM**

We have received two more messages from Carmen that she is OK. I just went out and greeted a lady who lives behind the Agip Station who has a telephone. She said she received a telephone call yesterday about 5:00 PM with the message that Carmen was OK but that we should pray for some of her friends who work in that building. Also, Wiebe came by with the message that Carmen was OK. We don’t know how he received the message but it was either he or Kevin who is responsible for the lady behind Agip getting the message. Also, Wiebe Boer brought by a great big basket of tomatoes. I had seen his brother, Kevin, yesterday at Falex. We were buying some chicken wings. He had asked what he could do. I told him we needed things like tomatoes and peppers. He gave me 3000 Naira and said he would see what he could do. I tried to tell him it was not necessary but he said, “No, it is at times like this that we must all work together.”

On a similar note, Margaret, the Fulbright scholar, came up to me and said, “Danny, I hope you don’t feel badly toward me about what I am about to say but I am really grateful that I was here to experience this crisis. I have seen and experienced things that I will never forget. I have seen some of the worst of human beings but I have also seen some of the best. The way you have taken those people into your homes is incredible.” She also talked about one of the memories that will always be on her mind. She said, “When I drove up on Sunday afternoon, right in the midst of that crisis, there was Mary sitting in the Jeep and you were standing outside. There was all of this shouting and confusion going on. Everyone thought that they were coming from the back part of the campus. However, Mary had this look on her face which said, ‘let me get out of this vehicle and get back to my kitchen. I have people to take care of.’ And you had this calm look on your face which seem to be saying, ‘What is the most rational thing to do in this situation?’ I will never forget that scene.” Well, I suppose I feel similar. It has certainly not been something that I would ever wish on anyone. However, if it had to happen, I am glad that I was here and could experience this along with all the others who have had to go through this.

About 8:30, a very strong storm blew up. It dumped some serious rain down. There was very little lightning but a lot of wind. It knocked our electricity off. I hope there was no major damage.

### **Wednesday 11:19 AM**

This thing is not over. About 10:00 AM, the people started streaming back into my house saying, "They have come again." I have heard enough rumors so I wanted straight information. I recognized one lady who is a clerk at the university and I called her back to my office to question her. She said she lives near the Baptist church that was burned. She was cooking food when someone came and told her they had started again and that she should leave. She refused to leave. A little later, a man came by with a vehicle. He insisted that she go with him. This man had been going somewhere looking for bread when he saw several Hausas come out on the road with sticks and other weapons. He did not see any policemen. However, they both said that there had been shooting in the night.

The lady also told me the following story. A young man who has been staying with us went to his home yesterday. When he got there, he found that some Muslim man had already occupied his house. The Muslim man took out his big knife and tried to cut the man on the head. He held up his hand to shield himself from the blow and got a very bad cut on his hand. However, he was able to escape. Later, the boy reported this matter to a soldier. The soldier asked him if he would recognize the man who had tried to kill him. The young man said that he would so the soldier or soldiers went back with the boy to his house and shot the person in the leg. The soldiers also later took him away.

All of this was disturbing but I was still not convinced that the Muslims were bent on a counterattack. I decided that Andrew and I would go up to the front gate and check on things. We slowly drove to the front part of our compound, stopping several times to ask people what was going on. Most of them did not know. When we got up to the road that runs parallel with the main road, we turned east and slowly drove that direction with the window down listening for gunfire. It was raining which affected our hearing but we heard nothing. We went up to the main gate and pulled through it out to the main road. We stopped to listen again. Three or four young men came out from the main road and said, "Go back." When they got a little closer I could see that they looked like Hausas. Certainly, one of them was dressed like a Hausa and, during these crises, it is not good to dress like a Hausa unless you are one because you get targeted by your dress. We asked them if there was any trouble and they said that they did not know of any trouble. They had heard that there was trouble but had not seen anything and everything around them was quiet. (there have been several gunshots in the last minute up behind Agip). We decided to drive down the main Ring Road to the next gate to see if we could see any soldiers. There were none. We pulled back into the UNIJOS quarters and I stopped to see our Permanent Site chairman. He said that there had been many rumors but, as far as he could tell, they were only rumors. Soldiers had been shooting in the air. He also said that the Muslims had been told not to go to the mosque this morning and when some of them tried to go to the mosque, the soldiers had shot in the air to scare them away.

When I got back to my house, I found out that there were at least 100 to 150 people standing in the living room, the dining room, the hall and out on the porch. There was no electricity so they were standing in the dark and the room was very stuffy. I went over and opened as many of the curtains as I could to let a little light in. However, to get from the front door to the windows was a bit difficult because so many people were crowded into the room.

I spotted two men and asked them where they had come from. One said he had come from Terminus and the other had come from somewhere in town. I called them back to my office to try to determine what they had seen and heard. The first fellow was a young fellow who had just come from Terminus. He has a motorcycle. He said he had picked up a passenger at Terminus and taken him to the Congo Junction which is near the bridge about two thirds of the way to the university. He dropped him off there and was heading back to try to get another passenger. All of a sudden he saw people running out of the area to the east of the road. He also saw soldiers and they were shooting in the air. He came back and things were calm at the car park near the university. He decided that he would pass through Anguwar Rogo and come on to this side. When he got to a certain place, he saw several people with sticks and other weapons. He was able to get through and come out on the main Ring Road near us. He saw all the people coming back this direction so he followed them to my house.

I then asked the other man what was going on. He said that he was preparing to go to Abuja. He apparently lives very near Katako. He got a phone call from someone telling him that there was trouble in a certain part of town. He also saw people running. He got in his car and drove toward Farin Gada. There was a large group of people there. He became afraid so he turned back and followed the crowd to my house.

About that time, Thomas walked into the room. He had taken Martin and Anabelle to Abuja yesterday and was back here in Jos by 9:30. He said that there had been no trouble on the road either going or coming from Abuja. The last man I interviewed was surprised at this story and decided he would just go ahead and take his family on to Abuja. I encouraged him to go. I told him I thought the army was firmly in control.

Mary suggested that we get some of these people out of my house and take them over to the Horton house. I went in and made the announcement and had Andrew translate for me. He said a whole lot more than I did so I suspect he was warning them about listening to rumors. No one really wants to leave this house. However, we finally managed to get perhaps 50 to go over to the other house. It was raining pretty seriously so it was difficult but they finally agreed to go. When I got over there, I appointed one man to be responsible for the people. He was an Igbo man and spoke only a little Hausa but he was the only mature man there so I figured he would have to do.

So, we are waiting again—waiting on the rain; waiting on NEPA; waiting to hear a report about what is going on in Anguwar Rimi so that these people can go back to their homes. May God continue to be with us.

### **Wednesday, 1:30 PM**

Just a little while ago, Pastor Sunday showed up with three of his elders. He had mentioned to me yesterday that they wanted to come see me. We gathered in my office along with Jim Bartlett and Andrew. At least two of the three elders speak English poorly. Sunday made the speech on their behalf. First, he thanked us profusely for providing the care for their people. It was a very sincere and humble statement of appreciation. Second, he informed us of the plans for the church. Sunday had divided the church into three groups and each group would be taken care of by one of the three elders (lots of gunfire right now). Third, he told us that the elders had decided that those church members whose homes had been destroyed would be absorbed by other church members for the time being. They were in the process right now of deciding who would go to which house.

I responded by saying the following: “I am very grateful that you have come to thank us for what we have done. However, it has been a privilege and a joy to take care of your people. We have done so freely and we have enjoyed it. Perhaps I should say a word or two about my schedule so that you will know how to plan for your people. As you know, my mother-in-law is here right now. We will be leaving on Monday to take her to Abuja. At that time, I am supposed to go to Lagos and be gone for about ten days. Therefore, if all goes well and things continue to improve as we think they will, perhaps you all should plan to implement your plan of distributing your people into the various homes by Sunday (four rapid shots). That will give us enough time to prepare to leave on Monday. So, our last night to sleep here will be Saturday night and the last meal will be breakfast on Sunday. Of course, if there continues to be trouble and there is need for us to continue keeping your people, we will certainly continue. Rev. Bartlett is here and can continue supervising things, even if I am absent (three more rapid shots).

I want to commend you for the good things that I have heard about your church members. I have just heard your pastor say that in the area where many of your people live, no Muslim was killed and no Muslim house was destroyed. That is very good. The follower of Jesus is a person of peace. We do not believe in killing and destroying. There may be a time when we need to defend our families and our property but otherwise, Jesus taught us to love our enemies. I am urging you elders to teach your people with your lips and with your lives how they are to respond during this crisis. Teach them to forgive; teach them to not harbor bitterness and anger and hatred in their hearts. And make sure you do the same thing.

And now, I will pray for you. Lord, we are grateful for these faithful elders whom you have raised up to lead the Emmanuel Baptist Church during this crisis. I am grateful for the way you have helped them. We are most grateful that no member of the Emmanuel Baptist Church has perished during this crisis. I am now praying that you will give them the necessary wisdom to lead and take care of their people. I am praying that you will bring this crisis to a close. I am praying that you will continue to provide protection for your people and that the angels of the Lord will encamp around all of us. I am praying that you will create an atmosphere of love and harmony and reconciliation and peace in the city of Jos. I pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.”

### **Wednesday, 3:11 PM**

It certainly is not over. May God help this situation.

When we were at one store yesterday, the manager promised to save a bag of rice for me. I wanted to go into town today and get that rice and check the email. However, we continued to hear shooting all morning which made us a little nervous. Andrew and I talked about the possibility of going into town. He was in favor of giving it a try. (heavy firing back toward town right now). We stood out on my balcony to see if there were any vehicles passing by on a portion of the main road we can see about a half mile away. I watched for perhaps five minutes before seeing one. In addition, we kept hearing gunfire, sometimes pretty serious gunfire.

About that time, someone came from the other side of Ring Road and told the people here at the house that everything was clear and that they should all return home. So, as we stood on the balcony, we started seeing many people walk back toward town with their loads on their heads. At one point, we were watching one group. We could hear the firing a good bit in the distance. All of a sudden there was a shot very close. It sounded like it was right at

the junction. It was almost funny to see how the little group of people were walking toward the junction but when they heard that close shot, they immediately did a U-turn.

About that time, Pastor Sunday showed up. I asked him what he thought about me going into town to try to get some rice. He thought about it a minute and then said, "I think it is safe." So, Andrew and I decided to give it a try. I told Jim Bartlett that I would take his computer in and check his email but he decided to go with me.

When we pulled out on the main road, it was obvious that things were different from yesterday. There were very few cars on the road. In addition, there were many students with their loads on their heads, heading in various directions. When we got to the Farin Gada market, there were about 50 people out on the edge of the street selling things. I could see potatoes, okra, tomatoes, and some green leaf. At least a person could get something to eat. From there, we went to Zaria Road and turned south. Except for very few people being on the street, things were pretty normal. I mentioned to Jim, "The rain has really driven everyone indoors." When we got a little past St. Marumba's Catholic Church, there was a roadblock with soldiers. They made us open the trunk and then waved us on through. We got to the Rock Haven Junction. There was another roadblock. The soldiers acted very nervous and had very short tempers. We passed through that one and had another check point about 300 meters away. The next checkpoint was at the Rukaba Barracks Junction. We were waved on through by the soldier but he was shouting in a very agitated voice, "Keep it moving; move, move, move!" We crossed the bridge below the Gada Biyu market and there was another checkpoint. There was another one at the Polo Ground Roundabout. There was another one about 200 meters away. There was another one another 200 meters away. There was another one at the Standard Building Junction. The people around these checkpoints were all very nervous. At most of these checkpoints, people were walking toward the soldiers with their hands up or on their heads to show that they were not carrying weapons. When a person got out of the car to be frisked down he would put his hands on his head. In fact, every person who was near any of these checkpoints was walking with their hands in the air.

There was another checkpoint in front of the Plateau Radio/TV station. This was a serious one. There were several vehicles backed up coming from the other direction. We had to wait just a few minutes to get through that one and while we were idling, we could hear a lot of automatic weapon fire that sounded only 200 or 300 meters off the road toward central Jos.

It was about that time that I realized that this was really serious and perhaps we should turn back. However, we were three quarters of the way to where we were going and I felt reasonably certain we could get there. There were many people and policemen on the street in front of the A-Division Police Headquarters. We went up to the Hill Station Junction. There was a roadblock there but we were waved on through. There were no more checkpoints until we turned on Wase Road. There was one soldier near the Niger Creek compound. We were not stopped again until we pulled up to the gate at the CRC Compound.

In addition to all these checkpoints, things were not good back to the east, toward the main part of Jos. There were two large fires burning over in what looked like the Nasarawa area. In addition, when we stopped at the check points, we could hear a lot of gunfire back toward town. I was not afraid but I was very tense.

We blew our horn at the CRC Compound. The gate man opened the gate but we were not allowed to enter until the CRC director personally saw who we were. We pulled around



to Sid Garland's house. He came out to greet us. I am sure we must have had pretty grim looks on our faces. They were very anxious to hear how we were doing. Sid said that they had a family in their house with small children and they were all terrified so perhaps we should go over to the CRC office and make our phone calls. We did. I was able to get dialed up and send out my emails and received several. Ironically, I got a message back from SIAMA about my travel plans next January. That certainly is the furthest thing from my mind right now.

Sid said that what they had heard was that a large group of Muslims had attacked again in the Terminus area. They had apparently gone part way up Ahmadu Bello Way and had been over on Ran Pam Street. They had apparently been able to temporarily drive the soldiers from the center of town. However, the soldiers had regrouped and were now seriously fighting them in town. We were probably there at the CRC office for 15 minutes. We could hear a whole lot of firing in two or three different directions at that time. Sid mentioned that they had heard some very heavy guns—things that sounded like artillery (very loud explosions toward town right now). I could not imagine what the army might need to be using artillery for but they must have been using some kind of heavy weapon.

The CRC director asked, "Is there anything we can do to help?" I said, "Yes, I need food. Do you have a bag of rice?" He said, "No, but we might be able to get something. We will see what we can do." When I went out to the car, they had put in about ten pounds of rice, several cans of sardines and a gallon of oil. God bless these selfless people.

The trip home was just as tense. We were stopped at all the same places. At one place, Andrew had to open both the trunk and the hood. There was still a whole lot of firing going on back toward town. When we got to the Farin Gada Junction, Andrew spotted some rice for sale on the side of the road. We pulled over and asked if it were possible to buy a bag. They wanted 5000 Naira for a 50-kilo bag of rice. The normal price is around 2800 Naira. I tried to get them to remove something. I tried to appeal to their sympathy—that this rice was for people who had lost their homes but they were not very sympathetic and insisted on the full price so I bought it. I thought we had better get what we could while we could. I thought that we had enough rice for perhaps one more day at that time.

When we got home, I saw the DVC briefly. He said that he had heard a rumor that the Muslims did not get their fair share in the fight so they were trying again. Shortly after that, Margaret came to see me. I gave her an update on things. We were standing outside and kept hearing a good bit of firing. At one point, we heard three very loud explosions which did indeed sound like artillery. I cannot imagine what they would use artillery for but cannot think of what else could make such a loud explosion. One possibility is that perhaps they have moved some tanks into town and they are shooting those big guns on the tanks.

It is now 4:31. The firing is still going on back toward town. In fact, there is some heavy weapon that is much bigger than the typical AK-47 that makes a kind of cracking sound. This gun is shooting in bursts of three to five shots—pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, and then there will be a few second pause and then another burst. There is also a rhythmic pounding outside my window. It is women pounding rice. Tonight, we are going to have *tuwon shinkafa* (pounded rice) for supper.

**Wednesday, 8:09 PM**

The security briefing at 5:00 PM extended to almost 6:30. There was not a lot of new information. There were some situation reports of people who went out in various parts of the city. They relayed their various experiences. While we were still talking, the local captain and two of his men showed up at the DVC's house. Most of us waited until they finished their discussion so we could get a proper briefing. Finally, one of the professors came in and gave us the briefing. We had been insisting that the army give us some soldiers who could be permanently stationed here. The captain said that he only has about 25 men. He prefers to keep them together in rifle teams of six and keep them mobile. He thinks that a mobile group of six is a much more deadly force than breaking them up in groups of twos. Small groups are too easy to overpower. He recommended that we all stay indoors at night and leave the security up to them. However, he promised to meet with the local security committee tonight. He assured the residents that they were safe.

Several stories were told by residents about their experiences throughout the day. One very senior professor told us that he needed to go into town for some reason or another. There was absolutely no traffic on the road. He got down passed the bridge near the Congo-Russia junction and was stopped by a soldier. The man said, "Oga, off your moto and come down." The professor did so. He could hear steady firing right in the direction that he was going. The soldier said, "Oga, there is a war going on in there. Do you want to proceed?" The professor said, "I got in my vehicle, turned around and went home."

After the meeting, I talked a little to the former DVC who had heard the entire conversation. He said that the captain admitted that there had been a problem today. He said that there had been a lot of looters who got out of hand and that they had killed a lot of them. He also felt that with the experience today, no one else would try anything.

The displaced person situation is getting a bit trying. The poor lady who has assumed the primary responsibility for cooking, is tired and getting a bit irritable with people at times. In addition, tonight we discovered several children coming to eat from our own university compound. They were not displaced; they were living at home; they had just discovered a good way to get some more good food. In fact, when we were preparing the food, Mary counted and we had about 70 people. I took the group over to the Bartlett's tonight and counted 30 people as they went up the stairs, including a woman or big girl with a baby on her back. However, a few minutes later, Jim came over and said that he had 13 children in his house and no adults. Almost half of the crowd had apparently eaten and then slipped out and either come back here to eat again or gone to their homes. I suppose that means that we are going to have to get a little better organized to make sure that everyone is treated fairly.

While taking over some of the people to the Horton house, I saw the big army truck go by on its patrol. I rushed back to the house to see if we had any food we could give these soldiers. The *tuwon shinkafa* (pounded rice) was gone. However, I found a couple of cans of sardines which were given to us today and ran out to the road in time to catch the truck coming through. I flagged it down and gave the captain the sardines. I told him to wait a minute and we would bring something else. After a minute or so, Mary and Adamu came out with some home-made bread. It was only a token but I know the men really needed something.

**Thursday, 13 September 2022; 5:52 AM**

I have decided that I am going to move some of the IICS people out of here. I do not believe that we are overly unsafe. However, the long-term stress of this situation is not good

for our people and it is about time for them to move on. I am going to meet with them a little later today and recommend that the Yilpets go to the CRC Compound or some other place on the other side of town where it will be safer. I am also recommending that the Yilpets go to Abuja for a few days until things settle down. We will stay here.

There has been a lot of shooting all throughout the night. In fact, Adamu says that there has been more shooting last night than any of the other nights. Most of the shots have been isolated single shots. I suspect that these are soldiers who are shooting in the air just to let people know that they are around. However, in the last few minutes, I have been hearing several bursts of automatic weapon fire. I suspect that the soldiers are trying to enforce the curfew. Anyone outside right now is very vulnerable.

I was happy to hear the big army vehicle roll into the compound three or four times last night. I told the captain last night that I slept better when I heard the noise of his big truck.

I have been up since about 4:30. Interestingly, I heard at least two mosques calling the prayers this morning. They were a bit subdued but they definitely had their loudspeakers on.

### **Thursday, 9:12 AM**

I have seen the DVC this morning and he thought things went very well last night. I mentioned to him the possibility that some of the Americans may leave for their own mental welfare. He assured me that he understood that.

From there, I went up to the Bauchi Road Junction to try to see the Army captain. When I pulled up to the roadblock, the soldiers were very friendly. One of them said, "Oga, you feed plenty people-o." I asked if I could see the captain. They told me where to go to see him. When I found the person I assumed to be the captain, I told him that I was having a meeting with the American citizens in the quarters and wanted to know the latest report. He assured me that everything was very quiet. There was no reason for alarm and no reason for anyone to go anywhere. That was the message I was expecting so I thanked him and got in my car. I was just backing up when one of the soldiers stopped me and pointed in the direction of the filling station. Two soldiers were walking slowly toward me. They waved that I should stop. I was a little confused. I thought I had just spoken to the captain and wondered how these lower-level soldiers would have tried to stop me. However, I got out of the car and waited. Eventually, when they got close enough, I recognized one of them as the captain. I am not sure who the other person was. He was certainly an officer but I now recognized this fellow. I asked him all the same questions I had asked the other fellow and got the same answers. He added, "The shooting you have heard in the night is our men. There are still a few pockets of stubborn people in there but these are isolated incidents." He was very nice. I thanked him for his hard work and left.

### **Thursday, 3:25 PM**

At 9:30, we had a meeting with the Yilpets, the Bartletts, Mary and me and Nanny. I began by reading Psalm 108:6 (New Living Translation), a verse I read a couple of days ago, in my regular morning reading: "*Use your strong right arm to save me and rescue your beloved people.*" I also read Psalm 109:26-31, verses I had read the following day in my quiet time. These verses are also very appropriate scriptures for our particular situation:

*Help me, O Lord, by God!  
Save me because of your unfailing love.  
Let them see that this is your doing,  
that you yourself have done it, Lord.  
Then let them curse me if they like,  
but you will bless me!  
When they attack me, they will be disgraced!  
but, I your servant, will go right on rejoicing.  
Make their humiliation obvious to all;  
clothe my accusers with disgrace.  
But I will give repeated thanks to the Lord,  
praising him to everyone.  
For he stands beside the needy,  
ready to save them from those who condemn them.*

After the scripture, Jim Bartlett prayed. After that I said several things. “First, I want to say that I am very proud of the way all of you have responded to this non-academic assignment. I don’t think that IICS gave you any orientation for dealing with such a crisis. You have been wonderful. Second, I want to give you a little situation report on the displaced persons. In light of the fact that we will be going to Abuja on Monday to take Mary’s mom to the airport, we will need to stop our food and accommodation services with the breakfast meal on Sunday. So, the last night of sleeping will be on Saturday evening. Pastor Sunday is aware of this and is waiting to absorb all of these people into various homes in his church. Third, I want to brief you on the security situation. Although there was a good bit of firing last night, things are very calm this morning. I went outside the university and people are moving up and down freely. In fact, I talked to the captain this morning and he assured me that everything was very normal and that there was absolutely no reason for panic and no reason to leave Jos.”

Jim mentioned the issues that Pastor Sunday had brought up so I asked him to review those for us. While he was doing that, I ran downstairs to greet Wiebe and Kevin Boer who informed me that they were heading to Abuja immediately. When I got back upstairs, I told the group that I wanted us to freely discuss what we should do from this point onwards. I mentioned that there were about five options. This most radical would be to pack up and go back to the USA. The next most radical would be to go to Abuja. The third thing we could do would be to move to the other side of town—to one of the missionary compounds. The fourth thing we could do would be to go to the missionary compound tomorrow until after the mosque prayers and determine at that time whether or not we needed to stay there or come back home. Of course, the fifth thing would be to simply stay here and do nothing. No one had any interest in going back to the USA. Also, no one was really interested in going to Abuja, even though I told them that that had been my decision a few hours early. We eventually settled on the fourth option. At least Roslyn and the kids would go in and stay until after the mosque prayers tomorrow. The rest of us would play it by ear. Yoilah closed our session in prayer.

Jim and Roslyn decided to go into town with me. I finished a couple of emails and then we went to town. Everything was even more free than it had been on Tuesday. We stopped at the Farin Gada market and bought some items. When we got out on Zaria Road there was a large crowd of people near the Christian part of the cemetery. Soldiers were guarding them. There was a pickup truck with a plain unpainted wooden casket in the back,

which a group was apparently preparing to bury. A hundred yards down the road, a group of people were walking south being led by a priest in a white robe. The rest of the trip was uneventful. I don't think we were stopped at a single place. However, when we got to the Gada Biyu Junction, there was a small traffic jam as two big army trucks were trying to turn around. They were followed by a small armored personnel carrier that had a heavy machine gun on top of it. I suspect that was what was making that heavy "put, put, put" sound at times.

When we got to the Garland's, they were happy to see us. We sent our emails. I received 36 emails today which is the biggest day we have had in a long time. A lot of people were responding to my crisis writings. There were statements of shock and love and support and assurances from everyone that they were praying for us. While there, I also talked on the phone to Allan Chilver, a British missionary with Action Partners, who is probably the longest serving missionary in Nigeria. I think he has been here almost 40 years. He informed me that the American Embassy and the British High Commission were planning to have meetings a Hillcrest on Friday morning at 9:00 AM. There were going to try to have a joint session together. He wanted me to inform all American citizens at the university.

The Garlands reported that the firing continued very heavily throughout most of the day yesterday. They also informed us that the Danish Lutheran missionaries had all evacuated to Abuja. Apparently the Muslims broke into their compound yesterday during this crisis and some of them (the Muslims) were killed by the soldiers. This was so disturbing that they decided to get out of town for a little while.

While we were doing our telephone work at the Garland's, Thomas went to check on his family who were not far away. When he came back he told us that one of his brothers had been in town the day before. He had seen soldiers loading bodies into two big trucks. They were apparently taken to Rukaba or somewhere else and immediately buried. Two truckloads of bodies are a whole lot of bodies.

When we left, we went to Ahmadu Bello Way to see if there were any shops open. There had been on Tuesday but the fighting was still too fresh in that area so nothing was open. We went to Terminus and then turned back toward JUTH (Jos University Teaching Hospital). Just as we were going past JUTH, I saw a man with a white mask on his face open one of the gates to the hospital. Out roared some kind of big truck about the size of a dump truck with a soldier or two in it. The driver and all of the occupants had masks on their faces. Another vehicle pulled out behind this one and the people had masks on their faces. It was instantly obvious that this truck was filled with corpses. We started following these vehicles and then it became obvious why they had the masks over their faces. The stench was terrible. We continued to smell it for a long time.

We went on down that road until we got to the Ring Road Junction and turned on that to go north. There was no damage at the Millionaire's Quarters. We stopped by to check on Roslyn's school. She did not have a key but there appeared to be no damage. We then drove on around Ring Road. There were quite a few burned out vehicles in the road. Just as we were approach Tina Junction, a young man appeared to be flagging us down and waving us to go back. The vehicle in front of us immediately made a U-turn. However, there were people up the road from this young man who were standing around talking casually as if nothing was the matter. I told Thomas to move on forward cautiously. There was no reason for alarm. We stopped at one place for Thomas to run in and check on Martha. She and all her family were OK. Just as we got opposite of the Ring Road Entrance to the Bauchi Road Permanent Site,

we smelled the awful stench of rotting human bodies. We did not see them but they must have been there in the bush somewhere. We smelled the same thing when we got close to the front gate of the Permanent Site of the university. So, there are still a few bodies out there which are now seriously decomposing (amazingly there is still a good bit of firing back toward town).

### **Thursday, 8:01 PM**

In the late afternoon, Apollos came by to chat for a bit. He told me that the story he had heard about yesterday was that the Hausas had plotted to loot and destroy the Igbo shops in several places of town. It was to be a well-coordinated attack that should have only lasted about a half hour. They would have done their damage and then melted back in the other part of the city. However, when they started, they found out that these places were being guarded by policemen. The policemen started battling them. For a while, the policemen were driven out of that part of town. However, they were reinforced by the army and they apparently really dealt with these boys. They killed many. According to Apollos' information, they had simultaneously attacked the Dilimi area, and Kwarafa, both of which have a lot of Igbo shops as well as the JUTH Hospital compound. They were able to loot and burn some of the Igbo shops but they did so at a very big price. So many of the looters died.

I went to the 5:00 PM briefing. I got there before everyone else because there had been an announcement about a prayer meeting to take place beforehand. However, it was raining pretty heavy and no one showed up for the prayer meeting. However, the DVC did give me a personal briefing about some of the things he was going to say later. The DVC had gone along with the VC and several others to see the GOC of the Rukaba Army Barracks. Once again, they made their request for permanent military people to be stationed in our quarters until this crisis is over. Once again, the request was denied with the explanation that the mobile units were very capable of taking care of our security. The DVC told me a couple of things the GOC had told him that were not mentioned later at the public meeting. First, he said that the commander said his troops were a bit frustrated by the kind of work they were being asked to do. They were doing police work but they were an army trained to kill and destroy. If they were allowed to do real army work, they would have finished this crisis several days ago. He also said that the army had intercepted a couple of truckloads of Hausa reinforcements coming from Bauchi and had taken them to Rukaba Barracks. One of Apollos' friends had also said that he had seen a couple of truckloads of people being taken to Rukaba Barracks. He also said that the army and the police had worked out a joint strategy for taking care of the city and that from today, that strategy would be implemented. He also assured the team from the university that they were very well aware of the possibilities of things getting stirred up either at the mosque on Friday or church on Sunday and that they were very well prepared for those possibilities. So, it does appear that the army has this thing under control.

One very interesting report was given. One lecturer reported on a visit that he and someone else had made to Yelwa Village, the Fulani village immediately behind the university. Some of our residents have been very fearful of the people in this village because nearly all Fulanis are Muslims. This fight has really not been against Fulanis but against Hausas. I was very happy about this report because it had been my suggestion that we go meet those people and try to form some alliance with them. The man reporting said that the chief who had received them was very happy about the visit. He said that they had been very worried about how we or the students might react to them. He also confirmed that the people

that we kept seeing over on the other hillside across the river were their own scouts who were surveying the situation. We all laughed about that. We had been concerned about an invasion from the rear by them or someone else and they were concerned about us invading them. They assured us that they had already linked up with the people in Naraguta Village and that no one would be able to come through their area without them knowing it. And if there was ever any threat to our compound, they would let us know. That was really great news. They also said that they were going to butcher a cow the next day and if we would send over our representative, they would send us some of the meat. Hallelujah. What a blessing.

When I got back home, I found out that we had only 19 people who were still remaining for supper and who would spend the night. The ladies had prepared a big pot of rice so everyone got to have plenty of food tonight. They were all very happy. Also, the Deputy Vice Chancellor stopped over to check on us. He had been telling me that he was coming to check on the refugee situation. I introduced him to the people sitting in my living room. There was young lady who could speak English. She said she had recently finished secondary school and was now working as a tailor. She confirmed that all of the people who were now at my house had had their houses burned and destroyed. I also took the DVC into the kitchen to meet the young lady who has been responsible for all the cooking. She was very gracious and profusely thanked the DVC for his cooperation and support of her people during this crisis. The DVC also expressed his great appreciation for the work we were doing for these refugees. He thought that there might be some relief coming for some of them, which we would be able to get. He was concerned about who was funding all of this. I told him that the American community had given me about 5,000 Naira. In addition, Wiebe Boer and his brother Kevin have brought a basket of tomatoes, about fifteen kilos of rice and several other things. I told him that one of my neighbors had brought some yams and some others had brought other things so our efforts have been very much of a team effort.

One of the young ladies who has been working in the kitchen showed me the x-rays of her brother's leg. He had been shot near the Total Station. He had been shot with something like a shotgun with pellets slightly bigger than bird shot. He still had six of these in one leg and about twenty in the other leg.

Here is one pitiful story I heard the other day. It also sounds a bit like a rumor but I know that there is some truth to it. When the people were coming from the south through Bukuru, the boys who were manning the roadblocks would demand that the person quote the Lord's Prayer. If he could do that, it was assumed that he was a Christian and he would be allowed to pass. If he could not, he was pulled out of the car and killed. At one point, a car pulled up and the boys demanded that the driver recite the Lord's Prayer. The man said, "the Father, the Son and the Mother." The person telling the story said he was neutralized.

### **Friday, 14 September 2001; 6:09 AM**

We have had another relatively quiet night. I was very tired last night and apparently slept very well. I did hear the army truck roll through once during the night. I was wide-awake at 5:15. For the last half hour or so, I have continued to hear gunshots. I assume that these are just warning shots, letting people know that there is still a curfew. They are isolated single shots and not automatic weapon fire. It is amazing how quickly you can get used to hearing gunfire. Even when we were preparing to go into town yesterday, we heard gunfire not too far behind the Agip Station. However, no one is paying much attention to these isolated shots anymore.

The whole gunfire thing is interesting. At times, the gunfire has sounded like a regular war which various kinds of automatic gunfire. There is the tap, tap, tap of the AK-47's. These are usually in bursts of two or three. And then there is the heavy machine gun fire which has a very deep put, put, put kind of sound. There are also the heavy deep single shots which are the tear gas canisters being fired. In addition, there are the various non-military guns which are nearly always single shots being fired. These are either double-barrel shotguns or a locally made guns that use shotgun shells. There is another gun that is a bit louder and deeper than the AK-47 or the shotgun. It is likely a muzzle-loading dan gun that hunters use in the bush. I stood on my porch two days ago and listened to the firing. It reminded me of a dove shoot. One person would fire two or three shots and then in another part of town, you would hear another burst. Then there would be a single shot and then two or three different guns firing together. When we used to go hunting and we would get on a good dove shoot, afterwards we would say that it sounded like a young war going on. I never thought I would hear myself saying that a war sounded like a dove shoot. (Just after I typed the last sentence, I heard a fast burst of five shells that sounded more like an automatic shotgun than an automatic military rifle. If it were a military rifle, the soldier was pulling the trigger for each shot. This was followed by a fast two or three shot burst that was automatic weapon fire.)

Perhaps I have said this before but one of the great blessings of this whole crisis has been that our electricity has been very steady ever since Sunday morning. Electricity went off about 6:30 on Friday and so we did everything with the help of our battery backup system and candles. When we went to the other houses, we did everything exclusively by candlelight. However, since Sunday, the electricity has been very steady. It has been off a couple of times but not for long periods of time. In addition, the Lord has blessed us with good strong water every day. With all of these people here, if we would have gone a single day without water, we would have been in trouble, but the Lord has supplied the water, for which we are thankful.

### **Friday, 4:24 PM**

The big news today was the meeting we had at Hillcrest School with officials from the American Embassy, the British High Commission, and the Netherlands. The road into Hillcrest was very free. We were stopped at only one checkpoint. When we got to Hillcrest, many people were pouring in. We eventually gathered in the chapel for the meeting.

The first person to speak was Mitchell Moss, a political officer in the Embassy. He welcomed us and said that they were there to listen primarily but would allow each of the representatives to say a few words and then they would take questions. The next person to speak was Ambassador Joseph M. Segars, who is a retired ambassador and has been in Abuja on a special assignment. He was invited to come along on this trip. The next person to speak was the representative from the British High Commission. He said a few words and then offered his sympathies to the American community for the tragedy that had taken place in New York and Washington DC. Finally, the representative from the Netherlands spoke about one minute. The Ambassador then chaired the question-and-answer time.

A missionary lady made the first comment. She said that according to many of their colleagues, the coverage from in the Hausa service of both BBC and VOA was heavily biased in favor of the Islamic position. This comment seemed to take the panel by surprise. They indicated that they had never heard this complaint before. Several other people joined with Barbara in making this point. An SIM missionary said that this was not a new problem but had been going on for many years. He gave the name of a former student at Hillcrest who



was the head of the Hausa service at one time but had been moved whenever he mentioned this complaint.

From there, several other topics came up. Someone complained about the inability to get through to the Embassy during the crisis because the phone was busy. I stood up and said, "I have a slightly different complaint. It was pretty hot on my side. However, on Sunday morning, I slipped out somewhere where there was a pay phone and managed to get through to the Embassy. However, the duty officer was not around and the person I talked to could not understand my accent. He kept asking me to repeat things. The units on my card were running down and I had no other card. The point is I think that in these times of crisis, we need to have someone in the US Embassy who can understand American English." The ambassador responded that perhaps they should get a dedicated line. I stood back up and said, "Sir, I don't think that is the answer. Most of us are not going to be able to find special numbers in time of emergency. We just call the US Embassy. The point is that during times of crisis, I think the Embassy needs to be especially sensitive and prepare for incoming calls from American citizens." After another exchange, the Ambassador said, "Well, I am sorry you had a problem getting through." I said, "I did not have a problem getting through to the Embassy. I just had a problem getting through to the embassy employee." Everyone roared with laughter.

Another missionary stood up and complained that he did not call anyone at the Embassy until about Sunday and when he did, the Embassy said that his was the first call. They also said that there was nothing to worry about. What was going on in Jos was a small tribal dispute. This angered him. It demonstrated that someone down there did not know what they were talking about. He mentioned that he had ridden around with the former head of state, Yukubu Gowon to many of these places and gave a brief assessment of the damage.

A British missionary attempted to give a historical perspective on the crisis. Apparently the Hausas are claiming to be indigenes here and he explained that that was not the case. Someone asked about what the embassies could do about helping needy people. All of them explained that they donate money to the Red Cross who provides various forms of relief. One of the Embassy people had said that Americans and foreigners really were not targets in this battle. However, one Catholic nun stood up and said that all Christians were targets and told a little about the trouble that had gone on outside her compound. Someone asked what the appropriate evacuation procedures were and complained that the embassy had not given better instruction. Mitchell asked how many people had really wanted to be evacuated during this time. No one raised a hand. He then explained that they had as many as eight armored vehicles prepared to come to Jos at a moment's notice. However, they never had any requests.

Finally, the time was up and the group wanted to close. I was sitting on the second row and indicated to Mitchell that we should close in prayer. At the end he said, "Someone has suggested that we close in prayer and I certainly have no objection."

I stood up and said:

Before we pray, I want to say a few things. First, of all, the fact that we are all here is a testimony to the goodness of God and his protection over us during the last few days. We must understand that our real protection does not come from policemen or soldiers or vigilante groups with sticks but from God. We must remember that the

angels of the Lord encamp around us to protect us, though, of course, sometimes the Lord in his sovereignty allows some of us to be casualties.

And now, there are three things that I want to say to all of us. First, I want to urge you, my brothers, and sisters, to try to avoid rumors. Rumors have gotten many people killed during this past week. So, let's be careful about passing along things that we do not really know of. Second, I would like to support what Mitchel said earlier about the risks involve in missionary work. When all of you got on that plane to come over here, you knew that there was risk involved. We cannot blame the Embassy or anyone else for this crisis and for these risks. If we feel uncomfortable about taking the kinds of risks we are facing right now, perhaps it is time for you to get away for a while until things cool down.

And there is one more thing I want to say. Ladies and gentlemen, please do not allow yourself to get caught up in the bitterness and resentment and anger that have been so prevalent in these last few days. I am sure that many of us are sympathetic with and believe the rumors that say that this whole thing was deliberately planned by the other side. Even if that is so, that does not give us the right to be bitter and full of hatred. I would encourage you to demonstrate the forgiveness and love for enemies that was taught by Jesus. God has allowed this thing to happen to us to teach us many lessons. God is going to use this crisis in our lives and ministries and I beg you to use this as a time to demonstrate real Christianity.

And now let us pray. Father, you have been close to us during this past week. We thank you for your protection. We thank you that everyone in this room is safe and that most of our properties are safe. We pray that you will comfort the hearts of those who have lost so much more than we have. We pray you will bless the representatives from our embassies who have come to check on us. We thank you for their concern and pray that you will give them divine wisdom during this crisis as well. We pray that you will restore peace in the city of Jos and in each of our hearts. We pray you will forgive us for any wrong attitudes we have had during this crisis. We pray that we will not be so concerned about our safety that we neglect our ministries. We ask these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

After the meeting, I had a chance to visit with a few of my friends. The most interesting stories came from an Assemblies of God missionary. He had mentioned in his public presentation something about a truckload of bodies. I asked him to give me a few more details. He mentioned that his driver had been taking the former head of state, General Gown, around town. Two of the soldiers who were guarding his house wanted to go to Rukaba Barracks to check on their families so Scott had agreed to let his driver and one of my former students take them. When they got to Rukaba, they saw two trucks loaded with bodies. One was one of these long cattle trucks. The other was a dump truck. Both of them were loaded so full of bodies you could see them extending over the sides of the truck. They were taken to Rukaba Barracks and apparently buried in a mass grave. This confirms what Thomas' brother had said a couple of days ago. A little later, a friend who is a physician at JUTH estimated that at least 500 people had been killed by the army on that Wednesday alone.

One of the missionaries also gave me a little more information about what went on in Bukuru. The Assemblies of God are very strong among the Beroms in the Bukuru area. He said that apparently early in the conflict, the Hausas went and killed the richest Igbo man in Bukuru. When that happened, the Berom people went and put on their "juju war paint" on

their faces. Apparently most of the Beroms live west of Bukuru. They all started congregating and coming to the main road. The police were guarding the main road. However, at one point, the police observed that soldiers were shooting at the local residents. There was some indication that these were “fake soldiers.” They had managed to get uniforms somewhere. When the police observed this, they allowed the Beroms to cross the road and for the next two and a half hours, the Beroms systematically killed Hausas and destroyed their property.

We stopped by the Garlands to check our email and got 17 emails in. We wanted to hurry to get home before the prayers at the mosque started that day. The ride home was uneventful.

After I got home, I had several people come and see me. One of them was Peter Ozodo. I have worked very closely with Peter with COCEN and Covenant Keepers during the last couple of years. We have met every Wednesday for prayer for a couple of years. His house is right in the midst of a lot of Hausas. In fact, much of the burning and destruction at Farin Gada was only about a quarter of a mile from his house. He told me that it had been very tense there. He later learned this story. The youths from the Muslim village right behind them had all banded together and had set out to go start their burning and killing. However, there is a pastor near there and he took it upon himself to see the Hausa chief of that area. He told him, “If your boys go out and burn Christian homes and shops, the Christians are going to come here and burn your homes and shops and your people will suffer. Let us stop this before it gets started.” He said the chief was happy with that recommendation and went after the boys and called them back and restrained them from doing anything destructive. That was a very positive story in the midst of so much destruction.

Peter gave me was a bit more information about the background to this conflict. The Hausas have been in this area for many generations. In fact, they came here when the British tin miners came here. There was really no one living here on the plains at this time. The Beroms were living up in the hills. However, the Beroms and other local people claim that though they did not actually live here, this was their land and that they are the true “indigenes.” Where a person is an “indigene” is very important in Nigeria. In what sense, the Hausas have had a lot of influence because they have bought up a lot of the land in the middle of Jos. They have also been very politically active and at one time were able to elect the chairman of the Jos North Local Government area. However, after that the local people came together and turned out in mass to elect their own people. Because they are a minority, they are not well represented in the governor’s cabinet, in the senate or in the state legislature. As such they feel marginalized. Recently, the governor attempted to do something nice for them by appointing one of them to be the chairman of the poverty alleviation committee. This would be a very good appointment because it would control a lot of federal money. However, the local indigenes were very unhappy about this because, according to them, this position should have gone to an “indigene.” Apparently, by giving this position to a Hausa man, the government was conceding that he was an indigene. This helped me understand why these local people were so upset about this appointment.

While they were still here, Umar Danfulani came to see me. Umar is a colleague in the Department of Religious Studies. However, at the present time, he is also serving as the Dean of Students. He deals with all of the student related problems. He had been in senate earlier in the day and reported to me what had happened there. There has still been no official announcement about closing the university. However, neither can we open until the curfew is lifted.

Umar also told me about some of his experiences. He was caught on campus on Friday evening and spent the night there. He confirmed that during the early part of the evening, Muslims attempted to enter the university. However, the students kept them from coming in. He also told me that Christian and Muslim students fought side by side to keep the Muslims from entering the compound. And while they were fighting, several of the students were shot. Umar made two trips to JUTH that night. During the first one, he took three students and during the second, he took two students. He could not go through town which would have been the most direct route but had to go around Ring Road. He said that he was stopped about ten times on Ring Road by the Christian vigilante groups. Very often, he would have to quote a verse of scripture before they would let him through.

Umar also confirmed that we now know that we lost seven staff members. One of them was the secretary to the director of the medical center. I saw this person only a few months ago when I was getting my contract renewed. I had to go to the medical director to get his signature. The secretary is the one who took me in. He was beheaded. We also lost the librarian in charge of the medical part of the library. We also lost a man who had been a typist in our department before I came. As far as Umar knows, we only lost one academic staff, a lecturer in the department of architecture. He only knows for sure that we lost one student. This was a young man who spent Friday night at the Bauchi Road Senior Staff Quarters. However, he was worried about his brother in Anguwar Rogo and so decided to go check on him. While he was in there, he was attacked and killed. Umar also knows we lost several more. He thinks the final count of students will be between ten and fifteen. He also told the sad story of meeting three girls in the car park during that Friday night. They had apparently come out and identified themselves to the policemen guarding the car park. Umar took them to his own house. They were students from ABU who had come to Jos for a special conference. Umar later found out that all three had been raped by the Muslims.

While Umar was still there, the special assistant to the governor on religious matters came to see me. He told me that he had been to see the Protestant chaplain and that he had mentioned that I was taking care of a lot of refugees. He told me he had some foodstuff and would be glad to share them with me. I told him that I thought most of my group would be going home today but I would be happy to have some of these things to give to individuals who had lost their homes and possessions. He agreed to that. He pulled his vehicle up to my front porch and gave me a 100-pound bag of rice and a similar bag of garrie. He also expressed his sincere appreciation for what we had done for the refugees.

Shortly after that, we took the lady who had been helping us cook and her sisters back to her house. Now that all the refugees were going home, there was no reason for her to stay. In fact, she had continued to stay with us, just so she could take care of the refugees. We had a brief but nice visit with her family.

### **Friday, 9:07 PM**

Later in the afternoon, I went over to the security briefing. We still had a very good group there. Nothing new was really discussed. Afterwards, I had a long talk with a physician in our university. He was at his private clinic on Wednesday when all of this violence and shooting broke out. His clinic is only a couple of hundred yards from the mosque where all the trouble began. He said he could hear the Muslims changing “Allahu Akbar” and then he would hear the shooting of the automatic weapons. He said that he has one patient who is the wife a very big police officer at the police training college. He had given her an appointment for that Wednesday. He had no idea she would try to show up but she did, in the presence of

16 policemen. She had passed right through the middle of town and testified that there were bodies everywhere in the middle of town on the Wednesday. This doctor told me one other interesting story. He has one Muslim woman as a patient. She came to his clinic today and spent a couple of hours there waiting for her husband. Since he had little else to do, he talked to her. He asked her, "Who really started this thing?" She said, "It is true that our people started it but the Christians took it too far." He also asked her if it were true that guns had been removed from the central mosque today? She confirmed that many guns were removed from the mosque today. He estimated that at least 500 people died on Wednesday alone in the middle of town. He thinks that there are at least 1000 people who have died. I would not be surprised if the total is higher than that.

This doctor told me that three or four casualties were brought into his clinic on that Wednesday. One was a girl of about 12 who was brought in by a Baptist pastor who is one of the graduates of our IICS diploma program. The girl was burned over about 80 percent of her body. All the doctor could do was to put an IV into her arm and recommend the pastor take her to JUTH. He complained that there was no way he could get through to JUTH at that time because all of the fighting was going on between that clinic and JUTH. The doctor told him that the girl would die if she stayed there and that he had to try. This girl's sister had already died from the injuries she received in the same incident. The doctor explained that these people would prepare petrol bombs by putting gasoline or Kerosene in a bottle and then also partially fill in with sand. They would have some kind of fuse made of cloth. They would light the fuse and throw the bomb onto the houses of people. This is apparently what happened in this case. The house caught on fire and one girl was burned very badly and another one died.

When I got home I discovered that, for sure, all of the refugees were gone. This is the first time we have had the house to ourselves in a week. I think we will enjoy the quietness.

Thomas told me that when he had come from town this morning from taking my dog to the vet, he had passed by the Muslim cemetery. There was one of these big cattle trucks loaded with bodies. People were unloading the bodies and taking them into the cemetery and apparently burying them in a mass grave. Thomas said, "I pray that I will never have to see something like that again."

Well, the Lord has brought us successfully through another day. It was peaceful but still a bit painful as we heard many stories of suffering and death. May God spare us anything like this again.

### **Saturday, 15 September 2001; 8:35 PM**

Perhaps the most unusual thing about today is an email I got from my brother-in-law Dan Simmons. Dan is a roofing contractor and not a particularly subjective experience. What he describes happened on Saturday, the day after the crisis started, although we did not get the email until a week later. This experienced occurred before anyone in my family in the US knew anything about the unfolding crisis in Nigeria. His email is copied below:

I hope that this e mail is not just one of scores of other e mails that you have to read through! I imagine that you are being flooded with mail.

We were in tears Sunday morning when I opened my e mail from Carmen and read her plea to hear from you soon about your safety. I felt a strange feeling come over me as I read about the violence there. I could not believe what I

was reading. Just the day before, on Saturday about 2-3 in the afternoon I was sitting in our back porch, listening to soft music and meditating and praying. I looked out over our back yard and into the distance and started feeling a strange feeling. I suddenly felt that you were in danger. I was looking at the university area and down the streets and back to your house. I felt that violence and killing were going on. It was like I was in a trance. I am happy that some of the sights I was seeing did not happen, since Danny is ok. I was a little terrified at what I was seeing happening to Danny, and I breathed a prayer. I started forcing these thoughts out of my mind because frankly they were a little strange. You can imagine how I felt when I opened that e mail the next morning since I had heard nothing about anything happening in Africa. At any rate, I believe that you are in God's hands.

We are emotionally drained as a result of the terrorism here in the U.S. The stories are coming out now from family members who are overwhelmed at the losses they are suffering. I can only sympathize with the tremendous anguish churning in people's hearts across the world.

Thank you for keeping us informed.

Love,  
Dan

Obviously, that email really touched my heart and demonstrated to me in a new way how God is able to encourage people to pray for us. Who knows? At the time Dan was praying for us, we had almost 200 people in our home trying to eat. There was fighting and gunfire within a mile of our house. Because we are something of a Christian island on the top of a sea of Muslims, we had felt extremely vulnerable. However, God, with his infinite wisdom and power protected us.

Amazingly, we are still hearing gunshots. There were about four or five fast ones over toward the student village while we were eating supper. We are also still hearing an occasional one back toward town. However, we are confident that things are quiet.

### **Sunday, 16 September 2001; 8:42 AM**

It was pretty quiet last night. Just about the time I was going to sleep, I heard shots not too far away, somewhere near the junction. Adamu said that during the night, the soldiers came patrolling through our quarters on foot. I think this is the first time they have done that. He said when they got in front of Yilpet's house, which is next door to mine, they shot into the air. In addition, when they got around on the loop near the Bartlett house, they shot a couple of times. I must have really been asleep because I did not hear those shots.

As I got out of the bathtub this morning and looked out the bathroom window, I could see pretty heavy black smoke coming out from some area behind student village. It looked like it was from Farin Gada or perhaps even as far away as the JETS seminary. My thoughts were, "Oh no, here we go again." I decided that I really needed to go take a look at what was going on. We are planning to go to church in a little while and I want to make sure that things are OK before we go out of the compound. So, I took Adamu and we went up there to check out what was happening.

When we got to the Farin Gada Market, we could see what appeared to be a house burning about one hundred yards from the road, up on a high hill. I have never been back in that area so it could be a shop also. There were about 20 soldiers out on the road in that area, including an armored personnel carrier. There were also plenty of people milling around. They have been selling food there for the last few days. I could not see anyone selling food but there was no panic. People were getting in the public transportation vehicles going wherever they were going. One person was repairing a flat tire. Things appeared very normal with only a slight bit of tension in the air.

The other events of this day are recorded in the chapter entitled “A Violent Test to Determine the Level of our Faith: A Journal of Reflections from the Jos Crisis.”

### **Monday, 17 September 2001**

On Monday, we had to go to Abuja to take Mary’s mom to the airport. We left the house about 9:30 AM and drove to the CRC compound where we checked the email and called Abuja to make sure that Nanny’s reservations were still intact. Everything was OK. We were relieved. She may have been on the first flight back to the US after the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>. I might add that Pastor Sunday Gomna rode to Abuja with us. He was heading back to Ogbomosho to go back to seminary.

We saw a good bit of damage all the way to the edge of Plateau State. There were houses and cars burned all the way to Bukuru. In Bukuru, there was a lot of damage. One section was especially damaged. It apparently was the Hausa section. As we passed through one area, Pastor Sunday said, “Do you see that big house there that was burned? They found several bags of money in that house along with some arms. They burned all the money.” All along the road from Bukuru south, we would periodically see vehicles burned on the side of the road. These told very sad stories. Apparently the vehicles were stopped by Christian vigilante groups. Apparently the drivers and/or the occupants were Muslims which probably meant the person was dragged out of the vehicles, killed and the vehicle burned. There were three or four vehicles which looked as if they had been wrecked and burned. These also told silent but sad stories. Apparently, the drivers had attempted to run through some kind of roadblock but was shot. Either the person was shot or the vehicle was shot which caused it to veer off into the bush or into a tree. There were at least two big villages which we passed through where there was extensive damage to what I am sure were Muslim homes and businesses. Most of these were mud block houses which had been pulled down in addition to being burned.

Once we got off the plateau, there was no more damage.

Pastor Sunday did give us some additional information about the burning of his church building. He said that seven members of his church spent the night at his church on that Friday evening to protect it and there was no problem on that evening. However, on Saturday, some soldiers showed up and told them that everything was under control. The soldiers also took the sticks away from them that they had been using to protect themselves. The soldiers apparently also encouraged them to go on home. They left and five minutes later the church and the parsonage were on fire. They now assume that these “soldiers” were fake soldiers who had gotten uniforms from somewhere. This is just one more of the “fake soldier” stories.