

The Impact of the Mission of the Church on Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa

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Abstract

The church has a calling and a mission to fulfill in the society. This study evaluates the church as the agent and an instrument of God's mission on earth. The assumption of this study is that the character of the church, her vocation, her message and success of her missionary endeavor force her to engage in conflicts and tensions of this world in order to bring peace and justice. The concept of holistic and integral mission that is evangelism and social action is urgent in our world today because of the challenges she is facing: poverty, terrorism and insecurity, plundering of public funds by corrupt individuals, bad governance and negative ethnicity among others which have implications for Muslims as well. The missionary purpose of the church is mission Dei to all nations, cultures and worldviews, Islam included where justice, peace, hope and righteousness remain at the top of the church's agenda. There are positive and negative effects of the church's mission on Christian-Muslim relations as whether to convert Muslims or not. Nevertheless, Muslims will always remain alert and suspicious because of the negative historical images and missionary nature of the two religions. This study used the historical analysis method to draw implications of the impact of the church mission on Christian-Muslim relations. The findings of this study are that the mission of the church presents opportunities of collaboration, engagement, dialogue and disagreements for Christian-Muslim relations.

Key Words: Church, Impact, Mission, Dei, Evangelism, Social Justice

1.0 The Background of the Study

This background serves to conceptualize and give ground for deeper meaning of the discourse of this study. DeYoung & Gilbert (2011) define *mission* more broadly and variably than ever before: the proclamation of the gospel and the church, “as the body of Christ. In this study, demystification of the following words justifies the course of this work: mission, evangelism, kingdom, gospel, social justice.

Kevin DeYoung and Gilbert (2011) believe that there is a lot that evangelicals can agree on if only we employ the right categories and build our theology of mission from the same biblical building blocks. Köstenberger (2020) asserts that mission is linked inextricably to humanity's sinfulness and need for redemption and to God's provision of salvation in the person and work of Jesus Christ and this constitutes the foundation for Christian mission, and the Christian gospel is its message. This narrative of God's mission—ranges from the story of Israel to the story of Jesus and the early Christians. The great commission is the epitome of church mission (Matthew 28:9).

The purpose of Jesus' mission was that all nations would become his disciples. Moreover, Jesus exemplified this to his disciples by often travelling to different places preaching the Gospel (Sanders, 2017). To ensure continuity of this mission, Jesus encouraged his disciples that he would give them power and he would be with them as they evangelize the world to impact love, justice and peace.

Packer & Dever (2012) argue that we need a right understanding of God's sovereignty and a thorough theological framework of how Christians and Muslims can relate to one another. But there is need to avoid an interest in militant extremism which has resulted in reactionary responses on a global scale creating negative relations, spiked fears and uncertainties, leading to violent outbursts. Today, in the midst of all these, Christians need to engage Muslims to promote peace and justice, whilst respectfully creating room for one another to coexist. Churches, missions and Muslims have a duty to remember their calling to service, reconciliation, peacemaking, and evangelism/da'wah in ways to enhance Christian-Muslim relations: to teach the forgiveness of sins and to reach out in love to Muslims in word and deed as the bearers of the gospel. Sensitivity to different traditions in reference to mission or Da'wah shall be addressed as one of the forces for religious conflict. Therefore this study calls for theological discourse to promote a common coexistence, whilst being faithful to our call to proclaim the gospel.

However, Accad (2011:183) argues that people should be left freely to choose their faiths. The post-Christendom era forces us to abandon the dichotomy between evangelism and dialogue, and move towards a multipronged and holistic approach to mission. Accad (2011:185) states that the emerging generation of missionaries prefers to think of themselves as developmental workers and peacemakers where they can live out the kingdom of God as global Christians. In this way, dialogue becomes by definition missional, where there is no standby of proclamation for the sake of dialogue. Dialogue should thus be seen as a complementary function of the proclamation of the gospel, done in the context of trust, frankness and respect of the other. The WCC, in their official document on mission titled *Together Towards Life* (Oikoumene 2012:27-26), makes the following assertions with regard to evangelism in interfaith dialogue: Evangelism further involves listening to and being challenged and enriched by others (Ac 10:1-43).

Missional theology of interfaith dialogue according to Muck (2011), advocates for a missional theology of dialogue to be developed, alongside mission, and identifies four characteristics which are critical for this study:

- It should be based on an orthodox recognition of God's revelation to all.
- It should fully embrace Christian humility.
- It must be grounded in a love of one's neighbors.
- Such a theology needs to make known to all involved, the commitment to Christian witness.

In the biblical text of Romans 1, Paul makes it clear that God has created, that God has not left anyone to themselves, and that God has given us all the capacity to know of God's existence. Justin Martyr spoke of the *logos spermatikos*, John Calvin of *sensus divinitatis* and Martin Luther of *Deus absconditus*, or in the words of John Wesley simply 'common grace' (Muck 2011:191). The general understanding with regard to these concepts is that God has somehow through various means made himself known to all people. Whether these people recognized it as such, however, is a different matter. This then becomes the theological basis for us to be willing to listen to the religious narratives of other faiths, and encourages the exchange of interfaith dialogue in mission (Muck, 2011:191).

Hiebert (1999) advocates for a type of critical realism as an epistemological stance for missionaries, which would help us to avoid the twin dangers of extreme foundationalism, which leads to intellectual arrogance, and postmodern idealism, which in turn leads to relativism. For Christians, truth is presented through the mechanism of faith, which is a subjective exercise informed by Scripture, and it is by this truth that we measure all truth, Islam included. This backgrounds explain terms in mission and Christian Muslim relations and provide whys and ways of doing mission.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Is mission the main cause of Christian Muslim conflicts? We truly live in a world of religious plurality and engagement with one another becomes increasingly unavoidable. This study sets out to establish why church mission and Islamic da'wah is problematically marked by outright suspicion, uncertainty or even hostility. Volf (2011:1) states that a chasm exists between Islam

and Christianity of misunderstanding, dislike and hatred that separate these religions due to religious and political past, bitter histories, mission activities notwithstanding.

One of the major concerns for many Christians relates to the fear or concern that mission outreach to Muslims hinders the call to mutual relations. Sookhdeo (2011:181) further contends that Christian history forces us to choose between dialogue in search of common ground and evangelism/mission which emphasizes a concern for distinctiveness. Unfortunately, the endorsement of one has sadly resulted in the violent rejection of the other dualistically (Accad, 2011:184). This dualism in mission is often misrepresented as a choice between kingdom ('dialogue') and church ('evangelism'). The following deconstruction by Caputo (2007) might be helpful: The idea behind the church is to give way to the Kingdom, to proclaim and enact and finally disappear into the kingdom that Jesus called for, all the while resisting the temptation of confusing itself with the kingdom (p. 35).

Caputo (2007) sets in the controversy when he argues that, "Nowhere in Scripture are we called to establish a particular (most likely our own subjective) expression of church amongst the nations, the call has always been for the kingdom. The church in this sense is not the establishment or final goal of missions, it rather becomes the question, an interim provisional plan B. In this sense, then the main impact of mission is the interpretation of mission as salvation to all the world, hence to non-Christians, Muslims included.

During dialogue there is often the request that all forms of missionary activity be stopped, since it often creates conflict between communities and does not reflect tolerance of other faiths, especially if we consider the possible result and implication of conversion (Accad 2011:183). In Bwire (2019), dialogue is a conversation or discussion between two or more parties. In Christian-Muslim relations, it means developing a culture of working and walking together on areas of common interest. Religion and their theology can divide us if their tenets are not well understood. It can also unite us if we try to understand our beliefs and doctrines through dialogue. Dialogue is the practical aspect of Christian-Muslim relations. The main major argument is because of the negatives of mission, pain and challenges involved in the process of moving from one faith to another.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

For the purposes of this study three objectives will be addressed in order to clearly understand: the history of Christian Muslim encounters and relations, to examine the impact of missions to Christian Muslim relations in Africa and to assess the effects of church mission/*da'wah*, on Christian Muslim relations.

2.0 Methodology: the following research methodologies were applied. Firstly, for the bulk of the research, a scientific literature study was conducted on almost every level of the research enquiry. Various academic articles and books were reviewed with an understanding of the nature of the religious impacts/effects related to Christianity and Islam in their mission endeavors and developing/ highlighting aggressiveness. Library literature helped this study to develop a theological framework for understanding mission today. In terms of underscoring the possible content of Christian Muslim relations, as 'people sharing Abrahamic tradition', the comparative study has been used in reflecting between Christianity and Islam in order to determine which aspects of our respective faiths we hold in common. In particular, special focus was on the notion of the 'one true God' and the need for Missions or *Da'wah*. The comparatively specific particularities within the Christian tradition which differ from the Islamic faith such as: the person of Jesus, specific Christian mandate to bear faithful witness were engaged, etc.

Throughout this research, references have been made both to the biblical texts as well as the Qur'an. Where scripture is used, a text-critical, socio-scientific and socio-historic reading of the text was rendered hermeneutically to grasp the social context of the text, in church mission and Christian Muslim relations.

3.0 Literature on the Historical Overview and Effects of Church Mission and Christian Muslim Relations

Throughout history, Christian Muslim encounters range from mutual to misunderstanding and even hostility and manifests how Christians and Muslims interact, both theologically and practically. However, extremism, terror attacks in Eastern Africa by Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram in West Africa, and Isis in the north, hostility and fear seem to dominate the attitude towards each other.

Volf (2011:2) explains that current events take Christians back to relive past ones; in other words, the experience of present danger or threat brings back memories of past injury, and that

past injury is seen as likely to repeat itself within the present situation: What happened then will most likely happen again. These relived memories and fear of history repeating itself stir aggressive energies which often result in violent actions, either by individuals or larger groupings of people, and even nations where one group is the minority against the other. Historically, the religious practices of mission/evangelism and Da'awa have caused immense tension and violent conflicts in various areas of the world (Wilken (2009:26). In the words of Hans Küng (Knitter, 2013:247), 'there will be no peace among nations unless there is peace and cooperation between religions'. The historical encounters between Islam and Christianity are hereby understood in terms of mission.

3.1 The Mission of the Church and Christian Muslim Relations

As earlier stated above, the mission of the church has both positive and negative lessons for Christian Muslim relations. From the positive aspect, any theological reflection on Christian-Muslim relations should always reflect the life and ministry of Jesus, and in particular a reflection of the cross as both an act of solidarity and of self-giving love from the Christian perspective. Mission is Christ-centered yet *imago Dei*. Theologically, here. The image of the cross and crescent comes in handy. The cross beckons us to stand in solidarity with the oppressed and suffering, while at the same time recognize atonement for the perpetrator. Moltmann (1992:129-131) argued that in the sufferings of the cross were not only the sufferings of Christ but also those of the poor and weak which Jesus shared in his own body in solidarity with them. Christ accordingly identifies with the victims of violence and identifies the victims with God. In the same way that the victims need to be liberated from suffering caused by oppression, oppressors need to be liberated from injustices committed. Volf (1996:23) observes that the cross is a divine atonement for sin, injustice and violence on the earth: 'but God demonstrates his own love for us in this: Whilst we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom 5:8). Therefore, the heart of church mission is not about all the good things Christians can or should do to love their neighbors and to be the salt and light in the world - but also how the church relates to the church as church. What collectively as an organized institution must we be about as God's people to accomplish his purposes for us in the world.

The call of all discipleship in mission centers on the pattern of life and death shown by Jesus. The theme of self-donation, or Christ's self-giving love, stands at the center of Christian

theology. For our Christian reflection on Muslim-Christian relations, this is our departure point to know Christ, and indeed, him the crucified (1 Cor 2:2). Mission is grounded in scripture though interpretation and application may differ. The following texts are clear on mission: if we are going to be obedient to the Great Commission—must be involved in missions, but not every Christian is a missionary. While it is certainly true that we should all be ready to give an answer for the hope that we have (1Pet. 3:15), and we should all adorn the gospel with our good works (Titus 2:1), and we should all do our part to make Christ known (1Thess. 1:8; 2Thess. 3:1), we should reserve the term “missionary” for those who are intentionally sent out from one place to another. Strictly speaking, the church is not sent out, but sends out workers from her midst. Our fundamental identity as church (ekklesia) is not as those who are sent into the world with a mission, but as those who are called out from darkness into his marvelous light (1Pet. 2:9).

However, this not without Theological differences. Volf (2011:87) advocates for an actual comparison between what Christians and Muslims say about God, to see which elements within their respective descriptions they hold in common; that is, if the Christians are to come to an agreement of whether Christians and Muslims worship the same God or not. This is not just the heart of mission but also a privilege to share and dialogue with Muslims. Romans 1:20 refers to general revelation of god to all communities, but Mission to Muslims is triggered by special revelation where God manifests himself in Christianity through Christ. This then serves as motivation for a comparative study for Christians and Muslims about God and the need to abide by the great commission.

3.2 The effects of Church Mission and Islamic Da’wah based on Islamic Expansion and the Crusades: No event in the history of Christianity was more unexpected, more calamitous and more consequential for Christianity than the rise of Islam (Wilken 2009:19). The rapid and vast expansion of the Arabs throughout the 7th century irrevocably and completely transformed society. Within a decade, three major cities (Damascus in 635, Jerusalem in 638 and Alexandria in 641) of the Christian Byzantine Empire succumbed to the foreign invaders. Up until that point, the global center of Christianity was in the Near East; up until today Muslims are still in Jerusalem and have been in a confrontation with Christianity ever since.

Christians in the 7th century had difficulty grasping the realities of Islamic expansion through the Arab conquest - the heralds of a new religion and architects of a new civilization. The

understanding of Islam and Muhammed was/is that both are false, “for the prophets do not come armed with a sword’ (Wilken 2009:20). Then again, Islam is not merely a faith in the same way that Christianity is, but is an all-encompassing social, cultural and political phenomenon. The new law, Sharia which should be applied to Muslims is at times is applied to Christians too causing conflicts. By the year 750, 50% of the world's Christian population found themselves governed by Muslim authority. Their rights and privileges were limited by their legal status as dhimmis, that is, members of a restricted and inferior minority subject to an arduous tax (Wilken 2009:21). In most of these regions, originally conquered by the sword, the subject people eventually embraced the religion of their conquerors.

Islamic military conquest and outreach led to the first crusade towards the end of the 11th century. For Christian-Muslim relations, the brutality of the crusades marks the darkest period in Christian counteroffensive against the occupation of former Christian lands. The crusades were an attempt by Christians to halt the advance of Islam missiologically, reclaim lost territory and to recapture the holy city of Jerusalem. However, the crusades failed because the territories that were gained were reclaimed within two centuries (Wilken 2009:22).

Islamic expansion and the Christian crusades form the basic reflection in terms of fear of those memories being relived in the present, marking one of the greatest stumbling blocks for mutual Christian Muslim relations to occur. The Turkish conquest of Asia Minor, has significant missiological effects too (Wilken 2009:22).

Turkish conquest: The city of Constantinople was the capital and bastion of Christianity for both the Roman and later the Byzantine Empire situated in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. Constantinople stood at the center of the Eastern Christendom for nearly 1000 years. Following the Islamic expansion by the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople became the Islamic capital of the Empire, with far greater consequences for Christianity than the crusades, especially considering demographics. In the 11th century, Asia Minor was almost completely Christian, by the 16th century, Muslims made up almost 92% of the population (Wilken 2009:22). Thus, by the beginning of the 16th century, Islam had a new powerful political center in Constantinople, and also in South-Eastern Europe, where they remain to this day (Volf 2011):

The impact of this attack was so severe ending up in depleted Christianity due to attacks, torture of victims, capture of loot/booty and humanity into slavery - the purpose was conquering,

subduing and threatening. These events, recently referenced in 2006 by Pope Benedict XVI in the famous speech at the University of Regensburg, caused much fury and protest amongst Muslims (Volf 2011:19). Importantly, it resulted in renewed efforts initially from Muslims but also from Christians to promote peace and understanding amongst all religions

It is during this period that the Protestant reformer Martin Luther reflected substantially on whether Christians and Muslims have a common God who loves unconditionally. For Luther, a major problem centered on the denial of the Trinity and the death of God's son on the cross. This led him to claim that in the hearts and mouths of Muslims, the true God morphs into no God at all. Their worship is directed towards the correct object, the 'One True God', but they distort that object almost beyond recognition (Volf 2011:71).

Recent examples: Denmark, Nigeria and Indonesia: Recently there has been an extremely high escalation of conflict, often designated as conflict between Christians and Muslims, what Rasmusson (2008:215) defines as an 'us versus them' syndrome in Christian-Muslim conflicts. These pockets of conflict here and there, since the establishment of good relations between Christians and Muslims are also being maintained.

In Nigeria's northern regions within the Plateau State, in the city of Jos, riots were triggered in 2001 due to issues relating to land ownership and access to public offices of the so-called indigenous people. The predominantly Christian Birom, Anaguta and Afizere peoples make up the indigenous grouping, whereas the Muslim Hausa-Fulani peoples are regarded as settlers. The Muslims as a minority group felt discriminated against. Violent conflicts and riots erupted throughout the region, especially in 2002 and 2004. This led to the eventual declaration by the president that the Plateau State was in a State of Emergency (Rasmusson 2008:217). Recent skirmishes in northern Nigerian have not shown much change in the way this conflict is being tackled.

Religion, although not necessarily central to the various conflicts, positively plays a central role in our social understanding of who we are. Religion further informs our perspective and understanding of the other. It becomes a small jump to view people of another religious tradition, say Islam, from the perspective of Christianity as people worshipping another completely different God; hence they would be viewed as 'the other' or even as an 'enemy'. Rasmusson (2008:222) points out that the 'us' versus 'them' syndrome is commonly associated with images of

enemy and fear; even majority populations can feel discriminated against by the 'other' - those they see as a threatening enemy. These are the driving forces of mission if seen as the other needing to be saved.

Mission at times sparks out of the negative stories of the 'other' or 'enemy' by mass media, depending on the context - thus forming a vicious cycle as manifested in Public debates, forms of outreach in East Africa called *Mihadhara*.

The other fertile ground for church missions is borne out of the major complexities of Christian-Muslim relations relating to how we can coexist together, especially given our multireligious, interdependent and closely connected society, where the dichotomy between specific Christian civilizations and Muslim societies has become increasingly distorted. This is where mission/evangelism takes place not merely in religious terms with the aim to convert, but to the lived experience of people coexisting together, socially, economically and politically. This becomes painfully difficult in regions where one religion is in the minority, such as in Sudan, Somalia, or even Kenya. From a Christian perspective, majority of states where Christians are experiencing various forms of persecution are predominantly Muslim. This is part and parcel due to the Muslim claim that Islam is a totality, a complete system that covers each and every aspect of human life (Naim 1995:11).

For religious freedom to be attained peacefully with one another, whilst creating room for our outward expression, be it in the form of Muslim Daawa or Christian mission, this study proposes some approaches that should be adhered to. Seemingly, radicalization, extremism or terror attacks of whatever nature, in their religious sphere are meant to impact on the other religions and either force conversions or spread the religion. This approach is found in both Islam and Christianity as missiological outfits.

Important for this study is that religious extremism and, in a very specific way, Muslim terrorism breeds fear and suspicion, and more importantly how these supposed violent propensities can be reconciled to the one God to whom Muslims owe ultimate allegiance. According to Naim (1995:10) and Haggmark (2008:38), historical events help shape our social construct of the other religion, which leads to a kind of 'us' versus 'them' mentality which breeds hostility but also engineers mission outreach and positive or negative Christian Muslim relations.

4. Findings and Discussions: Social Implications and impact of church mission on Christian Muslim relations in Africa.

The study found out that the historicity in the above foregoing relates more to our perceptions of the difference between 'us' and 'them' rather than the diversity itself (Rasmusson 2008:215). Volf (1996:16) argues this point a bit differently, stating that these ethnic, cultural and religious conflicts are part of a much larger problem of identity and otherness. It can be therefore deduced from the above literature data that Islam and Christianity being missionary religions are bound to experience conflicts if outreach missions are not well handled.

In this section, a possible Christian response to these given realities and perceptions is explored as a possible theological framework for moving forward to a just and peaceful society - in order to live in harmony with others, mission/da'wah notwithstanding?

It was observed that we need to consider the humanity of Christians and Muslims as people occupying the same space, as Volf (2011) refers to all of us as people 'living under the same roof'. Thus, we cannot really avoid one another, even though there exists conflict, whether perceived or real, between Christianity and Islam. Religions interact with one another in either positive, constructive relations or, more often than not, negative and violent conflict towards the other. Social ('religious') identity is formed through a complex process: We are who we are not because we are separate from others who are next to us, but because we are both separate and connected, both distinct and related; the boundaries that mark our identities are both barriers and bridges for the rich diversity (Volf 1996:66). This leads to viewing the other as an inferior who needs to be assimilated or subjugated by the self. This often becomes expressed in our attitudes towards mission, or as violent conflict. In mission, we embrace reconciliation and repentance.

The study found out that the Christocentric of the Church is a reconciling element in that Christ is a common denominator in both religions necessary for mutual relationships and co-existence. Volf (1996:126) remarks that the passion of Christ aims at restoring communion between former enemies, even those who persistently refuse to be reconciled. The central message of the gospel and that of the cross centers on this understanding, that Christ refuses the other to remain as an enemy whilst creating space within himself for letting the offender in: 'While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son' (Rom 5:10). The cross becomes the ultimate symbol of offence in a world of violence. We would do well to remember that the call to

follow in the fate of the crucified and his demand to walk in his footsteps remains open to us (Mt 16:24; Lk 14:26).

Therefore, much of the meaning of the cross is surmised by the injunction 'to embrace each other'. As we have been embraced by the outstretched arms of the crucified God, we ought to open up our arms, especially for those one deems enemies, and make space within ourselves for them. We should invite them in, so to speak, so that we might together be able to rejoice in the eternal embrace of the triune God (Volf 1996:131). Today's church's mission should be tailored on Jesus' mission as from the Biblical perspective:

Jesus' mission must not be reduced to verbal proclamation. Unique to his identity as the divine Messiah, Jesus' mission was vicariously to die for the sins of his people (Matt. 1:21; Mark 10:45). Concomitant with this purpose, Jesus's public ministry aimed at the eternal life that could come to the sinner only through faith in Christ (John 3:16-17; 14:6; 20:21). We see this in Mark's Gospel, for example, where the entire narrative builds toward the centurion's confession in Mark 15:37 where, in fulfillment of the book's opening sentence (Mark 1:1), the Roman soldier confesses, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" Leading people to this Spirit-given conviction is the purpose of Mark's gospel and of Jesus's ministry. The Messiah ministered to bodies as well as souls and made preaching his priority so that those with ears to hear might see his true identity and follow him in faith (Volf 1996:131).

The healing of memory which Volf (1996) speaks of is a kind of forgetting which he develops from the presupposition that matters of: Forgetting, or rather the healing of memory, has much more to do with remembering correctly. Volf advocates that when victims remember correctly, the memory of inhumanities of the past will shield both them and all of us against future inhumanities.

Volf (1996:135) explains that no final redemption or reconciliation is possible without the redemption of the past. Both ought to embrace the Golden Rule: common to their traditions, the love of God and neighbor. In the Qur'an, '[w]e believe what was revealed to us and what was revealed to you. Our God and your God is one, and to him we submit as Muslims' (Al 'Ankabut 29:46). Also (Al Shura 42): God is our Lord and your Lord; we have our works and you have your works; there is no argument between us and you; God brings us together; and to him is the final destiny (p. 15).

In terms of content, we find numerous parallels and overlaps in sections of the Bible with the Qur'an. In terms of revelation, the Qur'an states (Al Baqara 2:136, Al Nisa' 4:136): We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the descendants and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to all Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them (v. 136).

It would appear that for Muslims we share a common revelation through our common ancestry, and therefore they would conclude that we worship the same God. Volf (2011:88) argues that this would settle the argument for Christians on one condition, and that is that Muslims need to agree that the Bible contains the authentic content of God's self-revelation to Abraham, Moses, the Prophets and Jesus. This would then indeed constitute being a sufficient indicator that Christians and Muslims have significant overlaps and therefore a common Scripture. However, the Qur'an, states that Christians have gone astray from the original revelation (Al Ma'idah 5:14, 66, 68).

Volf (2011:89-91) argues that in a comparative study we seek to establish that which is 'sufficiently similar' - noting that our descriptions about God need not be identical, uniform and at the same time they cannot be radically different in order to refer to the same object.

One of the biggest hurdles for Muslims to overcome to come to this point is a thorough understanding of the Christian theology of the Trinity (which is incomprehensible because of the incarnation mystery not found in Islamic revelations). The oneness of God, Tawhid, is a principle which stands at the heart of Islam (Volf 2011:129). Christians are very aware of the problematic theology of the Trinity in terms of Muslim engagement. Since most Christians struggle to grapple with the concept themselves, they avoid engagement with Muslims simply on the basis of the fear that it might surface in a discussion, which indeed it will (Ipgrave 2008:21). Therefore, in obedience to the Qur'an Muslims reject what Christians appear to affirm, that God had a son and that other gods should be joined to God and that God is but one of three beings.

Missional theology for dialogue must be grounded in a love of neighbor (Muck 2011:192). The study recommends that hostility is not conducive to dialogue. Participants who want to partake in interfaith dialogue have various reasons and motives for engaging with people of different religions, but those motivations need to be saturated in love. Paul noted that any interaction without love is meaningless (1 Cor 13:1). This notion of love also marks the will to pursue the

common good of the other. Our desire is always to seek the common good of all people, especially in promoting harmonious coexistence with those of other faiths, and in contending for justice. Therefore, what begs our mind is whether the mission of the church is relevant to not only church growth in terms of (spiritual, numerical, organic and physical) but also creating peace and justice in the African society?

In view of the above, analysis of the mission impact is hereby drawn again in summary: first and foremost, mission and vision are core components of the church: the church should be a beacon of hope, transformation and change in Africa in the context of turmoil and chaos. This is because mission has helped the church to clearly define her purpose according to (Warren & Mancini, 2024). Mission has led to transformation through sermons, worship, and outreach mission aiming at life's change for Christ like image through the power of the Gospel. If the gospel mission is well lived it leads to Christ like congregation with a contagious effect to peaceful Christian Muslim relations.

It has clearly shown that mission is not just for the leaders but for all believers. In Africa, from the examples discussed here in the literature, mission has helped to define the purpose of the church where it experienced strife with Muslims. Mission came in handy to guard against drifting away from the founding mission - to love the world or even non-Christians. It guarded the church from being everything to everyone by focusing on specific needs of the church according to God's call, gifts, passions, and abilities hence not drifting to toxic relations with others - Muslims (Sanders, 2017).

Conclusion

From the above foregoing, we conclude that mission is not directly meant for mutual Christian Muslim relations. Shaw (2023) asserts that mission should be done with a scope and context. In the words of Köstenberger (2020), "mission is linked inextricably to humanity's sinfulness and need for redemption and to God's provision of salvation in the person and work of Jesus Christ". This good news of salvation must be made known. The saving mission of Jesus constitutes the foundation for Christian mission, and the Christian gospel is its message.

Acts 14:21-23 presents us with the three-legged stool of the church's mission. Through the missionary work of the Apostle Paul, the early church aimed for: new converts, "when they had

preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples” (v. 21); new communities, “and when they had appointed elders for them in every church” (v. 23); nurtured churches, “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith” (v. 22). If the apostles are meant to be the church’s model for mission, then the goal of mission work is to win new converts, establish these young disciples in the faith, and incorporate them into a local church. Concurrence with these statements herein if Muslims are targeted, complicates the desire for mutual Christian Muslim relations. That’s why this study found out that missional dialogue could address the damage encountered both in Mission or Da’wah by rationally allowing free will to choose the faith of one’s choice.

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