

Muslim-Christian Dialogue from the Nigerian and Pakistani Perspective: A Theological Discussion

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Abstract

Muslim-Christian dialogue is one of the most common dialogues around the globe. Even though the interreligious dialogue is accepted in Muslim countries, the discussions in Nigeria and Pakistan are facing challenges. This paper, therefore, intends to examine the Nigerian and Pakistani perspectives on Muslim-Christian dialogue to analyse its legality or otherwise from the main sources of the two religions. This is qualitative research comprising the historical and contextual approach of the Qur'ān, Hadith, and the Bible as well as views of Islamic scholars and Christian clergies. The findings reveal that Islam and Christianity not only acknowledge dialogue between Muslims and Christians but encourage it among other religions for the establishment of peaceful coexistence and sustainable development of a community. This paper, therefore, recommends that Nigerian and Pakistani Muslim scholars should give extra energy to enlighten Muslims to understand that interreligious dialogue does not in any way mean to unify Islam with Christianity.

Keywords: Muslim-Christian, Dialogue, Nigerian and Pakistani, Theological Discussion, Perspectives.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is believed that Almighty Allah Has created humankind and shaped them on different skin colour, nations, tribes, and backgrounds as well as locations as He says, “O mankind! We have created you from a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another... (Al-Qur’ān, *Sūrah al-Hujurat* 48:13).” Religion is the uniting factor among all humankind, but this can be achieved if there is an understanding of one another. It is argued that peace and harmony among people of different religions cannot be sustained if there is no proper interreligious dialogue (Chukwulozie, 1986), although Almighty Allah Has granted freedom of religion to a man as He is saying, “Verily! We showed him the way, whether he be grateful or ungrateful” (Al-Qur’ān, *Sūrah al-Insan*: 76:3). *Tafsir Jalalayn* translated grateful as a believer (Mumin) and ungrateful as a disbeliever (Kafir) (Al-Suyudiy, 2019). This further connotes that man is granted freedom to be a Muslim or a *Kafir* (disbeliever) hence, is a choice given to him because there is no compulsion in religion (Al-Qur’ān, *Sūrah Al-Baqarah* 2:256). Nowadays, without any fear of exaggeration, Islam and Christianity are the world's two major religions. For example, Islam preaches peace, unity, and harmony among its adherents. It is in line with this assertion, that Almighty Allah says, “Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your home from being righteous toward them and being justly toward them. Allah loves those who act justly (Al-Qur’ān, *Sūrah Al-Muntahana* 60:8). This indicates that for a Muslim to be pleased by Allah, he should do justice to all humankind regardless of religious and tribal differences. Islam plays an important role in supporting the idea of interreligious dialogue this is because of various examples of dialogue and interreligious relationships mentioned in the Glorious Qur’ān as earlier indicated in the (Qur’ān 49: 13). For more details, see (Al-Qur’ān *Sūrah Al-Ma’idah* 5: 48; *Sūrah Al-nahl*16: 125). However, misunderstanding in this regard is inevitable. It is eventually noted that some with extreme views believed that religious dialogue should be discouraged with the fact that any form of dialogue with any belief other than Islam is forbidden. It is in line with the burning issue that the present research attempts to highlight the permissibility of otherwise of interreligious dialogue to clear the misconception of perception of some Nigerian and Pakistani Muslims. One may wonder why Nigeria and Pakistan were selected for the discussion. This comes to the mind of the researchers because of the debate that is taking place among Nigerian scholars and their students, particularly those who discouraged the persistence of such dialogue between the adherents of two religions. Besides, it should be noted that Pakistan in this study was primarily selected because of the imbalances that usually occur between Muslims and Christians when it comes to religious dialogue. As pointed out Muslims use medieval polemic dialogue because of fundamentalism. This is why Christians often prefer dialogue on a social aspect that deals with politics and others. It is on this note this study tries to highlight this issue to present the permissibility of religious dialogue from the theological perspectives.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

What comes under this heading is an attempt to review various and available literature that were consulted while conducting this research. The review will be categorically based on the following subheadings:

2.1 Meaning and Conceptual Definition of Religious Dialogue

The term Religious Dialogue is a mixture or rather a combination of two terms: Religious and Dialogue. Categorically, the term “Religious” means manifesting faithful devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality or deity, as a noun, it connotes a member of a religious order under monastic vows (Doniger, 1999). The term dialogue comes from the Greek roots *dia-* (“through” or “across”) and *-logue* (“discourse” or “talk”) (Karbassian, 2022). From the linguistic terms of Arabic, Religious Dialogue is translated as “*Hiwar al-adyan*” which ‘*Hiwar*’ literally means dialogue, conversation, interlocution, talk(ing), speech, speaking, discussion, debate argumentation (Baalbaki, 2001). In addition, the Arabic terms *Hiwar* and *Mujadalah* with a contextual meaning of “Dialogue) have been frequently mentioned in the Glorious Qur’an. Firstly, it is where Almighty Allah says, “And he had fruit, so he said to his companion while he was conversing with him (Qur’an, Sūrah18:34), the word ‘Conversation’ appears here and secondly in the same chapter, where Almighty Allah says, “His companion said to him, in the course of the argument with him (Al-Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Kahf 18:37)”, *Hiwar* as argument appears here and thirdly, it is where Almighty Allah says, “Indeed Allah Has heard the statement of her (Khaulah bint Tha’labah) that disputes with you (O Muhammad Pbuh)... (Al-Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Mujadalah 58:1), the term *Hiwar* is translated here as disputes. *Al-Adyan* (Religions) is the plural of *Din* (Religion) which in Arabic means: obedience and submission. While religion in general terminology connotes what a person embraces, believes, and owes from matters of the unseen and witnessed. Hence, in Islamic terminology signifies submission to Almighty Allah with obedience on what he commands and forbids. Therefore, religion in this regard is the religion of Islam and the doctrine of monotheism, which is the religion of all the messengers from Adam and Nuh to the seal of the prophets, Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Almighty Allah says, “Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam (submission to His Wills) (Al-Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Imran 3:19). In a nutshell, religious, dialogue is defined as an ecumenical attempt to bring people of different faiths together on the platform of peaceful co-existence, cooperation, and tolerance (Toki et al., 2015).

2.2 Historical Ground of Religious Dialogue in Islam

One of the philosophies of history is to trace the origin of everything and how something begins, flourishes, and ends. It is in this regard that, religious dialogue has its origin in the history of Islam. Therefore, to establish a cogent fact, it is of great importance to look at the life and struggles of the Prophet (Pbuh). Hence, history recorded that the migration of the Prophet from Makkah to Madina in the thirteenth year of his Prophetic mission brought him very close to the Jews who were already residing at Yathrib. Earlier before his migration, the Yathribites had agreed with the Prophet during the second pledge of Aqabah, to migrate to their land where they promised him protection and support (Gada, 2009).

Gada further asserts that “Having known the relationship between the Jews and the people of Yathrib notably the Aus and Khazraj, the Prophet did whatever possible to restore and maintain the relationship. Because of this, an agreement was written in the name of the “Madinan Charter”, for the establishment of unity between not only the Muslim immigrants (Muhajirun) and their neighbours of Madina. It is noted that the agreement made with the Jews spelled out certain conditions upon which peace and security would prevail throughout Arabia. The prophet agreed to respect their religion and property on mutually agreed conditions (Gada, 2009).”

The above indicates that the agreement entered by the Prophet with the Madinan people: Yathribites and the Jews established the beginning and foundation of religious dialogue in the history of Islam. This testifies that religious dialogue has a solid foundation and is allowed in Islam

since the Prophet practiced it. To trace the first contact between a Christian and a Muslim, a wonderful question was asked, why have been many discussions held between Christians and Muslims about their belief? A Muslim replied I think we both have several things in common. We believe in the Oneness of the Creator Who has sent many prophets including Jesus as the Messiah as well as the Word of God which had been denied by the Jews. Muslim further replied that our Glorious Qur'an mentions in Sūrah 3:45, "Remember! When the angels said, "O Mary! Verily Allah gives you the glad tidings of a word from Him, his name will be Messiah Jesus the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the hereafter, and of those who are near to Allah..." (Baagil, 1984).

Nawaz and others argue that the life of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) is a perfect model of positive engagement with the people through dialogue. In their views, the charter of Madinah for the citizens of Madinah city-state in the life of the Prophet and the Treaty of *Hudaybiyyah* made with the people of Makkah are two significant documents that affirm the significance of dialogue. People of Madinah regardless of their religions lived in peace, harmony, and coexistence under the jurisdiction and authority of the Charter of Madinah (Nawaz et al., 2022).

They further highlight that going through the History of Islam, it is known that the Prophet (Peace be Upon Him) engaged during his early stay in Madinah to sign the Charter of Madinah with several tribes of Madinah. According to this charter, all tribes were considered as members of a united *Ummah*. Commenting on this, Kurucan & Erol Said that this charter determined various objectives including political, economic, and common objectives for maintaining peaceful co-existence among the individuals of various tribes (Baagil, 1984).

To appreciate the role of Muslims in protecting non-Muslim religious places under their control, history records that rightly guided Muslim leaders when they conquered non-Muslim lands, they did not temper with a place of their services. To understand this, one of the Muslim Caliphs, Abdul-Malik, took the church of Saint John from the Christians and made it part of a Mosque. When Umar bn Abdul-Aziz succeeded him as the new caliph, the Christians complained to him about what his predecessor had done to their Church. Umar wrote to the governor that the portion of the Mosque that was rightfully theirs should be returned to them if they were unable to agree with the governor on a monetary settlement that would satisfy them (Al-Qardawi, 2012).

Additionally, the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem is known to historians to be one of the holiest places of worship in Judaism. It was completely buried under rubble and heaps of debris during the era of the Ottoman Caliph, Sultan Sulayman 1 (1494-1566). When the Caliph came to know of this, he ordered his governor in Jerusalem to remove all the rubble and debris, clean the area, restore the Wailing Wall, and make it accessible for Jews to visit (Hussayn, 2012).

The above signified that history played an important role in nurturing the mind of whoever wanted to accept the truth. No matter how someone is extremist or fundamentalist, someone needs to recast his mind to what are the teachings of his religion. Otherwise, whatever someone is doing would not be accepted in any way since it contradicts the doctrine of his religion. It has to be noted that religious dialogue is not only on religious matters but on every aspect of human endeavor, the above depicted clearly that peace and justice should be maintained among all nations regardless of religious differences. To sum up, those in Nigeria and Pakistan that have the extreme ideology of the impermissibility of religious dialogue among people of different religions should understand their ideas are unacceptable in Islam and it is out rightly not part of the teachings of Islam and Christianity. Islam teaches peace, harmony, and justice. Anything against that would not be accepted.

2.3 Nigerian-Pakistani Perspectives on Religious Dialogue

What the researchers intend to highlight here is the perspective of Nigerian and Pakistani on Religious dialogue. This became imperative because some people in both countries denounced the idea of Muslim-Christian dialogue and categorised it as a blameworthy act that should be avoided. This is the reason why a call is made frequently that those who used their unhealthy desire to eradicate other religions through violence, intimidation, and aggressive apologetics are better able to foster dialogue and critique unfounded myths that deny religious freedom to those who are different in opinion or religion (Ahiokhai, 2013).

The researchers noted that those who have these ideas are none but the extremists who used to exaggerate the boundaries of Islam by introducing uncertified acts. It is in this regard, that the researchers discovered fundamentalist ideology which does not in any way support interreligious dialogue between people of different religions. First, in Nigeria, the writers became most enthusiastic to write on this topic because of what happened recently during the Blessed Month of Ramadan of the year 1443/2022. The crisis of “Interreligious Dialogue” emanated when one of the famous Muslim scholars, Shaykh Muhammad Nuru Khalid (Digital Imam), the Imam of National Assembly Quarters Mosque, Apo, Abuja, Nigeria was dismissed by the committee of the Mosque because of his interference into current Nigerian politics, hence, people began to criticise him and labeled him with several accusations and counter accusations for the fact that he is the supporter of Muslim-Christian dialogue. This according to fundamentalists or rather the Sunni extremists deviated Shaykh from the mainstream of Sunni Orthodox or he would be an apostate hence, this opinion does not have any authority on what Allah Has sent down. It is stated that “Such ‘*Ulama*’ issued *fatwa* literally declaring those involved in Interreligious Dialogue and any form of a committee consisting of people of other religions as apostates. *Fatwa* without strings or borders, is a dangerous trend indeed. Therefore, something is wrong somewhere, and we need to trace our steps back to do the right things (Babangida, 2022).”

It is argued that in most Islamic countries, there is presence of established Central Committee of Leading *Ulama* (Hai’at Kibar al Ulama) or a *Fatwa* Council collectively deliberates on any issue requiring a verdict. Countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia were achieved in this regard. To understand this, both the Suharto (1966-98) and Mahathir (1981-2003) governments of Indonesia and Malaysia launched Islamisation programmes, upgrading and creating religious institutions, which generally required *ulamas*, or religious teachers, to support state ideologies; they sometimes succeeded in capturing the state by influencing policies in their favour (Saat, 2017). Uncertified people who issue *Fatwa* are sanctioned (Musa, 2022). Within the *Fatwa* Council, the majority opinion is upheld, while the minority view of any scholar is respectfully appended, but the majority view remains the official position. It is probably high time we considered instituting such a body in Nigeria, which will consist of capable and qualified *Ulama* who would be saddled with the responsibility of issuing fatwa based on well-informed opinions (Babangida, 2022). It is emphasized that since the early ninth century, Muslim societies have had scholars who specialise in the study of the Qur’ān, the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), Islamic law (fiqh), legal theory (Usul Fiqh), theology (Kalam), and the linguistic sciences required for these and other intellectual pursuits. Therefore, to implement a lasting interfaith dialogue that maintains peaceful coexistence in Nigeria and its various populated Muslim states like Kaduna, Dogarawa (2018) suggests that government should partner with Muslim scholars and other faith leaders to organise positive interfaith dialogue for their different communities at all levels to make them respect one another regarding a relationship with followers of other faiths. Similarly, Omotosho (2014) asserted that no doubt, the inter-religious dialogue represents an energetic and indispensable mechanism for achieving lasting peace among divergent religious groupings in Nigeria.

Pakistan, as a multi-religious nation (Mehfooz, 2021), makes the utmost effort to maintain peace and establish a conducive environment for religious minorities. Despite this, religious minorities suffered a negative impact of religious fundamentalism despite the excellent services rendered by the Christian Study Centre Rawalpindi which *was established in 1967 as an extension of (Henry Martyn Institute, Hyderabad India) to promote interfaith dialogue, harmony, and good relationship among the followers of different faiths in Pakistan*. Riaz Ahmad Saeed in his attempt to evaluate the contribution of the Christian Study Centre, Pakistan, has an extensive literature review in his article. In one of the reviews, the author described in-depth the religious fundamentalism truncated the objectives of the Centre in maintaining religious dialogue, particularly between Muslims and Christians. The author noted that ***Religious Fundamentalism and Its Impact on Minorities*** is one of the significant publications of the Centre. In this book, it is highlighted how the minorities especially, the Christian Community were affected by the religious fundamentalism of Pakistan. The book consists of 5 Chapters: The Histories of Religious Fundamentalism, How Minorities were Affected by Fundamentalism in Pakistan, Impact of Fundamentalism: Social, Economic, Cultural Jihadist Activities and Political Aspects of Islamic Fundamentalism etc.” The book criticizes religious fundamentalism, fundamentalist movements, jihadist movements, and the jihadist role of Pakistan in the Afghan War and Islamic amendments in the Pakistani Constitution. The book did indeed highlight the special objectives of the Center (Saeed, 2017).

One of the challenges that sometimes Muslim-Christian dialogue encounters in Pakistani is rigid argumentation without arriving at harmonious understanding. Meanwhile, in Pakistan, it is noted that polemics and apologetics have overshadowed the conversation between Muslims and Christians, and Christian-Muslim relations are stuck in a rut by repeating medieval themes. Along with theological debates, Christian interlocutors prefer to discuss social-political issues highlighting primary issues such as separate electorates, blasphemy law, unequal legal rights of minorities, conversion and education, and government employment of minorities. As a result, it evaluates Muslim polemics against Christianity and Christian apologetics to defend their faith as a minority. It proposes that Christians rediscover the Church's Catholicism and devise an agreed-upon strategy for Christian-Muslim relations. Similarly, Muslims are encouraged to move beyond medieval polemics and sectarian doctrinal debates and toward modern constructive debate to contribute to the creation of an inclusive and progressive welfare society (Kim, 2015).

In view of the above, therefore, Pakistan cannot afford any discrimination, misbalance, and ignoring attitudes towards religious minorities. It is observed that Pakistan is making its efforts to build peace by promoting interfaith harmony. One thing worthy of note is that even though Pakistan came into being based on Islamic teachings, this does not mean the country is for Muslims only. It has been stated clearly in the Pakistan Constitution that non-Muslims are guaranteed to live and practice their religions without any intimidation or prejudice (Munawar & Mushtaq, 2022). Therefore, the rights of religious minorities must be safeguarded and protected. It is in view of this fact that Muhammad Ali Jinnah emphasized the adherence to the basic rights of minorities living on the soil of Pakistan by indicating that the religion of minorities must be protected. Any sort of interference should not be allowed as they possess their rights and freedoms (Khan et al., 2017).

By the way, Maria and Kiyani (2023) argue that Pakistan has become vulnerable to attacks by Al-Qaeda, Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), *Jamat ul-Abraar*, and ISIS. Such groups are proactive in achieving their goals by exploiting interfaith and intercommunal conflict. Their "modus operandi" is the divide-and-rule strategy. In their opinion, constant reinforcement of interfaith dialogues is a necessary strategy. The goal of interfaith or interreligious dialogue is to:

1. Increase mutual understanding and good relations.
2. Identify sources of tension in religious segments that are not religious, such as economic, social, or political factors.
3. Develop confidence and understanding to overcome or prevent tensions.
4. Dismantle the stereotypes that breed suspicion, distrust, and bigotry.

3.0 MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE: THE LEGALITY OR OTHERWISE

Having seen what Religious Dialogue is linguistically and technically, it is of paramount importance to understand how Islam and Christianity recognised and respected religious dialogue between people of different religions. Therefore, in the context of the Glorious Qur’ān, Dialogue is clearly stated as bringing people of different religions to a table discussion as Almighty Allah says, “*Then whoever disputes with you concerning him (Isa, Jesus) after (all this) knowledge that has come to you, (I.e Isa, Jesus) being a slave of Allah, and having no share in divinity) say: (O Muhammad pbuh) “Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves then we pray and invoke (sincerely) the Curse of Allah upon those who lie”* (Al-Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Imran 3:61). Even though the verse is talking about the people of the book, it further suggests that where there is a dispute or debatable issue among people of different opinions or religion, a meeting place should be provided for a discussion reasonably.

In case of dispute, Islamic law rules that reconciliation is the best option. For example, Allah says, “*And if a woman fears from her husband contempt or evasion, there is no sin upon them if they make terms of settlement between them - and settlement is best. And present in [human] souls are stinginess. But if you do good and fear Allah - then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted* (Al-Qur’ān, Sūrah Al-Nisa 4:128). In view of this verse, it is noted that Islam always encourages reconciliation in an amicable manner. This is because reconciliation leads disputing parties to understand each other and establishes a lasting cordial relationship that is why in the case of matrimonial crises which is the subject matter of the verse, Imam Al-Jalalyn asserted that reconciliation is better than separation while Ibn Kathir opines that making peace is better (<https://quranx.com/tafsirs/4.128>). With all these explanations, Farooq Hassan (Hassan, 2010) argues that even though the Prophet (Pbuh) and his wife Sawdah were the subjects of the verse’s revelation, it can be interpreted broadly to suggest that peace and harmony should be fostered at all levels.

In another place in the same Sūrah, Allah says, “*Say o people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah: that we associate no partners with Him that we erect not, from among ourselves lords and patrons other than Allah* (Al-Qur’ān, Sūrah Al-Imran 3:64).” This shows that Dialogue in Islam is to call someone to discuss on social, economic, political, and religious issues irrespective of religious differences. The most prominent thinker, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi divides dialogue into *Da’wa* and Mission which considers selfless for Muslims and Christians (Al-Faruqi, 1998). Furthermore, it is stated that some Muslim scholars define dialogue as *Da’wah* as earlier indicated by Al-Faruqi which includes preaching Islamic teachings, promoting virtues and avoiding vices, diverting to a faith beneficial for them and helping them save divergence, transporting them from somewhere to somewhere else, and providing comprehensive knowledge to understand the purpose of life (Khan et al., 2020). Additionally, Issa Khan et al., (2020) describe that although *Da’wah* is characterized as dialogue, it is not solely for promoting an Islamic way of life but also for promoting human values and preserving society from evil deeds while respecting the differences between humanity. Toki, Gambari, and Hadi argue that Dialogue must take place

in a conducive atmosphere of trust and readiness for harmony (Toki et al., 2015), but must be in line with the Islamic guidelines as contained in the Glorious Qur’ān as Allah is saying *Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in the ways that are best* (Al-Qur’ān 16:125).

On the other hand, many biblical passages also encourage good neighborliness devoid of hostility with non-Christians as elucidated in John 14:16, Matt: 5:17, and Matt: 22:40. In 1st Thessalonians 5:21, the Bible gives a methodological guideline on Dialogue. On the other hand, in the Bible, Christians are clearly called to peace (Byrnes, 2003). With these verses, Christians are called to shun and ignore whatever incites hate to anybody or a group of people. It is stated that “It is wrong to use words to incite others to hate Muslims” The Bible also enjoins Christians to love their neighbours and not to speak to them hatefully (Barkhuizen, 1993). In addition, the Bible, states: “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Deterding, 2003). It is argued that some Christians fail to respect this command by doing the negative. They fail to follow biblical instructions. It is asserted on the other hand that others among the Christians are speaking the truth but in the most hateful manner. This suggests that speaking hatefully contradicts the teaching of Christ. One prominent example would be Westboro Baptist Church and its "[God hates fags](#)" slogan. Westboro Baptist Church is correct in declaring the Bible’s teaching that homosexuality is sinful, but they are declaring this truth in such a way that it is intended to be incendiary, offensive, and hurtful. Needless to say, the Bible does not support such methods (Ham et al., 1999). In another verse from the bible, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (Votaw, 1896).

In view of the above, therefore, Dianne Dentice suggests that “The misappropriation of religious texts to support racism, prejudice, and hate speech must be exposed to halt the proliferation of prejudiced attitudes among a segment of our population directed at minority groups and persons of color. More orthodox religious adherents, along with the mainstream, religious or not, can benefit from learning about how and why some extremist groups misrepresent and misinterpret biblical scripture for their own nefarious purposes” (Dentice, 2019). This statement asserts that among Christians, some misrepresent the actual biblical instructions by doing something that contradicts the mainstream of its teachings. This is the reason why Dentice remarks that exposing the real text of the teachings of Christianity becomes necessary so that people who in one way or another could understand that such are doing blameworthy acts are not directly or indirectly representing the religion of Christianity (Dentice, 2019).

4. 0 METHODOLOGY

This article adopted the qualitative method in the form of historical and contextual analysis. This is because contextual analysis is explorative and interpretive when it comes to what meaning data has. Meanings are discerned and delimited within research objects as wholes, in relation to other data about the same research object (Svensson, 2021). Data were collected from the primary sources of Islam and Christianity, that is, the Glorious Qur’ān and Sunnah (Sayings, actions, and silent approval of the Prophet) and the Holy Bible. Hence, secondary data were collected from scholarly articles, electronic sources, and books that have been reviewed to have in-depth perspectives of Nigerian and Pakistani on whether Muslim-Christian dialogue is legally or not allowed. In a categorical sense, the authors in this paper used the collected data from the primary sources of Islam especially from the verses of the Qur’ān to identify the conceptual definition of dialogue with its various derivations. It was through this that the authors discovered the conceptual meaning of dialogue in a literal and technical. More so, the authors used the historical approach in

this paper because it is the approach that systematically examines past events to give an account of what has happened in the past. Hence, one of its goals is to communicate an understanding of past events (Rowlinson, 2005). It is on this note that the approach used to be able to analyse and trace the emergence of dialogue between people of different faiths from the early period of Islam, that is from the time of the Prophet and how he engaged in conversation with them about facts and peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, to have in-depth information that supplements the data collected from the primary sources of the two religions (The Qur'ān, Hadith, and Bible), Google Scholar was used as part of the electronic sources for the secondary data from articles, Exegesis, reports, and books written by Muslim and Christian clergies and the data were analysed contextually. The Nigerian and Pakistani perspectives on Muslim-Christian dialogue are noted from all these secondary sources. Meanwhile, Endnote was entirely used to manage the references. Hence, the term theologically and religiously is used interchangeably in the entire paper.

5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What is discussed here is the general outcomes discovered from the previously reviewed literature. It should be noted that the discussion here represents the paper's main objectives, which will be presented based on the following subheadings:

5.1 Conceptualization of Dialogue and its Legality from the Theological Perspective

Given the previous discussion, it is noted that dialogue from the literal and technical senses connotes a faithful discussion for mutual understanding to establish peaceful coexistence between people of different faiths. To agree with these findings, refer to the following evidence as earlier cited: Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Kahf 18:34 (Dialogue as a conversation), Qur'ān Sūrah al-Kahf 37 (Dialogue as argument), similarly, Qur'ān Sūrah Al-Mujadalah 58:1 (Dialogue as argument), Qur'ān Sūrah Al-Nahl 16:125 (Dialogue as inviting others with wisdom and beautiful preaching). In other words, refer to the Qur'ān Sūrah Imran 3:64 (Dialogue as inviting people of Kalima Sawa). According to the Qur'ān Exegesis, Ibn Kathir under Qur'ān Sūrah Al-Nisa 4:128 opines that conversation means for making peace while Al-Jalalayn on the other hand argues conversation for reconciliation. All these signify the legality of conversation but for the establishment of peace and justice as well as for peaceful coexistence between disputing people of different faiths. On the other hand, various verses in the Holy Bible clarify how someone lives with others in peace, security, and respect. To understand this, refer to John 14:16, Matt: 5:17, and Matt: 22:40. In 1st Thessalonians 5:21, 'To understand more about the legality of Muslim-Christian dialogue, Pim Valkenberg argues that an alternative rendering of 'Kalima Sawa' in Qur'ān 3:64 as a word of justice or an equitable word may open up new possibilities for a dialogue between Muslims and Christians than centres on matters of peace and justice rather than on dogmatic statements, and might help to broaden the Christian reception of A Common Word (ACW) (Said et al., 2018).

The above clearly depicted the perspective of Christianity concerning Muslim-Christian Dialogue and its associates. It is understood that neither in the Qur'ān nor in the Bible where a person called to ridicule, insult, and criticise his brother when it comes to any conversation. It may be concluded that religious dialogue from the perspectives of Islam and Christianity is legalised and should be respected at any level. It should be noted that in the context of Abraham's religion, the aim of the Christian-Muslim dialogue should be courageous and daring to ascend to the model of coexistence and the unity of God, not just for each other's tolerance and acceptance. This is the ultimate concern for religious dialogue between Christianity and Islam (Lin, 2019).

5.2 The Legality of Dialogue between People of Different Faiths from the Historical Perspective

Based on the reviewed literature, it is now discovered that Islam encouraged dialogue between people of different faiths for a very long time. This was what exactly was discovered during the lifetime of the Prophet when he dialogued and entered into an agreement with the non-Muslims of Madina, Jews, and others. The **“Madinan Charter”** and **Treaty of “Hudaybiyyah”** were a typical example in this regard.

5.3 The Legality of Muslim-Christian Dialogue from the Nigerian-Pakistani Perspectives

As earlier noted, the Muslim-Christian dialogue is facing serious challenges in Pakistan and Nigeria because of the opinion of some Muslims who were discovered they are fundamentalists. However, various findings suggest that such dialogue is accepted by many Muslims. For example, as a counter-rejection of the idea of extremist ideology, Nigerians were cautioned to stop doing such acts, and have suggested the right actions that the Nigerian government should have to be taken. Thus, it vividly highlights the situation that Nigerian Muslims find themselves in today, in which a scholar said, “We are in a state of everyone claiming Islamic knowledge. There are the ‘social media scholars and the ‘Market and roadside scholars. We have the ‘Amulet-vendor scholars’, ‘political-opportunists’ scholars, and all sets of quasi-scholars who wriggle in themselves and slug it out with the real scholars in the religious and socio-political space. They corrupt the religious environment, promote confusion and chaos, and ultimately cause societal decay. Something needs to be done to stop these people and keep them away altogether.” (Babangida, 2022)

More so, it happens on some occasions that the Christians in Pakistan complain about the maltreatment of radical people who attempted to disenfranchise their religious rights and places of their service with attacks and others. This is the reason why a call is made frequently that those who use their unhealthy desire to eradicate other religions through violence, intimidation, and aggressive apologetics is better to foster dialogue and to critique unfounded myths that deny religious freedom to those who are different in opinion or religion (Aihiokhai, 2013).

To understand the role of religious perspective in Pakistan, research has been conducted where renowned community leaders in Pakistan interviewed and argued that the underlying theological teachings of all religious communities in Pakistan uphold the doctrine of the sanctity of the human soul as a core preaching of all of the residing religious communities and if violence is used as a means of achieving one’s goals, it is not the doing of a religion but the actions of individual beings (William & Khalid, 2022). This signifies a holistic acceptability of everyone one religion by the Pakistani communities and indicates that anything against this represents someone’s whims not of the teachings of his religion.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The above discussion played a significant role in examining the legality of Muslim-Christian Dialogue from the main sources of Islam and Christianity. The entire discussion achieved the designed objectives of the paper. It is understood in the light of the sources of two religions that religious dialogue does not mean only to engage in a discussion on religious matters, rather it encompasses every aspect of human endeavours, be it religious, social, economic, political, and cultural aspects. The entire discussion serves as a panacea to some Muslims in Nigeria and Pakistan who have the view of illegalising Muslim-Christian Dialogue to apostate its supporters. This is because, various shreds of evidence have been presented from the textual and historical records of Islam that Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) had engaged and entered into different agreements with people of other religions, such as Jews and Christians. It is in line with the discussion that comes to believe fundamentalism and religious extremism are not parts of the main teachings of Islam

and Christianity. Finally, it is understood that Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Nigerian and Pakistani perspectives have a clear relationship and it is noted that the Pakistan Government has done what it could to ensure the diminishing of such acts of religious extremism, in the case of the Nigerian Government, various recommendations were made to the Government that if it is implemented such unreligious and extremist acts would be extinguished. It is at this juncture that the Nigerian government should kindly ask the Pakistani government to balance the issue and bury it forever.

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