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Hospitality and the Other

Pentecost, Christian Practices,
and the Neighbor

Amos Yong

ORBIS  BOOKS
Maryknoll, New York 10545

FAITH MEETS FAITH

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Manufactured in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Yong, Amos.

Hospitality and the other : Pentecost, Christian practices, and the neighbor / Amos Yong.

p. cm. — (Faith meets faith series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-57075-772-3

1. Hospitality—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BV4647.H67Y66 2008

241'.671—dc22

2007036513

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Between Terrorism and Hospitality

The Encounter of Religions in the Twenty-first Century

Many of us recall watching the circumstances unfold on our television sets on that fateful day of 11 September 2001, when two jetliners hijacked by terrorists were flown into the World Trade Center twin towers. I was teaching then at Bethel University in St. Paul, and we were watching a screen set up in one of our public lounges. In reflecting back over the years on that sequence of events, three themes have emerged that describe for me central aspects of the encounter between religions in the twenty-first century, and that frame the discussion of this book.

First and foremost are concerns with the complexity of the interreligious encounter in our time. We have since come to realize that the war on terror is not just a war fought abroad, but it involves all human beings who care for peace, justice, and freedom. More to the point, the religious, ideological, political, social, and economic struggles in various places around the world have reverberating effects for every one of us. We are past the point where wars are merely “local” or geographically circumscribed. Our globalized and globalizing world has forced the many nations, cultures, peoples, and religious traditions together. The result is what some theorists have called “glocalization,”¹ so that what happens (locally) to or through “the least of these” may have (global) consequences for any and all others, and vice versa. Truly one of the first questions in the biblical narrative—“Am I my brother’s keeper?”—is no longer rhetorical but has serious impli-

¹ See Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London and Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1995), 25-44.

cations not only for those threatened but for all who may or may not wish to be responsible for others.

And the truth is, second, that the human family may be more deeply divided than we would care to admit. Not long ago Harvard University professor Samuel Huntington proposed that the present world order may be divided into at least three civilizations—the Western, Islamic, and Chinese—with the latter two now retrieving and re-affirming the value of their own cultural (and even religious, in the case of Islam) achievements in response to Western colonialism and imperialism.² The results might be catastrophic since these developments may lead to full-scale civilizational clashes such that what happened on 9/11 is only a portent of things to come. Even if the overall scope of Huntington’s thesis is unsustainable,³ 9/11 has alerted us to the fact that none of us are immune to the threat of wars waged in the name of religion. And our growing recognition of human interdependence not only across space but also across time—generations, even centuries past—means that the victims and perpetrators are bound up in an extensive web of cause and effect such that only repentance on all sides can bring about reconciliation and peace.

But third, and here I am sounding the hopeful note of this volume, 9/11 has showed us that religious terrorism ultimately takes a back seat to the kind of hospitality advocated by the world’s religions. Here I am referring to the massive mobilization of disaster relief, the charitable efforts and commitments of people, and the many acts of unrelenting kindness, all of which brought together people across traditionally divided religious lines.⁴ One of America’s darkest hours also brought forth the heroism, kindness, and hospitality of people of many faiths.

In this chapter, I want to explicate the first two themes—that of the complexity of the interreligious encounter in a post-9/11 world and that of the actual and potential clash of religions (if not civilizations)—and do so by attending to case studies of interreligious relations in three distinct contexts: Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and the United States. In a sense, the three cho-

² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

³ Jonathan Fox, *Religion, Civilization, and Civil War: 1945 through the Millennium* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2004), ch. 6, argues that Huntington’s thesis is too broad because many conflicts are ethnic and regional, not civilizational; that religion is not often the primary cause of conflict, even if religion does influence the dynamics of conflicts in various ways; and finally, that religion impacts conflicts in deeper ways than it does civilizations. There have been many other responses in the debate that Huntington’s book has opened up.

⁴ For an American Muslim account of some of the “acts of compassion, tolerance and friendship” in the wake of 9/11, see Riad Z. Abdelkarim, “The Muslim American Community a Year after the Attacks,” in *Muslims in America*, ed. Allen Verbrugge (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2005), 97-103, esp. 99-100. For Christian perspectives that resisted the demonization of Islam and Muslims, see Alan F. H. Wisdom and Darrell Cole, *Straight Answers to Moral Confusion in National Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Institute on Religion and Democracy, 2002), ch. 11 and appendix.

sen cases are arbitrary: there are many others that could have served our purposes. But Nigeria was on my radar because it involves pentecostal Christians, of whom I have a special interest having grown up in that tradition, and I live in and am therefore most familiar with the American situation. Further, I desired a diversity of empirical studies reflecting the global character of the contemporary interreligious interchange. Finally, I wanted at least one of the case studies to be focused on non-Christian interactions (Sri Lanka).

Especially in the first two cases of Sri Lanka and Nigeria, we will be discussing some very controversial issues about which there is no agreement not only between but also within the religious communities involved. My comments should be read not as being prejudicial toward one or other side of the divide (I claim no “bird’s-eye view” on these matters), nor as advocating one or other political agenda (I am a theologian, not a political scientist). Rather, my goal in these case studies is to provide some empirical perspective to situate our theological reflections in the rest of this book amidst concrete developments in the complex encounter between religions “on the ground.” Hence, I should caution that these case studies are neither exhaustive of what is happening in these three regions nor representative of interreligious relations worldwide. At the same time, I believe they will open up possibilities for thinking about interreligious interactions through the lens of a theology of hospitality that this book proposes.

WORLD CHRISTIANITY: MINORITY STATUS AMIDST RELIGIO-ETHNIC CONFLICT IN SRI LANKA

Our first case study focuses on Christianity in Sri Lanka. This case is of particular interest for at least three reasons: first, Christianity is a minority religion in Sri Lanka; second, Sri Lankan Christians have been implicitly drawn into the civil war in Sri Lanka that has been waged since 1983 between the Sinhalese Buddhist majority and the Tamil Hindu minority; and third, all “parties” to the conflict are negotiating local identities within the global context. In this section, we will offer an overview of the Sri Lankan conflict, present shifting Sinhalese Buddhist self-understandings over the last two generations, and describe the wide range of Christian responses from their minority locations. It will be especially important to note what practices are prominent when Christians find themselves as a minority group in the midst of an ethnically and (partly) religiously motivated conflicted situation.

THE CIVIL WAR IN SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka is an island of approximately 25,000 square miles lying about forty miles (at its shortest point) off the coast of southeast India across the

Palk Strait. A partial census in 2001 estimated a population of almost nineteen million, with about 74 percent of these being of Sinhala or Aryan descent and mostly Buddhist, and 18 percent Tamil of Dravidian descent and mostly Hindu.⁵ Christians constitute 7-8 percent of the population, almost 90 percent of these being Roman Catholic, with a larger proportion of Tamils than Sinhala (about 33 percent and 60 percent respectively) when compared to the general population.⁶

With the exception of three ceasefires in 1989-90, 1994-95, and 2002-2005, the current civil war dates back to the Colombo-centered riots in July 1983.⁷ Tensions between Sinhalese and Tamils had been building up since independence (1948) in disputes over land ownership, educational and employment rights, and the national language. The Tamil demand for autonomy if not independence came to a head when—according to the most conventionally accepted account—the extremist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) forces ambushed, killed, and mutilated an army truck of thirteen government soldiers, and the army agreed to bring the mangled corpses back to the capital city for public viewing prior to military burial. The resulting Sinhala riots against Tamils by unemployed and underemployed youth from shantytowns resulted in up to 3,000 dead, 100,000 homeless Tamils in Colombo itself, and up to another 150,000 to 175,000 displaced Tamils around the island.⁸ Governmental agents were complicit in the massacre either by looking the other way during the riots or, worse, even orchestrating some of the attacks.⁹ This series of events precipitated an even further radicalization of the LTTE, whose agenda since its formation in 1976 has involved achieving a separate Tamil state.¹⁰

Over the last twenty plus years, the LTTE has consolidated its resistance and developed a global network of support that begins with sympathizers

⁵ All census figures are taken from the Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics, Census of Housing and Population 2001, available at <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/census2001/index.html> (accessed 5 December 2006).

⁶ On the breakdown of percentages of Christians, see S. Ratnajeevan H. Hoole, "The Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: The Christian Responses and the Nationalist Threat," *Dharma Deepika* 2, no. 2 (1996): 39-66, esp. 40-41.

⁷ For details of the Colombo riots, see Stanley J. Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), ch. 4.

⁸ The numbers of displaced Tamils are disputed. My figures come from Robert Bobilin, *Revolution from Below: Buddhist and Christian Movements for Justice in Asia* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988), 145; and Robert I. Rotberg, "Sri Lanka's Civil War: From Mayhem toward Diplomatic Resolution," in *Creating Peace in Sri Lanka: Civil War and Reconciliation*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press; and Cambridge, Mass.: World Peace Foundation, 1999), 1-16, esp. 7. This is not to overlook the many Sinhalese and Muslims also displaced by the conflict.

⁹ On this point, see Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 71-75.

¹⁰ For an introduction to the origins of the LTTE, see Ranga Kalansooriya, *LTTE and IRA: Combating Terrorism and Discussing Peace* (Sri Lanka: Sanghinda Publishers, 2002), 12-29.

from Tamilnadu in south India, involves an international narcotics distribution network, and extends to the growing Tamil diaspora, especially in North America, Europe, and Australia.¹¹ Its various sources of funding have allowed the organization to procure weapons, raise funds, and conduct propaganda.¹² Along the way, the guerilla-warfare approach adopted by the LTTE has intensified to the point of involving human rights abuses (including kidnapping of children) and suicide bombings of high-ranking national (e.g., Sri Lankan president Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993) and even international officials (such as Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, who was then serving as prime minister of India). As a result, the United States Department of State has included the organization on its black list of terrorist groups since October 1997.¹³

To be sure, an increasing number of Tamils agree neither with the extremist and violent tactics nor with the secessionist political agenda of the LTTE. In fact, Tamils have long contributed to the government and civilian work force. Many own property in traditional Sinhala towns and villages, and many more in recent years have sought refuge from the LTTE in the southern part of the country. Hence, to discuss the Sri Lankan civil war between Sinhalese and Tamils is misleading insofar as neither of these ethnic groups is homogenous in terms of religious identity, socioeconomic standing, or political commitments. Therefore, we can talk about a Sinhala-Tamil conflict only in very general terms, and it is at this level of abstraction that many of the following comments need to be understood.

This said, it should still be noted that some innocent Tamils continue to be on the receiving end of the human rights abuses perpetrated by the government (often justified in its “war against terror” through the Prevention of Terrorism Act),¹⁴ and it has been the LTTE that has taken up the Tamil

¹¹ Estimates are that there are now up to 800,000 Tamils worldwide; see Rohan Gunaratna, “Impact of the Mobilised Tamil Diaspora on the Protracted Conflict in Sri Lanka,” in *Negotiating Peace in Sri Lanka: Efforts, Failures and Lessons*, ed. Kumar Rupesinghe (London: International Alert, 1998), 301-28.

¹² Note, however, that the line between authentic fundraising and intimidationist extortion is blurred with regard to LTTE tactics; see Jo Becker, “Funding the ‘Final War’: LTTE Intimidation and Extortion in the Tamil Diaspora,” *Human Rights Watch* 18, no. 1C (2006).

¹³ The LTTE remains on this list; see the U.S. Department of State’s Foreign Terrorist Organizations, at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/37191.htm> (accessed 5 December 2006); cf. M. de Silva, *Reaping the Whirlwind: Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Politics in Sri Lanka* (Delhi: Penguin, 1998), esp. 324-30; Edward V. Linden, ed., *Foreign Terrorist Organizations: History, Tactics and Connections* (New York: Nova Science, 2004), 55-58; and Jonathan R. White, *Terrorism and Homeland Security*, 5th ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006), 189-93.

¹⁴ On the complicity of governmental agents in human rights abuses, see “The Fatal Conjunction: Women, Continuing Violations and Accountability,” *University Teacher’s for Human Rights Information Bulletin*, 25 (11 July 2001) [<http://www.uthr.org/bulletins/bul25.htm>], accessed November 2006. While the government has acted against unjust abuses—e.g., in the sentencing to death by the Colombo high court in July 1996 of five security forces members for murder; see Paul Marshall, gen. ed., *Religious Freedom in the World: A Global*

cause against the Sinhala-dominated government. Hence, the LTTE has staked its claim—rightly or wrongly—to represent the Tamil people and demands to be reckoned with in any attempt to bring about peace on the island. But the Sri Lankan government has not been able to negotiate successfully with the LTTE, even as the Sri Lankan military has been unable to decisively defeat the rebel forces. Part of the problem is that the government has not taken effective steps to cut off the international support-and-supplies network that props up and arms the LTTE,¹⁵ even though such support has waned considerably after 9/11. Further, there is the varied nature of the Tamil demands for rights, ranging from that of full Tamil citizenship to that of self-determination in their own Tamil Eelam (“Eelam” meaning “homeland”) state.¹⁶ The third set of complicating factors has to do with Sri Lanka’s relationship with India in general and with the state of Tamilnadu in particular. When one considers that up to one-third of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka are recent descendents of or current plantation immigrant workers from south India, mostly from Tamilnadu,¹⁷ it is understandable that favorable Tamil sentiments run high north of the Palk Strait. Tamilnadu’s chief ministers have even extended material support to the LTTE and provided a safe haven for LTTE retreat and respite.

The complexities involved became most apparent during 1987 when the Sri Lankan government mounted Operation Liberation to capture Vadamarachchi (a major crossing point between India and the Jaffna peninsula at the northernmost tip of the island) with the intention to cut off LTTE retreat lines to Tamilnadu.¹⁸ At that point, Delhi gave clear signals that it would not allow Jaffna to be captured by the government forces and even dispatched flotillas of relief supplies to Jaffna Tamils as well as emergency airdrops, in clear violation of Sri Lankan airspace. This led finally to negotiations for a joint Indian-Sri Lankan military campaign to root out the Tamil Tigers that brought initially 10,000 Indian troops to the island, a number that increased in just a few months to 125,000. With increasing Sinhalese fears of an Indian invasion (a perpetual worry given the long history of at least sixteen major invasions of the island by Indian armies over

Report on Freedom and Persecution (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 279—yet there is a fine line between official government sanctioning of human rights abuses and abuses at the hands of governmental forces acting on their own accord.

¹⁵ On this point, see Roham Gunaratna, *Sri Lanka’s Ethnic Crisis and National Security* (Colombo: South Asian Network on Conflict Research, 1998), ch. 4.

¹⁶ See Shri D. R. Kaarthikeyan, “Root Causes of Terrorism? A Case Study of the Tamil Insurgency and the LTTE,” in *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*, ed. Tore Bjørgo (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 131-40.

¹⁷ See S. W. R. de A. Samarasinghe, “The Indian Tamil Plantation Workers in Sri Lanka: Welfare and Integration,” in *Ethnic Conflict in Buddhist Societies: Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma*, ed. K. M. de Silva et al. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, and London: Pinter, 1988), 156-71.

¹⁸ For details of Tamilnadu’s role in the conflict and of the Indian intervention, see Chris Smith, “South Asia’s Enduring War,” in *Creating Peace in Sri Lanka*, 17-40 (see n. 8).

2,500 years) the government itself supplied arms to the LTTE to thwart the Indian intervention, thereby sabotaging the agreement. By late 1989, Delhi admitted the failure of its mission and began to withdraw.¹⁹

It is clear that the Sri Lankan civil war has had international ramifications. Besides deforming the entirety of the south Asian region, the economic costs of the war have also materially impacted global industry.²⁰ Whereas Sri Lanka experienced an economic boom from 1977 to 1982 when growth rates exceeded 6 percent per annum, after the 1983 riots these rates decelerated to about 3.7 percent over the next six years. Increase in defense expenditures correlated with decrease in foreign investment, while economic production in the north and east and the fishing industry in the northeastern provinces dissipated. Tourism all but ceased—Sri Lanka is one of few countries with beaches, mountains, ancient cities, and wildlife all within driving distances—and with it an important source of income. Irreplaceable, of course, are the loss of lives: over tens of thousands of military personnel and LTTE casualties besides civilian casualties of 20,000 to 30,000. For those who remain, there are other challenges: disabilities because of war injuries (over 20,000 wounded), the issue of displaced people, loss of wages due to work disruptions, and brain drain of skilled laborers (over 50,000 by the mid-1990s) to emigration. Besides all this is the trauma of an entire generation growing up in war, not only without education but also with the ongoing psychological problems that will persist long after any peace is negotiated.

“MAJORITY RULES”: THE REVIVAL OF SINHALESE BUDDHISM

Although our objectives here are not to resolve the issues involved in the Sri Lankan civil war—for which I have neither the expertise nor the political standing—still we can and need to understand better the specifically religious dynamics present in this context. This will help us see that while there are a host of nonreligious factors driving the war, there are also undeniable religious elements at work. More importantly, such an understanding will help clarify how Sri Lankan Christian interreligious practices (to be discussed in the next section) are operative in the conflicted context of a predominantly Buddhist society.

Leading up to and since independence (1948), there have been focused and concentrated efforts to reclaim the Buddhist heritage and identity of the nation against its colonizers. Some of the most significant early efforts

¹⁹ For analysis of the failed Indian intervention, see Kumar Rupesinghe, ed., *Negotiating Peace in Sri Lanka*, chs. 2-8 (see n. 11); see also Rajat Ganguly and Ray Taras, *Understanding Ethnic Conflict: The International Dimension* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998), ch. 7.

²⁰ Here I rely on Saman Kelegama, “Economic Costs of Conflict in Sri Lanka,” in *Creating Peace in Sri Lanka*, 71-87 (see n. 8).

were led by Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), a social reformer who became a monk toward the end of his life.²¹ Born David Hewavitarana, he changed his name to Dharmapala, which means guardian of the dharma, to signify his untiring commitment to showing how Buddhism was just as if not more noble than Christianity for a modern Sri Lanka. Along the way, Dharmapala also worked to revitalize the Buddhist Sangha (order of monks and nuns).

By the mid-1940s and especially into the 1950s, the Sangha had emerged as a palpable force in Sri Lankan politics.²² The year 1956 witnessed three events that signaled the arrival of the Sangha at the center of the nation's political scene. First, the Sangha-organized celebration of Buddha Jayanthi (2,500 years since the death of the Buddha and the landing of Vijaya, the first Sinhala, on the island, a midway point of the 5,000-year period the *dhamma* would last) was a turning point marking the rejuvenation of the Buddha's teachings. Second, the publication of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress Committee of Inquiry's *The Betrayal of Buddhism* called for the establishment of a Buddhist Sasana Council to counteract the organized Protestant and the Roman Catholic churches and for a state-controlled (Sinhalese) and Buddhist-based educational system to oppose the dominant Christian educational institutions/structures.²³ Third, the election of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike (1899-1959) as prime minister succeeded in part because of the support of the Sangha and resulted in Sinhala being established as the official language of the nation. Following this, the riots in 1958-1959, which saw hundreds of Tamils killed and over 10,000 displaced, were provoked in part by the resistance of Buddhist clergy to governmental and legislative "compromises" with the Tamils.

In many ways, the emergence of the Sangha in the Sri Lankan public square paralleled the rise of the nationalistic consciousness among the Sinhalese. While distinct, these two "movements" were and remain interdependent, bound together in part by the commitment to preserve and lift up the Buddhist legacy of the island. Known also as *sibadeepa*, which means "the island of the Sinhalese," and as *dhammadeepa*, which means "the island of the *dhamma*," the Sinhalese are proud about their claim that "Sri

²¹ Surprisingly, there is still no full-length published scholarly study of Dharmapala's life. For an overview, see Gananath Obeyesekere, "Personal Identity and Cultural Crisis: The Case of Anagarika Dharmapala of Sri Lanka," in *The Biographical Process: Studies in the History and Psychology of Religion*, ed. Frank E. Reynolds and Donald Capps (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1976), 221-52.

²² An overview of the history of the revival of the Sangha in Sri Lanka is provided by Stanley J. Tambiah, "Buddhism, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka," in *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economies, and Militance*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, The Fundamentalism Project 3 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 589-619.

²³ Buddhist Committee of Inquiry, *The Betrayal of Buddhism: An Abridged Version of the Report of the Buddhist Committee of Inquiry* (Balangoda, Ceylon: Dharmavijaya Press, 1956).

Lanka is the oldest Buddhist society in the world.”²⁴ This sense is bolstered by the sixth-century CE text, the *Mahavamsa*, which functions with canonical (Buddhist) authority for most Sinhalese.²⁵ While the epic narrative of the *Mahavamsa* concerns King Dutthagamini’s (101-77 BCE) triumph over a Tamil general from south India in the second century BCE, it serves to reveal the mindset of the Sinhalese in terms of their self-understanding as those charged by the Buddha to maintain the *dhamma* and protect the island against the hordes of south Indian invaders. So although Tamils are represented variously in the *Mahavamsa* and not just as enemies of the Buddha’s teachings,²⁶ the architects of the modern revival of Sinhalese Buddhism have read the text ideologically in support of Sinhala aspirations for “cultural, religious, economic, and linguistic hegemony.”²⁷ As Stanley Tambiah notes, there is “a deep ontological commitment to the Buddhist cosmology which implies that the alien must be domesticated, subordinated, and then incorporated into its hierarchical scheme; the corollary is that anything that challenges this scheme is necessarily seen as evil, demonic, outside, and threatening to the very core of Sinhalese Buddhist identity and existence.”²⁸

This convergence of Sinhalese Buddhism and Sinhalese nationalism and the intransigency of the LTTE has produced an intractable stand-off. Besides insisting on the restoration of the over 250 religious sites damaged or destroyed by the LTTE during the civil war, the most vocal leaders of the Sangha have also been united against accepting any peace terms that would lead to an autonomous Tamil state. These monks’ primary concerns have been not only to protect the sovereignty and integrity of the country—after all, unlike the Tamils who can retreat to Tamilnadu, there is nowhere else for the Sinhala to go or call home—but also to advance the cause of Buddhism by constitutional amendments declaring it the national religion. For the more radical members of the Sangha, threats to the priority of

²⁴ Vimal Tirimanna, “Asia: Sri Lanka,” in *Religion as a Source of Violence*, ed. Wim Beuken and Karl-Josef Kuschel (London: SCM; and Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997) 23-30; quotation from p. 21.

²⁵ See Douglas Bullis, ed., *The Mahavamsa: The Great Chronicle of Sri Lanka* (Fremont, Calif.: Asian Humanities Press, 1999).

²⁶ See Gananath Obeyesekere, “Buddhism, Nationhood, and Cultural Identity: A Question of Fundamentals,” in *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, ed. Martin E. Marty and F. Scott Appleby, The Fundamentalism Project 5 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 231-56, esp. 240-41.

²⁷ Tessa J. Bartholomeusz and Chandra R. de Silva, “Buddhist Fundamentalism and Identity in Sri Lanka,” in *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, ed. Tessa J. Bartholomeusz and Chandra R. de Silva (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 1-35, quote from p. 3.

²⁸ Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?* 168-69. See also Bruce D. Kapferer, “Remythologizing Discourses: State and Insurrectionary Violence in Sri Lanka,” in *The Legitimation of Violence*, ed. David E. Apter (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 159-88, esp. 169-77, for a similar discussion.

Buddhism in Sri Lankan life and culture are to be taken seriously and resisted with all possible means. Even if this involves or requires killing, such would be justified as “conventional” modes of response to this-worldly, real-life problems.²⁹

This posture, of course, would surprise those unfamiliar with the Sri Lankan situation, especially given the wider Buddhist tradition’s well-known stance on nonviolence (*ahimsa*) and emphases on cultivating generosity and compassion. But what has emerged on the Sinhalese front are what might be called Buddhist just-war arguments whereby the commitments to pacifism and nonviolence can be overridden with good cause, such as those related to defending the dharma.³⁰ While only a very small number of Sinhala monks have actually participated in violent activities themselves, most support the “war against terror” (opposing the LTTE) in very concrete ways. The monks consider their preaching to the troops as merit-making, both for themselves and for the soldiers. Their sermons are designed to inspire soldiers to think particular thoughts, to nurture a posture of equanimity, to have a specific mindset so that they can be courageous in carrying out their duties. On the other hand, since preaching about the negative karma of killing in war does not promote the kind of morale that soldiers need to do their *samsaric* (this-worldly) duty, it is avoided.³¹ For these and other reasons, the Sangha has not been at the forefront of leading the nation to hear out Tamil concerns.³²

Before turning our attention to Christianity in Sri Lanka, I want to briefly note that the Sinhala-Tamil conflict has another set of interreligious implications: that concerning the small Muslim minority in the country. Mostly Moors with a tangible Sufi contingent, Muslims in Sri Lanka number about the same as Christians (approximately 7 percent of the overall population), and they also have suffered from the war. In 1990, almost 300 Muslims were killed by the LTTE, including 120 at prayer time in a mosque in Kattankudy. Shortly thereafter, the LTTE expelled 75,000 Muslims at gunpoint from the Jaffna peninsula and from their longtime homeland in

²⁹ See Oliver McTernan, *Violence in God’s Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2003), 99-100. Mark Juergensmeyer writes, “I was once told by a monk who had participated in violent anti-government protests that there was no way to avoid violence ‘in a time of *dukkha*’—the age of suffering that Buddhists regard as characteristic of recorded human history”; see Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 113.

³⁰ See Tessa J. Bartholomeusz, *In Defense of Dharma: Just-war Ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

³¹ See Daniel Kent, “Onward Buddhist Soldiers: Preaching to the Sri Lankan Army” (paper presented to the American Academy of Religion, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 18-21 November 2006); my thanks to Professor Kent for sharing his manuscript with me.

³² The 10 percent of the Sangha more sympathetic to Tamil issues have usually been the younger undistinguished monks without a university education who come from poorer economic backgrounds; see Nathan Katz, “Sri Lankan Monks on Ethnicity and Nationalism,” in *Ethnic Conflict in Buddhist Societies*, ed. K. M. de Silva et al., 138-52, esp. 149 (see n. 17).

the district of Mannar, and many of these have remained in refugee status since.³³ These are only two of the many incidents involving attacks against Muslims. Whereas in the decades preceding the war Muslims were more politically aggressive, their posture now is more subdued, sometimes being reduced to being “used” by the Sinhala majority as a counterweight to Tamil radicalism. On the religious, social, and cultural fronts, the Muslim response has varied across the spectrum: from assimilation into the fabric of Sinhalese life to association with a more pan-Arabic Islamic identity. Hence, Sri Lankan Muslim identities are negotiated at multiple levels: regionally and locally on the island, where the disputes are between orthodox Islam and the Sufi tradition; nationally, where the issues revolve around the Sinhala-Tamil conflict; and internationally, where the discourse is also shaped by resistance to secularism and the West.³⁴ In short, the inter-religious arena in Sri Lanka is multidimensional, with the Muslim presence adding further layers of complexity to an already intricate situation.

THE CHRISTIAN MINORITY IN SRI LANKA

The history of Christianity on the island has been mediated by colonialism: first the Portuguese (1505-1658), then the Dutch (1658-1796), and finally the British (1796-1948).³⁵ During the twentieth century, the Buddhist revival has slowly but surely pushed Christianity to the margins of national, social, and cultural life. The Free Education Act in 1947 was the first of a number of formal legislative procedures intended to wrest control of education from the missionaries and their schooling systems. Whereas the small minority of “Westernized” Christians (about 9 percent of the population during the mid-1940s) under the control of Western denominations and churches wielded a disproportionate amount of social, economic, and political control during the colonial administration, there has been a steady decline of Christian numbers, influence, and, concomitantly, morale in the last half century.³⁶

Along the way the Christian churches have not been immune to the pressures exerted by Sinhalese nationalist forces. Political independence fol-

³³ See K. M. de Silva, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, ch. 7, “The Islamic Factor”; cf. K. M. de Silva, “Sri Lanka’s Muslim Minority,” in *Ethnic Conflict in Buddhist Societies*, ed. K. M. de Silva et al., 202-14 (see n. 17).

³⁴ Victor C. de Munck, “Sufi and Reformist Designs: Muslim Identity in Sri Lanka,” in *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, ed. Tessa J. Bartholomeusz and Chandra R. de Silva, 110-32 (see n. 27 above).

³⁵ An overview is G. P. V. Somaratna, *Chronology of Christianity in Sri Lanka* (Nugegoda, Sri Lanka: Margaya Fellowship of Sri Lanka, 1998).

³⁶ See G. P. V. Somaratna, “Christianity in Sri Lanka, 1948-1987: Struggle for Survival,” *Indian Church History Review* 22 (1988): 132-49. Some of the factors leading to the decreasing Christian population include comparatively lower birth rates and massive emigration since the start of the civil war.

lowed by ecclesial independence from Western mission agencies left many of the Protestant churches scrambling for funds while attempting to discern what it meant to develop an indigenous Sri Lankan ecclesial identity. On the Catholic side, Vatican II made it possible for priests to lead their parishes in similar initiatives of de-Westernization and inculturation of Sinhalese or Tamil forms of life.³⁷ What has emerged, however, is the gradual “Sinhalization” of the Catholic Church to the point that some “have felt their Sinhalese identity overpowering their Christian identity [to the point of] attacking Tamil Roman Catholics in the 1983 violence against Tamils.”³⁸

On the other hand, the presence of significant numbers of Tamil Christians means churches have been unable to ignore Tamil concerns. While the major Protestant denominations have focused more on pastoral than political activities, the Church of South India with its sizable Tamil contingent has, in the hands of certain leaders, even embraced the LTTE agenda for various stretches of time.³⁹ And since the emergence of liberation theology in the late 1960s, these have been joined by some Roman Catholic priests in the northern and eastern Tamil-predominant districts who have aligned themselves publicly with the Tamil cause. With the Sri Lankan priesthood thus divided between Sinhala and Tamil interests, the Roman Catholic Church has been limited to making generalized, innocuous, and uncontroversial statements calling for dialogue, peace, and prayer.

Meanwhile, there have been other developments on the Protestant side. Most important for our purposes is that the Protestant churches constituting the National Council of Churches—the Church of South India, the Salvation Army, and the Anglican, Methodist, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches—have become more theologically liberal over time. Influenced by discourses coming out of the World Council of Churches, interreligious dialogue rather than evangelism has come to be emphasized, even as there has emerged in some quarters an increasingly relativistic perspective regarding the person and work of Christ vis-à-vis other religions and those in other faiths.⁴⁰ For these Christian minorities in the Sri Lankan context, survival required diplomacy rather than traditionally understood mission-minded zealotry.

In the last few decades, however, the southward shift of world Christianity, particularly in its evangelical, pentecostal, and charismatic forms,

³⁷ Charles R. A. Hoole, “The Church Amidst Suffering in Sri Lanka,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 13 (1989): 61-65.

³⁸ S. R. H. Hoole, “Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka,” 41; cf. Jan H. Pranger, “Culture, Ethnicity, and Inculturation: Critical and Constructive Comments in Relation to Sri Lankan Contextual Theology,” *Mission Studies* 18-1, no. 35 (2001): 154-80, esp. 159.

³⁹ S. R. H. Hoole, “Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka,” 48-49.

⁴⁰ S. R. H. Hoole, “Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka,” 52-53. For an overview of the Buddhist-Christian dialogue in Sri Lanka, see Whalen Lai and Michael Von Brück, *Christianity and Buddhism: A Multi-Cultural History of Their Dialogue*, trans. Phyllis Jestice (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001), ch. 2.

has also begun to impact Sri Lanka.⁴¹ During the mid-century period of mainline Protestant decline, classical pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God also struggled, sustaining their numbers primarily through proselytism from other churches.⁴² But more recently, buoyed by the support and influx of parachurch missionary organizations from various parts of the world, especially North America, mainline churches have been slowly revitalized. At the same time, a growing number of independent churches have also made their presence felt in terms of mobilizing local leadership (not only Sinhala but also Tamil), empowering the laity, and adopting indigenous forms and practices.⁴³ They more often have remained formally a-political, preferring instead to devote themselves to prayer and evangelism as their means of contributing to the reformation of the Sri Lankan situation.⁴⁴ Yet because of their aggressive (relatively speaking, for the Sri Lankan context) evangelistic methods and successes in gaining new converts, including highly publicized conversions of Buddhist monks, they have been criticized for unethical proselytizing tactics such as using material inducements to increase their numbers.⁴⁵ Buddhist clergy have been especially concerned about the growth of these churches, and quite a few have attempted to introduce legislation prohibiting such activities.⁴⁶ Others who have felt the Sinhalese cause threatened or thought

⁴¹ For a sketch of the changing face of Christianity in the global south, see Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁴² G. P. V. Somaratna, *Origins of the Pentecostal Mission in Sri Lanka* (Nugegoda, Sri Lanka: Margaya Fellowship of Sri Lanka, 1997), 51-53.

⁴³ See Ranjit DeSilva, "House Church Movement Catches on among Sri Lanka's Urban and Rural Poor," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (1991): 274-78; and idem, "Beleaguered Christianity in Contemporary Sri Lanka," *Asia Journal of Theology* 9, no. 1 (1995): 47-62.

⁴⁴ Neville Jayaweera, *The Role of the Churches in the Ethnic Conflict*, Marga Monograph Series on Ethnic Reconciliation 17 (Colombo: Marga Institute, 2001), 10; cf. Charles Hoole, "Ethnic Fratricide and the Church's Witness to Intercommunal Peace in Sri Lanka," *Transformation* 15 (1998): 15-18.

⁴⁵ Mahinda Deegalle, "JHU Politics for Peace and a Righteous State," in *Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka*, ed. Mahinda Deegalle (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 233-54, esp. 244 and 251. My sense is that at least some of what is happening is the result of misunderstanding since what is thought to be unethical can also be understood as being the result of access to new social (ecclesial) networks and relationships brought about by religious conversion. It has also been the case that evangelicals have often taken the lead in relief efforts, whether in response to riots, such as those of July 1983, or to the more recent devastating tsunami in December 2004; see, e.g., "Evangelical Relief Efforts are Under Way in Violent Sri Lanka," *Christianity Today* (7 October 1983): 66-67; and Manpreet Singh, "Bent But Not Broken: A Pummeled Church Helps Bury the Dead and Bring Life to Those Who Remain," *Christianity Today* 49, no. 2 (February 2005): 30-33.

⁴⁶ Shirley Lal Wijesinghe, "The Places of Worship in the Bible: A Theological Reading Prompted by the Recent Attacks on Places of Christian Worship in Sri Lanka," in *Encounters with the Word: Essays to Honour Aloysius Pieris S.J. on His 70th Birthday 9th April 2004*, ed. Robert Crusz, Marshal Fernando, and Asanga Tilakaratne (Colombo: Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, 2004), 629-39, at 638.

these Christians disrespectful of the Buddha and the dharma have gone as far as intimidating Christian workers, assaulting ministers, and burning churches.⁴⁷ On the other front, in Tamil-dominated areas, evangelicals and pentecostals are also endangered if their work is thought to undermine the LTTE agenda.⁴⁸

Arguably these anti-Christian reactions are related to postindependence developments. It was precisely because the church bodies with a longer history on the island had shifted their forms of missionary engagement from kerygmatic proclamation to social uplift that evangelical and pentecostal missionary organizations focused on and committed themselves to the evangelistic renewal of Sri Lanka. In the process, some evangelical leaders have been careful to emphasize respectful and dialogical interactions with Buddhists and those in other faiths—for example, the work of Ajith Fernando, the National Director of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka, especially in his emphasis on the importance of interpersonal dialogue, getting to know other religious traditions and people of other faiths, and treating those in other faiths with respect and approaching them with humility.⁴⁹ Further, even in the face of persecution, it is often the case that Sinhala Christians have risked their own lives and homes in providing refuge to Tamil Hindus threatened by mobs and violence.⁵⁰ Finally, there have also been occasions when Buddhists and Christians across the ecclesial spectrum have collaborated in the face of disaster and tragedy, most recently in response to the devastating tsunami of December 2004.⁵¹ Still, Sinhalese Buddhist nationalists have been unprepared to deal with evangelistic strategies that brought back memories of the colonial missionary effort.⁵² For many of the most politically invested Buddhist elite, too much ground has

⁴⁷ Marshall, gen. ed., *Religious Freedom in the World*, 281-82.

⁴⁸ As seen in the report of the murder of Assemblies of God pastor Sivanesarajah on 2 May 2000 because of his preaching pacifism to Tamil youth (which undermined the LTTE's capacity to recruit), and his ignoring LTTE demands to stop holding meetings in the rural area of Panichchankerni; see "The Fatal Conjunction: Women, Continuing Violations and Accountability," *University Teacher's for Human Rights Information Bulletin* 25 (11 July 2001) [<http://www.uthr.org/bulletins/bul25.htm>] (accessed November 2006).

⁴⁹ See the relevant chapters in Ajith Fernando, *The Christian's Attitude toward World Religions* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1987); and idem, *Sharing the Truth in Love: How to Relate to People of Other Faiths* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2001); see also his call for a sensitivity to the Sri Lankan context: Ajith Fernando, "Missionaries Still Needed—But of a Special Kind," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1988): 18-25.

⁵⁰ Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 330.

⁵¹ Post-tsunami relief efforts evidenced "countless experiences of grassroots hospitality" between Buddhists and Christians; see Paul Jeffrey, "A Great Leveler: Sri Lanka's Factions Deal with the Tsunami," *Christian Century* 122, no. 3 (8 February 2005): 8-10, quotation from p. 9.

⁵² Elizabeth J. Harris, "Christian Perceptions of the Buddha in Sri Lanka," *Swedish Misological Themes* 90, no. 1 (2002): 39-62, esp. 62.

been reclaimed from the Christian colonizers to now be lost again to aggressive evangelical and pentecostal mission churches.

Committed Christians in Sri Lanka realize that given the existing political situation, their witness to the gospel must be borne with discernment, propriety, and wisdom. Arguably, the Christian imagination in Nigeria is similarly attuned, but its vastly different social and political circumstances have produced an entirely contrasting set of interreligious attitudes and practices.

WORLD PENTECOSTALISM: ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN NIGERIA

Unlike in Sri Lanka, Christians are neither a small minority nor a clear majority in Nigeria. While precise demographic statistics are unavailable, there is widespread recognition that Muslims and Christians are almost numerically equivalent in the country as a whole, albeit more or less clustered in different regions. Further, while there is no ongoing civil war in Nigeria, there is a history of Muslim-Christian violence almost as long as the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict, with the potential of religiously based riots occurring at almost any time. Finally, the expanding form of Christianity in Nigeria is clearly pentecostal and charismatic, although many of these churches and their leaders are far from being politically disengaged. These and other reasons make Nigeria an important case study for those of us seeking to understand the conflict of religions in the twenty-first century. The following discussion lays out the history of Muslim-Christian violence in Nigeria before exploring Nigerian Muslim and Christian perspectives on their common struggles. Again, we will seek to highlight the wide range of Christian responses to situations of interreligious conflict.

MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

The projected population of Nigeria as of 2005 was close to 132 million, making it the most populous state in the African continent.⁵³ This includes innumerable different ethnic and tribal groups, the largest being the predominantly (Sunni) Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the north (about 32 percent), the religiously mixed Yoruba in the southwest (21 percent), and the predominantly Christian (Catholic) Igbo in the southeast (about 18 percent). Because of the history of the Muslim-Christian conflict and the contested political ramifications of census data, no reliable figures are available regarding the number of religious adherents. The best current estimates

⁵³ Figures range from 125,000 to 137,000, depending on one's sources. My numbers derive from the United Nation's Children's Fund Web site: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria_1463.html (accessed 8 December 2006).

indicate that Muslims consist of between 40 and 60 percent of the population, while Christians range from 40 to 53 percent of the population, with the different percentages dependent on who is counting and on how practitioners of African traditional religions are counted. Regardless of the actual numbers, Muslim-Christian relations are clearly central not only to the religious, cultural, and social life of the country but also to its political and economic well-being.

Before turning specifically to Muslim-Christian violence, it would be helpful to set the broader recent Nigerian context. While the role of religion in the conflicts cannot be denied, there are other extenuating circumstances. First, the history of British colonialism in the region resulted in the arbitrary organization of different ethnic groups under one national government. Since independence (1960), this has been a perennial source of political disputation and even violent conflict, as seen in the civil war (1967-1970).⁵⁴ Second, in part because of ethnic strife and distrust, there has been an entire generation of political instability featuring coups and countercoups (motivated variously) that have in turn opened the doors for military dictatorships and corruption in leadership at all levels of the government.⁵⁵ By 2001, Nigeria had come to rank ninetieth out of ninety-one nations on *The Transparency International Corruption Index*, and it was estimated that 1 percent of the population controlled 90 percent of the nation's wealth in banks outside the country.⁵⁶ Third, the tremendous natural resources of the country, especially its massive oil deposits, have not been harnessed for the well-being of the people, and this has resulted in widespread poverty.⁵⁷ Since the oil boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Nigeria's per capita Gross National Product (GNP) has fallen drastically such that more than two-thirds of its population lives below the poverty line.⁵⁸ Against this background, it should not be surprising that there exists

⁵⁴ For an overview, see Remi Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience* (New York: Nok Publishers, 1982). A more focused study is Yusufu Bala Usman, *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977-1987* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Vanguard, 1987). For a brief synopsis, see Godfrey N. Uzoigwe, "Assessing the History of Ethnic/religious Relations," in *Inter-Ethnic and Religious Conflict Resolution in Nigeria*, ed. Ernest E. Uwazie, Isaac O. Albert, and Godfrey N. Uzoigwe (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 1999), 7-17.

⁵⁵ Leo Dare, "Political Instability and Displacement in Nigeria," in *Displacement and the Politics of Violence in Nigeria*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy and Pat Ama Tokunbo Williams, *International Studies in Sociology and Social Anthropology* 67 (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1997), 22-32.

⁵⁶ Victor E. Dike, *Nigeria and the Politics of Unreason: A Study of the Obasanjo Regime* (London: Adonis & Abbey, 2003), 71 and 116.

⁵⁷ Nigeria has been losing rather than gaining ground as a developing nation; see John McCormick, *Comparative Politics in Transition* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1995), ch. 7.

⁵⁸ Abdul Karim Banura, "Multifaceted Ethnic Conflicts and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria," in *Perspectives on Contemporary Ethnic Conflict: Primal Violence or the Politics of Conviction?* ed. Santosh C. Saha (Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 2006), 173-96, data from p. 182. Early in the new century, the United Nations Development Programme ranked Nigeria as the

a high degree of economic pressures, social unrest, and ethnic tensions. When other considerations such as the instability of the economy, the question of control over and access to the nation's key natural resources, and the ethnic pride instilled by centuries of Arabic-Islamic rule in the north are factored in, the Nigerian situation is volatile indeed.

In this context we need to understand the volatility of Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria. Since 1982—the beginning of the nation's downward economic spiral—conservative estimates show more than a dozen serious violent conflicts involving Muslims against Christians and vice versa. I will simply list some of the most prominent here,⁵⁹ and discuss only two incidents in more detail:

- December 1980, October 1982, February 1984, and April 1985— involving the extremist Maitatsine sect that sought to cleanse Nigeria from secularism, and which involved primarily Muslims against Muslims (over 6,000 killed, and over 6,000 displaced), but that included some Christian casualties and burnt church buildings;⁶⁰
- October 1982, Kano— involving the more radical Muslim Students Society that burnt eight churches and a Christian bookshop;
- March 1987, Kaduna-Kafanchan and Kano areas— more than 160 churches burnt, 5 mosques destroyed, and thousands dead;
- May and June 1990, Kaduna and Bauchi states— hundreds injured, Christian homes burnt;
- April 1991, Katsina and Bauchi— Muslims reacting against a predominantly Christian government because of its alleged anti-Muslim stance, resulting in an estimated 2,000 dead, 1,483 churches, mosques, and houses burnt, and about 25,000 displaced;
- October 1991, Kano— Muslims responding to the Reinhard Bonnke crusade, resulting in the deaths of over 2,000 Christians, 13 churches burnt, and 22,000 displaced (see below);
- February-May 1992, Zango-Kataf area— over 5,200 Christian and Muslim deaths and many burnt homes;

twenty-sixth poorest country in the world; cited in Dike, *Nigeria and the Politics of Unreason*, 87.

⁵⁹ My sources are varied, but the most comprehensive surveys include Patrick Lambert Udoma, *The Cross and the Crescent: A Christian Response to Two Decades of Islamic Affirmation in Nigeria* (London: Saint Austin Press, 2002), 143-52; Jan H. Boer, *Nigeria's Decades of Blood 1980-2002*, Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations 1 (Belleville, Ont.: Essence, 2003); Carina Tertsakian, "Revenge in the Name of Religion: The Cycle of Violence in Plateau and Kano States," *Human Rights Watch* 17, no. 8A (May 2005); and Iheanyi M. Enwerem, "An Assessment of Government's Formal Responses to Ethnic/religious Riots, 1980-1990s," in *Inter-Ethnic and Religious Conflict Resolution in Nigeria*, ed. Ernest E. Uwazie, Isaac O. Albert, and Godfrey N. Uzoigwe, 121-35 (see n. 54 above).

⁶⁰ On the Maitatsine riots, see Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies* (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 1998), ch. 5.

- January 1993, Katsina state—1,000 killed, dozens of homes burnt;
- April 1994, Jos—involving Muslim perpetrators and aggressive Christian retaliation in self-defense;
- December 1998, Maiduguri—20 deaths as a result of clashes and protests over the government’s allowing the teaching of “Christian Religious Knowledge” in the public schools;
- February 2000, Kaduna—1,000 killed;
- September 2001, Jos—around 1,000 people killed in six days;
- June 2002, Yelwa—up to 190 Muslims and at least 30 Christians killed;
- February-May 2004, Kano and Plateau states—numerous incidents resulting in over 1,000 (mostly Muslims) dead, tens of thousands of both Muslim and Christian refugees either displaced from their homes or made to flee the region, and the declaration of a state of emergency in Plateau state by President Olusegun Obasanjo from May 18 to November 4 (see below).⁶¹

This list and numbers do little, however, to give us a sense of the inter-religious hostilities in Nigeria. For this, I will briefly describe the incidents at Kano in October 1991 and in the Kano and Plateau states in the first half of 2004. The riots in October 1991 were precipitated by the return to Kano of pentecostal evangelist Reinhard Bonnke, whose crusade was part of his Christ for All Nations Africa campaign designed to evangelize the continent of Africa by the year 2000.⁶² Kano is a historically Islamic city, and renowned Muslim apologist Ahmed Deedat (1918-2005) already had been denied a license to hold a similar type of meeting in Kano earlier that year.⁶³ Given the widely recognized successes experienced by Bonnke on his first visit to Kano a few years before, Muslims pressured the government to deny Bonnke’s license for this visit. When this did not happen, Muslims were deluged by Christian advertisements in public posters and space (including radio, TV, and moving vans with public address systems). When

⁶¹ There is some debate about why the Christian president declared the state of emergency only in Plateau (which was governed at that time by a Christian as well), but not in Kano (a historically Muslim-dominated state); see John Okwoeze Odey, C.A.N. *My Foot: The Reckless Utterance of a Wilful President* (Abakaliki, Nigeria: St. Patrick’s Parish, 2004).

⁶² Rosalind I. J. Hackett, “Radical Christian Revivalism in Nigeria and Ghana: Recent Patterns of Intolerance and Conflict,” in *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*, ed. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999), 246-67, esp. 251. This was Bonnke’s nineteenth crusade in Africa after his Harare (Zimbabwe) Fire Convention in 1985 challenged over four thousand pastors with the theme “Africa Shall Be Saved”; see Ogbu U. Kalu, *Power, Poverty and Prayer: The Challenges of Poverty and Pluralism in African Christianity, 1960-1996*, Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 122 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 114.

⁶³ One of the few scholarly articles on Deedat is by David Westerlund, “Ahmed Deedat’s Theology of Religion: Apologetics through Polemics,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 3 (2003): 263-78.

“Bonnke entered Kano in a triumphant motorcade two days before the scheduled opening,”⁶⁴ a few scuffles and arguments provoked rioting, with tragic results.

While the majority of riot-related deaths have been Christians,⁶⁵ they have retaliated aggressively and violently on numerous occasions. It has been extremely difficult to identify the originating causes of these riots because each side blames the other. At least in the Kano-Plateau riots of 2004, however, there is evidence that Christians had tired of turning the other cheek and mobilized intentionally against those they felt were their oppressors.⁶⁶ Christian atrocities have been documented in the Yelwa area when, on 2-3 May 2004, over 700 Muslims were killed, including some who sought medical help at a clinic for injuries. Finally, an equally disturbing fact is that nearly 370 Muslim women and children were abducted by the attackers, with many of the women raped, fed pork, and required to drink locally brewed alcohol (both prohibited by *Sharia* law).

While these were dark days for interreligious relations in Nigeria, there have also been some signs of hope in Muslim neighbors protecting and saving Christians and vice versa. One Christian testified, “An old Muslim man took me into his house where I stayed until 6.30 p.m.,” while two elderly Christian men said they “managed to escape and were saved by a Muslim acquaintance who hid them, along with eight women and two young men, in his house close to the church premises.”⁶⁷ Other Muslims warned Christians in advance of potential attacks, or gave their Christian neighbors Muslim headscarves enabling their escape from rioting areas; some even risked their own lives in the face of threatening fellow-Muslim attackers.⁶⁸ That many on both sides have been preserved from harm and death by neighbors, friends, and total strangers from the other faith shows that interreligious relations, even in Nigeria, have not been marked solely by violence.

⁶⁴ Paul Gifford, “Reinhard Bonnke’s Mission to Africa, and His 1991 Nairobi Crusade,” in *New Dimensions in African Christianity*, ed. Paul Gifford (Nairobi: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1992), 157-82, quotation from p. 171.

⁶⁵ Marshall, gen. ed., *Religious Freedom in the World*, 240, identifies thirteen thousand Christian deaths alone. But Marshall has also written as follows elsewhere: “Nigeria is one of the few areas where Christians have engaged in communal violence themselves, though most of this seems to be in reaction to the activity of Islamic radicals”; see Paul Marshall, with Lela Gilbert, *Their Blood Cries Out: The Worldwide Tragedy of Modern Christians Who are Dying for Their Faith* (Dallas: Word, 1997), 63.

⁶⁶ Carina Tertsakian writes, “The Christian attackers were so numerous and well-armed that they quickly overpowered even those Muslims who had weapons” (“Revenge in the Name of Religion,” 23); for what follows, see pp. 26, 30, and 34-37.

⁶⁷ Tertsakian, “Revenge in the Name of Religion,” 17-18.

⁶⁸ David L. Windibiziri, “Neighborology, Mutuality and Friendship,” in *Dialogue and Beyond: Christians and Muslims Together on the Way*, ed. Sigvard von Sicard and Ingo Wulfhorst (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2003), 89-95, esp. 92-93; cf. Boer, *Nigeria’s Decades of Blood*, 62 and 109 n. 49.

RESISTING SECULARIZATION: MUSLIM DISCOURSES IN NIGERIA

The question remains: What exactly identifies these violent episodes as religious rather than ethnic, economic, or political? In this section, we will examine Muslim perspectives before looking at Christian viewpoints in the next.

At one level, the ethnic and religious hostilities need to be understood against the background of the colonial administration.⁶⁹ During the first half of the twentieth century, the British created a system of “indirect rule” in the northern region by allowing the existing Muslim emirates—renamed “Native Authorities”—to remain in power. By the time of independence, however, many of these emirs were either being phased out of leadership or had come to retain only a ceremonial role in the public sphere.⁷⁰ There were also increasing numbers of colonially educated southerners (mostly Igbo Christians) who migrated to the northern areas, and these in many cases succeeded in taking over land long controlled by Hausa-Fulani tribes. In the process Igbos also assumed positions of political leadership. Arguably, the conflict may have been minimized if southern Nigerian migrants who moved to the north and then established themselves there actually observed the behavioral protocols of their regions rather than antagonize their Muslim neighbors in various ways after attaining political standing.⁷¹ Last but certainly not least, the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) was in part a dispute over which groups (Muslim or Christian) should control what space (northern and/or southern areas) of the country. From the Muslim perspective, independence meant throwing off the yoke of the colonizers (along with their seed, including southern Christian Nigerians), re-asserting Nigerian Muslim identity, and reclaiming the Islamic culture and civilization from Western, secular, modernist, and Christian forces.⁷²

⁶⁹ See Chima J. Korieh, “Islam and Politics in Nigeria: Historical Perspectives,” in *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu*, ed. Chima J. Korieh and G. Ugo Nwokeji (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2005), 109-24; and Lamin Sanneh, *Piety and Power: Muslims and Christians in West Africa* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996).

⁷⁰ See Jonathan T. Reynolds, “The Politics of History: The Legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate in Nigeria,” in *Displacement and the Politics of Violence in Nigeria*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy and Pat Ama Tokunbo Williams, 50-65 (see n. 55 above).

⁷¹ On this point, see M. H. Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Spectrum, 1993), 256. For more on the southern displacement of northerners in that region as well as the marginalization of northern migrants to the south (which also exacerbated northern-southern relations), see Kate Meaher, “Shifting the Imbalance: The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Rural-urban Population Movements in Northern Nigeria,” in *Displacement and the Politics of Violence in Nigeria*, 81-92 (see n. 55 above); and Patrick J. Ryan, “In My End Is My Beginning: Muslim and Christian Traditions at Cross-purposes in Contemporary Nigeria,” in *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*, ed. Benjamin F. Soares, *Islam in Africa* 6 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 187-220.

⁷² Muslims fear “that the aim of the unholy triad of colonialism, secularism, and Christianity ‘is to keep the Muslims under perpetual domination,’” and therefore often equate this

From the Muslim point of view, one of the most illuminating issues involves their insistence on governance through *Sharia* law. It needs to be recalled that *Sharia* law has been in effect at least in some respects since the early nineteenth century through the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate by Usman dan Fodio (1744-1817).⁷³ Whereas full implementation of *Sharia* provided a comprehensive national legal system—addressing, for example, sumptuary laws (involving prostitution, alcohol, and gambling), *zakat* (poor tax), land reform (which would in all likelihood retrieve land from multinational corporations), economic/banking reforms, and educational reforms to include Islamic/*Sharia* courses on politics, economics, law, banking⁷⁴—the “indirect rule” approach of the colonizers did not eliminate *Sharia* entirely. Yet, the British relegated *Sharia* to matters related to personal status and replaced *Sharia* criminal law with a version of the English Penal Code. But at independence (1960), the Northern *Sharia* Court of Appeals was established to rule on issues disputed between Muslims. With the division of the northern region into twelve states after the civil war, the practical question that emerged was how to harmonize conflicting *Sharia* decisions given the various rulings of the multiple-state *Sharia* courts of appeals. The proposal for a federal *Sharia* court of appeals in 1977 was intended to address precisely this question.

Christians rejected this proposal because they felt it symbolized the intent of Muslim northerners to Islamicize the country.⁷⁵ After two years worth of debates, the new constitution in 1979 explicitly stated there would be no state religion in Nigeria—and this was repeated in the 1999 constitution—but did provide for state *Sharia* courts of appeals even if only for issues related to Islamic personal law such as marriage, divorce, inheritances, and so forth. Yet Muslims lost much more because *Sharia* decisions could now be appealed to federal non-*Sharia* high courts. Hence they continued to search for ways to implement *Sharia* law and found such through a constitutional loophole giving states the power of self-determination with regard to the implementation of judiciary systems in state territories. In October of 1999, in part as a response to the emer-

triad with the Satanic; see Jan H. Boer, *Muslims: Why the Violence*, Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations 2 (Belleville, Ont.: Essence, 2004), 65 and 79; the quote within the quote is from the *New Nigerian* (8 November 1999), 1. See also Boer's more extensive presentation in his *Muslims: Why We Reject Secularism*, Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations 4 (Belleville, Ont.: Essence, 2005).

⁷³ Ibraheem Sulaiman, *A Revolution in History: The Jihad of Usman dan Fodio* (London and New York: Mansell, 1986), 22-23.

⁷⁴ Umar M. Birai, “Islamic Tajdid and the Political Process in Nigeria,” in *Fundamentalisms and the State*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, 184-203, esp. 194 (see n. 22 above).

⁷⁵ Philip Ostien, “An Opportunity Missed by Nigeria's Christians: The 1976-78 Sharia Debate Revisited,” in *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*, ed. Benjamin F. Soares, 221-55 (see n. 71 above), suggests that Christian foresight in this matter in the mid-to-late-1970s would have averted the emergence of *Sharia* under state implementation since 1999.

gence of a southern (Christian) president at a very precarious time in the country's history, *Sharia* was introduced in the state of Zamfara, and this was followed soon by eleven other states in the north. As was the case previously (under colonial rule and during the First Republic period before the civil war, 1960-1966), non-Muslims, including Christians, have the option of having their cases heard in the existing (Christian created) Common Law Courts.⁷⁶

For Muslims, *Sharia* law is not merely a political system; rather, it is divinely given and intrinsic (not accidental) to fulfilling the Islamic way of life in submission to Allah. Many Muslims believe that while people of the Religions of the Book were and are tolerated under Muslim rule with their rights protected, Muslims in a secular (Christian and Western) state have had no such rights of religious freedom insofar as denial of *Sharia* is in effect a denial of the practice of Islamic faith. To counter the Christian claim that the creation of a federal *Sharia* court of appeals is equivalent to creating a Muslim state, *Sharia* apologists point out that if such were the case, Christians would not be able to opt out of *Sharia* law. By contrast, since the colonial period, the forcible removal of *Sharia* has been part of the Christian plan to exterminate Islam.⁷⁷ Moderate Muslim voices are especially careful to affirm *Sharia* as an expression of Muslim resistance to Western decadence on the one hand, but, on the other hand, to insist on *Sharia* operating within the religiously plural framework of multifaith Nigeria.⁷⁸

Yet Christians remain unconvinced that justice is possible for non-Muslims if *Sharia* law is implemented in Nigeria. They point out that the history of *Dhimmi*s (non-Muslims) in Muslim-controlled regions have included the following restrictions based on *Sharia*: on joining the army, even while having to pay for and rely on the army for defense; on holding certain positions of leadership; on exercising the right to own and control land; on living in well-built homes; on exposing crosses and other objects of worship; on having sexual relations with or marrying Muslims; on possessing arms or dressing in certain ways; on maintaining other than a standing posture in the presence of Muslims; and on disturbing Muslims (e.g., churches must be silent).⁷⁹ In the present situation, there are other concerns such as the following: that the witness of a Muslim would have greater

⁷⁶ Abdur Rahman I. Doi, *Non-Muslims under Shari'ah* (Brentwood, Md.: International Graphics, 1979).

⁷⁷ Ibrahim Ado-Kurawa, *Shari'ah and the Press in Nigeria: Islam versus Western Christian Civilization* (Kano, Nigeria: Kurawa Holdings, 2000).

⁷⁸ Frieder Ludwig, "Religion and Politics in Northern Nigeria: Shari'a Controversies and Christian-Muslim Relations," unpublished manuscript. My thanks to Prof. Ludwig for sharing his paper with me before publication.

⁷⁹ See Matthew Hassan Kukah and Toyin Falola, *Religious Militancy and Self-Assertion: Islam and Politics in Nigeria* (Aldershot, U.K.: Avebury, 1996), 119-20.

value than that of a woman, a Christian, or a pagan, or that there would be prejudice against those unable to swear on the Qur'an. There is also the question that while *Sharia* may work well when both parties are Muslim, what if one is not?⁸⁰ Hence, in spite of Muslim assurances, Christians remain concerned that later expansion of *Sharia* law would severely curtail non-Muslim freedoms.

At the same time, it should also be acknowledged that Muslim fears about Christian secularization of Nigeria are no less well grounded than Christian fears about Muslim Islamization.⁸¹ Such Muslim aspirations were most clearly signaled in Nigeria's surreptitiously changing its status from observer to full member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1986, membership in which was limited only to sovereign Muslim states.⁸² At one point, the OIC's charter included the objective "to propagate Islam and acquaint the rest of the world with Islam, its issues and aspirations," and cited the Declaration of the Third Islamic Summit of 1981: "Strict adherence to Islam and Islamic principles and values, as a way of life, constitutes the highest protection for Muslims against the dangers which confront them. Islam is the only path which can lead them to strength, dignity and prosperity and a better future."⁸³ These moves were motivated by the Muslim concern that a secular state would in effect empower Christians and result in negative implications for Muslim with regard to the national calendar, religious holidays, control of public education, and Nigeria's international relations, among other issues. Hence, the political disputes in Nigeria have retained an undeniably religious character. In the end, many Muslim theopoliticians continue to insist it is insufficient to win the game of electoral politics because that would be to capitulate to a foreign system of social organization rather than to abide under religiously sanctioned dictates.⁸⁴ After all, to accept the separation of religion and politics (of church/mosque and state) is to accommodate to a secular framework of understanding.⁸⁵

Yet, there is also a growing contingent of Muslims who recognize that as a religiously plural state, Nigerians of all faiths must learn to get along with one another. A few Muslims have begun to call for an end to the "silent majority syndrome" so that extremist Muslims do not represent the

⁸⁰ John Okwoeze Odey, *The Sharia and the Rest of Us* (Abakaliki, Nigeria: St. Patrick's Parish, 2000), esp. ch. 4; and Udoma, *The Cross and the Crescent*, 101-26.

⁸¹ On the issue of Islamization, see Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, ch. 3.

⁸² For discussion of this issue, see Udoma, *The Cross and the Crescent*, 126-33.

⁸³ Lamin Sanneh, *The Crown and the Turban: Muslims and West African Pluralism* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997), 220. For the current OIC charter, see the "About OIC" link at <http://www.oic-oci.org/>.

⁸⁴ William Miles, "Muslim Ethnopolitics and Presidential Elections in Nigeria," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 20, no. 2 (2000): 229-41.

⁸⁵ Simeon O. Ilesanmi, *Religious Pluralism and the Nigerian State* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997), ch. 4.

public face of Islam to the world, whether in Nigeria or elsewhere.⁸⁶ Within Nigeria, moderate and progressive Muslim voices are urging acceptance of a secular state for the sake of peace.⁸⁷ Isn't this what Nigerian Christians are seeking?

RESISTING ISLAMIZATION AND "CASTING OUT THE EVIL ONE": NIGERIAN CHRISTIANITIES

The answer to the previous question depends on which Christian one asks. In what follows, we survey the responses of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Roman Catholic Church, and the growing pentecostal-charismatic churches.

Although officially founded in 1976, CAN has its roots in the earlier Northern Christian Association (NCA), an ecumenical initiative formed out of concerns related to the centralization of power in the federal military government, the consolidation of power in the northern region states under Hausa-Fulani Muslims, and the agenda of the military class to unify the nation under Islam.⁸⁸ Over the years, CAN led initiatives to address Christian concerns such as Christian school autonomy; censorship of Christian media; the provocative use of loudspeakers in mosques and near church buildings; the denial of expatriate quotas to Christian institutions; the use of government subsidies for Muslim pilgrimages to Mecca without making such funds available for Christians; the imposition of Muslim authorities over Christians; the disproportionate number of Muslim appointees to governmental positions; and rights related to church buildings, female fashions, and the media.⁸⁹ But while CAN began with a "pol-

⁸⁶ Liyakat Takim, "Peace and Conflict Resolution in the Islamic Tradition," in *Religion, Terrorism and Globalization: Nonviolence—A New Agenda*, ed. K. K. Kuriakose (New York: Nova Science, 2006), 109-20, esp. 109.

⁸⁷ Most often these are scholars in conversation with Christian and African-tradition religionist academics; see, e.g., Sam Babs Mala and Z. I. Oseni, eds., *Religion, Peace and Unity in Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions, 1984); C. S. Momoh, et al., eds., *Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance*, 4 vols. (Ibadan: Shaneson C. I., and Lagos: CBAAC/NARETO, 1988-1989); Jacob K. Olupona, ed., *Religion and Peace in Multi-Faith Nigeria* (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University, 1992); R. D. Abubakre, ed., *Studies in Religious Understanding in Nigeria* (Ilorin, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for the Study of Religion, 1993).

⁸⁸ In addition, CAN sought to bring about collaboration between a wide range of Christian churches so as to foster church unity, develop the Christian Health Association of Nigeria, issue joint statements related to government policies and activities, write syllabi for schools, support the Bible Society of Nigeria, and fund and develop media training for the purposes of evangelization; see Bauna Peter Tanko, *The Christian Association of Nigeria and the Challenge of the Ecumenical Imperative* (1991; reprint, Jos, Nigeria: Fab Anieh, 1993), 128-31.

⁸⁹ Jan H. Boer, *Christians: Why This Muslim Violence*, Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations 3 (Belleville, Ont.: Essence, 2004), 93-101. Of course, it should be noted that Muslim perspectives on almost all of these issues are exactly reversed from that of Christians.

itics of quiet diplomacy” for its first ten plus years, by the mid-1980s, in response to the riots and Nigeria’s full membership in the OIC, it had developed a “militant politics,” led in part by the fiery archbishop A. O. Okogie. CAN’s projects involved the massive use of media, engagement with members of the military council, and use of the court system.⁹⁰ While it is impossible to link CAN directly with any of the violence perpetrated by Christians in Nigeria, it is arguable that its operations as a network not only informed Christian public opinion but also mobilized Christian responses to the riots. CAN’s unspoken motto was voiced by Christians fed up with Muslim violence: that the Bible is silent about what should happen after one’s cheek has been slapped the second time.⁹¹

With regard to the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) in Nigeria, a number of trends can be identified.⁹² At the political level, responses have usually been registered through CAN—often to voice criticisms of what is perceived as unfair governance. Going beyond political statements, RCC leadership also sought to implement Vatican II initiatives emphasizing engagement in dialogue with people of other faiths.⁹³ While the goal of increasing understanding of other religions is essential, these dialogues are for the most part limited to academics. From the point of view of the RCC’s spiritual vitality, however, Nigerian clerics seem to be concerned less with Islam than with pentecostalism. After all, Catholic Christians who leave the Catholic Church are not converting to Islam but are joining pentecostal churches.⁹⁴

The emergence of pentecostal and charismatic churches and Christians (PCCs) in Nigeria during the last thirty years further complicates an

⁹⁰ Iheanyi M. Enwerem, *A Dangerous Awakening: The Politicization of Religion in Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: IFRA, 1995), 119. Reflecting this alarmist posture of Nigerian Christians over the 1980s and into the 1990s, Tanko Yusuf, CAN’s first president and later Nigerian ambassador, wrote a book in 1995 to show that “Islam’s fundamentalist Muslims seek to control not only Nigeria but also the world”; see Tanko Yusuf and Lillian V. Grissen, *That We May Be One: The Autobiography of Nigerian Ambassador Jolly Tanko Yusuf* (Grand Rapids, and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1995), xvi.

⁹¹ Kalu, *Power, Poverty and Prayer*, 156.

⁹² I regret that the analysis of Roman Catholic priest Casimir Chinedu O. Nzeh, *From Clash to Dialogue of Religions: A Socio-Ethical Analysis of the Christian-Islamic Tension in a Pluralistic Nigeria*, European University Studies 23, Theology 745 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002), came to my attention too late to incorporate into this book.

⁹³ Victor Chukwulozie, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Daystar, 1986), ch. 8.

⁹⁴ See, e.g., Evaristus Basse, *Pentecostalism and the Catholic Church in Nigeria* (Calabar, Nigeria: Mariana, 1993); John A. Farounbi, *A Brief History of Pentecostal Movement in Nigeria* (Mushin, Nigeria: Lemuel Publishers, 1997); Emmanuel Onuh, *Pentecostalism: Selling Jesus at a Discount* (Nsukka, Nigeria: Goodwill of God Apostolate, 1999); Jerome N. Okafor, ed., *The Challenge of Pentecostalism* (Awka, Nigeria: Mercury Bright Press, 2004); and Hilary C. Achunike, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria* (Onitsha, Nigeria: Africana First, 2004).

already hotly contested interreligious arena.⁹⁵ Besides revitalizing Christianity by competing for the allegiance of the Christian faithful with historic Protestant and Roman Catholic churches in Nigeria, PCCs have also aggressively engaged the interreligious arena. On the one hand, PCCs have adopted earlier missionary polemics against African traditional religions. They remain concerned that even the retrieval of African culture—for example, such as which occurred at FESTAC 1977 (the second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture)—was and would be “an open door to the demonic” in terms of reinstilling the covenants with the indigenous religious traditions and their spiritual entities.⁹⁶ On the other hand, PCCs not only counter the Islamization of Nigeria but sought to do so by evangelizing both the nation and, as we have seen in Reinhard Bonnke’s “Africa for Christ” crusades, the entire continent.⁹⁷

For our purposes, it is important to recognize not just the PCC commitment to mission and evangelism but also the tactics and, especially, the rhetoric that is often employed. The inflammatory nature of PCC modes of evangelization can be identified at multiple levels. First, PCC “political theology” is not based on political action but on fasting, prayer, spiritual warfare, and even exorcism and ministries of deliverance against the principalities, powers, and covenants of the heavenly realms.⁹⁸ Following

⁹⁵ This would include also neo-pentecostal churches. For discussion of the categories, see Matthews A. Ojo, *The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria* (Trenton, N.J., and Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2006), 9-12. In what follows, I use “PCC(s)” in an all-inclusive sense to refer to pentecostal and charismatic type movements, churches, and Christians in Nigeria.

⁹⁶ Joseph Thompson, “Rising from the Mediocre to the Miraculous,” in *Out of Africa: How the Spiritual Explosion among Nigerians Is Impacting the World*, ed. C. Peter Wagner and Joseph Thompson (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 2004), 19-36, esp. 26-28. For more coverage of this issue, see Rosalind I. J. Hackett, “Discourses of Demonization in Africa and Beyond,” *Diogenes* 50, no. 3 (2003): 61-75; and the work of Ogbu U. Kalu, “Estranged Bedfellows? The Demonisation of the Aladura in African Pentecostal Rhetoric,” *Missionalia* 28, no. 2/3 (2000): 121-42; idem, “Preserving a Worldview: Pentecostalism in the African Maps of the Universe,” *PNEUMA* 24, no. 2 (2002): 110-37; idem, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Reshaping of the African Religious Landscape in the 1990s,” *Mission Studies* 20, no. 1 (2003): 84-111; and idem, *The Embattled Gods: Christianization of Igboland, 1841-1991* (Trenton, N.J., and Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2003), 334.

⁹⁷ Thus the back flap of *Battle Cry for the Nations: Rekindling the Flames of World Evangelization*, ed. Timothy O. Olonade (Jos, Nigeria: CAPRO Media, 1995), announces that this book is designed to mobilize the church to evangelize the “unreached millions” caught up in “idolatry and Islam.”

⁹⁸ Kalu, *Power, Poverty and Prayer*, ch. 5. In this regard, Nigerian PCC beliefs and practices mirror developments in world PCC circles—e.g., Jean DeBernardi, “Spiritual Warfare and Territorial Spirits: The Globalization and Localisation of a ‘Practical Theology,’” *Religious Studies and Theology* 18, no. 2 (1999): 66-96—although one of the effects of this spiritualization of Nigerian politics is that PCCs are less motivated to address corruption and other national problems at their social, economic, political, and structural levels; see Paul Gifford, “The Bible as Political Document in Africa,” in *Scriptural Politics: The Bible and the Koran as Political Models in the Middle East and Africa*, ed. Niels Kastfelt (Trenton, N.J., and Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2004), 16-28, esp. 21-23.

from this, second, there is consistent demonization not only of African religions but also of Islam in PCC literature. For PCCs, Ishmael is outside the covenant, born to Hagar “the bondwoman” because of Abraham’s lack of faith (see Gal 4:22-31); Mohammad is not a prophet but an epileptic and womanizer; and Allah is not the supreme God but one of 360 gods in the Ka’abah of pre-Islamic Arabia; hence, Islam is idolatry. Muslims are caught up “in Satan’s bondage,” and PCCs reject as demonic several core Islamic symbols such as the moon, the star, and Islamic rituals.⁹⁹ Third, and perhaps most provocative in terms of its practical effects, PCCs have employed the full range of media and technology in their evangelism campaigns—loudspeaker public address systems, cassettes, videos, CDs, DVDs, radio, TV, and the Internet—all of which not only clearly publicize the PCC understanding of other religions but also generate new forms of interreligious animosity and hostility.¹⁰⁰ Of course, Muslims also produce such defamatory literature and media, and the result is an intensification of interreligious “hate” rhetoric that further destabilizes the region rather than provides a platform for building a harmonious multifaith Nigeria.¹⁰¹

Finally and perhaps most interestingly for our purposes, PCC engagement with the public sphere has also expanded over the last few decades so

⁹⁹ See Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford, and Susan D. Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism* (New York & London: Routledge, 1996), 173-75; Rosalind I. J. Hackett, “Radical Christian Revivalism in Nigeria and Ghana: Recent Patterns of Intolerance and Conflict,” in *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*, ed. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999), 246-67, esp. 252; idem, “Managing or Manipulating Religious Conflict in the Nigerian Media,” in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*, ed. Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 47-63, esp. 58; Ruth Marshall-Fratani, “Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism,” in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, ed. Andre Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2001), 80-105, esp. 102-3; Ogbu U. Kalu, “Sharia and Islam in Nigerian Pentecostal Rhetoric, 1970-2003,” *PNEUMA* 26, no. 2 (2004): 242-61, esp. 256-58; and Matthews A. Ojo, “American Pentecostalism and the Growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements in Nigeria,” in *Freedom’s Distant Shores: American Protestants and Post-Colonial Alliances with Africa*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006), 155-67, esp. 167. The reference to “Satan’s bondage” is in Paul Gifford, *The New Crusaders: Christianity and the New Right in Southern Africa*, rev. ed. (London and Concord, Mass.: Pluto Press, 1991), 111, while the PCC assertion that Allah is not the supreme God builds on the highly polemical book by a Muslim convert to Christianity, G. J. O. Moshay, *Who Is This Allah?* (Bucks, U.K.: Dorchester House, 1994).

¹⁰⁰ See Rosalind I. J. Hackett, “Devil Bustin’ Satellites: How Media Liberalization in Africa Generates Religious Intolerance and Conflict,” in *Religion in African Conflicts and Peacebuilding Initiatives: Problems and Prospects for a Globalizing Africa*, ed. Sakah Mahmud, Rosalind I. J. Hackett, and James Smith (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), in press. Thanks to Prof. Hackett for sending me a draft copy of this paper.

¹⁰¹ Toyin Falola points out that in light of the emerging Muslim literary and media propaganda, “hate crimes are rationalized in religious terms: the holy books provide psychological support for all sorts of crimes, including murder” (*Violence in Nigeria*, ch. 9, quote from p. 264).

as to involve not only voting but also campaigning for public office and the courting of other explicitly political relationships.¹⁰² The emergence of former general Olusegun Obasanjo from prison, during which he had a “born-again” experience, and then his run for the presidency in 1999, brought out massive PCC support.¹⁰³ Before and since, PCCs have been associating themselves with public figures, sometimes through CAN but other times on their own accord, especially in the cases of the more high profile, independent PCC organizations.

All is not bleak, however, for interreligious relations in Nigeria. There are signs some PCCs are recognizing that different attitudes need to be cultivated that will allow them to listen to, understand, and work together with Muslims for peace in Nigeria. In some cases, PCC involvement with CAN has helped moderate intolerant and negative perceptions of Islam among their constituencies so that “by the mid-1990s, Pentecostals were participating in the inter-faith dialogues that were held under the auspices of CAN.”¹⁰⁴ Leading the way has been pentecostal pastor James Movel Wuye. After losing his right arm during the February 1992 riots in the Zango region, Wuye began searching for alternatives to violent responses in the Nigerian context. He met Ustaz Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa, who lost his brothers in the same Zango conflict, and after coming to realize they had wrongly perceived each other and their religious traditions, they founded the Muslim/Christian Youth Dialogue Forum. Together they published *The Pastor and the Imam*, in which they confessed, “We, as Christian and Muslim youth leaders who have played significant roles in past conflicts and became victims through the physical and psychological injuries that we sustained, came to realise that there is a need for a better approach to our conflict situation.”¹⁰⁵ Their book neither overlooks the many substantive disagreements between Christianity and Islam nor denies the importance of the work of evangelization or Islamization; but

¹⁰² Matthews A. Ojo, “The Church in the African State: The Charismatic/Pentecostal Experience in Nigeria,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 1, no. 2 (1998): 25-32, esp. 27.

¹⁰³ See Asonzeh Franklin-Kennedy Ukah, “The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Nigeria: Local Identities and Global Processes in African Pentecostalism” (Ph.D. diss., Universität Bayreuth, 2003), §§5.3.6 and 6.3.3, available at <http://opus.ub.uni-bayreuth.de/volltexte/2004/73/pdf/Ukah.pdf> (last accessed 10 December 2006). For introductions to Obasanjo, see Alan Rake, *African Leaders: Guiding the New Millennium* (Lanham, Md., and London: Scarecrow, 2001), 180-84; and Akin Sofoluwe and 'Leke Ogunleye, eds., *The Return of Obasanjo* (Lagos: Peekay, 1999). More sympathetic early accounts include Mansour Khalid, ed., *Africa through the Eyes of a Patriot: A Tribute to General Olusegun Obasanjo* (London: Kegan Paul, 2001), and A. Toriola Oyewo, *Obasanjo's Administration and Issues in Nigerian Government* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Jator, 2001). One of Obasanjo's more severe critics is John Okwoeze Odey, *This Madness Called Election 2003* (Abakaliki, Nigeria: St. Patrick's Parish, 2003).

¹⁰⁴ Ojo, *The End-Time Army*, 69.

¹⁰⁵ Ustaz Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and James Movel Wuye, *The Pastor and the Imam* (Kaduna and Lagos: Christian/Muslim Youth Dialogue Forum, 1999), ix.

it does lay out seventy scriptural texts each from the Bible and the Qur'an that provide common ground for the beginning of dialogue. They conclude by proposing collaboration via creating a platform for dialogue, fostering mutual respect for one another and for each other's religious tradition, resisting forced/unethical conversions, engaging in joint forgiveness-and-reconciliation initiatives, committing to the fight against injustice, and working together toward socioeconomic development. Might PCCs and Muslims live in peace as neighbors in Nigeria after all?

WHERE THE WEST MEETS THE REST: MULTICULTURALISM AND INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

In the American context, some Muslims have also recognized the possibility of PCCs cooperating rather than colliding with Muslims for the betterment of their communities.¹⁰⁶ Of course, the situation in the United States is much different from either that of Sri Lanka or Nigeria. In this section, I want to highlight these differences by describing America as a multicultural and multireligious country, and then observe the responses to this pluralistic situation on both the "left" and "right" side of the religious spectrum. Throughout we will note the wide range of interreligious practices at work in the contemporary American scene.

MULTICULTURALISM AND MULTIRELIGIOSITY IN A DEMOCRATIC AND SECULAR SOCIETY

In 2001, Diana Eck, a leading Harvard University professor, published a book with the subtitle *How a "Christian Country" Has Now Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*.¹⁰⁷ Coming out of the "Pluralism Project" research initiative—which continues to the present—Eck's book provides a snapshot of multicultural and multireligious America at the turn of the twenty-first century.¹⁰⁸ The following recent estimates (2004) suggest that besides about 160 million Christians, there are millions of Americans who belong to non-Christian faith traditions.

¹⁰⁶ See Khalid Abdullah Tariq Al Mansour, *The Pentecostals: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly* (n.p.: First African Arabian Press, 1991), ch. 18, who sees real potential for African American PCCs and African American Muslims to work together to address the social and economic challenges confronting the black American community.

¹⁰⁷ Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Now Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001).

¹⁰⁸ The following statistics come from the Pluralism Project Web site, which is continuously updated; see <http://www.pluralism.org/index.php>.

- Baha'i—up to 767,000
- Buddhism—up to 4 million
- Hinduism—about 1,200,000
- Islam—up to 4,390,000
- Jainism—up to 75,000
- Judaism—up to 6,150,000
- Paganism (including witches and neopagans)—up to 1,000,000
- Sikhism—approximately 250,000
- Zoroastrianism—about 18,000

Although the actual percentage of non-Christians remains small, with almost 18 million Americans belonging to or affiliated with the world's major religious traditions, the United States is the most religiously diverse nation on earth. There is simply no denying the demographic diversification of American religiosity over the last generation owing to immigration, globalization trends, and transnational movements.¹⁰⁹

However, there are definitely also ideological agendas that multicultural and multireligious America has produced. To simplify an otherwise enormously complex discussion, it could be argued that there are two trends at work: a progressive trajectory wishing to preserve the constitutionally guaranteed rights of religion and conscience that emerged out of America's founding by refugees and immigrants seeking such freedoms, and a conservative mentality seeking to focus on retrieving and emphasizing the Judeo-Christian legacy of the founding fathers of the nation. For those in the former camp, American multiculturalism and multireligiosity are potential resources that will strengthen the nation in an increasingly shrinking global village while an overemphasis on the Judeo-Christian tradition would necessarily exclude the flourishing of diversity and pluralism needed for American leadership in the twenty-first century.¹¹⁰ On the other side, conservatives counter that American greatness was made possible precisely because of its Judeo-Christian heritage and that uncritical embrace of multiculturalism and multireligiosity will undermine the cohesiveness needed to sustain the American democratic vision.¹¹¹ Where progressives recognize multicultural and multiracial families and seek to approve transracial adoptions, conservatives anticipate the destabilizing of the family; if pro-

¹⁰⁹ See Peter W. Williams, *America's Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-First Century* (Urbana, Ill., and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 6-11.

¹¹⁰ See William Scott Green, "Diversity and Tolerance: Religion and American Pluralism," in *The Religion Factor: An Introduction to How Religion Matters*, ed. William Scott Green and Jacob Neusner (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 257-68; and Barbara A. McGraw and Jo Renee Formicola, eds., *Taking Religious Pluralism Seriously: Spiritual Politics on America's Sacred Ground* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2005).

¹¹¹ See Alvin J. Schmidt, *The Menace of Multiculturalism: Trojan Horse in America* (Westport, Conn., and London: Praeger, 1997); and Russell Kirk, *The Roots of American Order*, 4th ed. (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2003).

gressives want to emphasize a multicultural, multireligious, and bilingual education, conservatives see political correctness and an ideology of relativism. Where progressives want to open up immigration and defend affirmative action, conservatives are concerned about the unraveling of the American way of life; and so on.¹¹² Where in some quarters of the country this distinction between “progressives” and “conservatives” does not accurately reflect the emergence of a *via media*, in many other parts the culture wars continue to rage.

Part of the challenge is that whereas there is a constitutional separation of church and state in America—which means that there is no state-sponsored religion—there is an inseparable connection between religion and politics. This connection is no less present in the United States than it is in either Nigeria or Sri Lanka. Further, religious practices have political implications and vice versa, and it is impossible to divide our lives into an allegedly objective public political sphere and a purportedly subjective private religious domain.¹¹³ This means at least two things. First, at the political level, many Americans realize they need to find a middle way between left and right, between progressive and conservatives, between pluralism and homogeneity, and so forth. How this is done is the million dollar political question, but there can be no doubt this is a conversation all concerned Americans need to engage for the future not only of this country but also of its place in the world affairs of the twenty-first century.¹¹⁴

Second and concurrently with the first, at the religious level Americans recognize the importance of nurturing both religious particularity and interreligious understanding and relationships. This involves working together to protect and preserve the religious freedoms they have in ways that allow for the flourishing of all religious traditions, including presently marginalized religious communities. At the same time, there is the acknowledgment that in a post-9/11 world, no religious tradition exists in isolation from all others. Therefore, there is an urgent need for collaboration across religious lines in developing safe public spaces wherein all citizens can learn more about other religious ways of life. From this, perhaps it will be possible for Americans to cultivate relationships of solidarity that respect religious differences but yet are committed to working amidst such differences for the common good. What is required is not a bland tolerance but a vision for a respectful mutuality that is able to engage in dialogue about ultimately meaningful (religious) convictions and yet at the same time is strong enough to sustain commitments relevant to the public good.

¹¹² An introduction to these debated issues can be found in Eleanor Stanford, ed., *Inter-racial America: Opposing Viewpoints* (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006).

¹¹³ See Robert Booth Fowler et al., *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2004).

¹¹⁴ One suggestion from David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), builds on America's diversification while resisting the anarchic threats of an uncritical ideology of pluralism.

All this sounds nice and good. But pluralism means Americans probably have different ideas about what should be done and how to go about doing such. In the next two sections, we look respectively at responses to religious pluralism in America as seen in the development of interreligious dialogue and in the circles of evangelical Christianity.

FROM THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS TO THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION

Given the centrality of religious freedom to the history of the United States, it should not be surprising that the World's First Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago in September 1893 in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition.¹¹⁵ Thousands of Americans and people from all over the world heard speeches and papers by representatives of the various Christian churches (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and the different Protestant denominations) as well as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, and other less-well-known religious traditions. Christian voices dominated the conversation, but for the first time the world's religious traditions were gathered in one place with each given a platform to present its ideas. By the time of the second Parliament one hundred years later, globalization had commenced in earnest and the Christian dominance in 1893 had been replaced by a genuine ecumenical and interfaith process and multireligious framework.¹¹⁶

In retrospect, the First Parliament gave impetus to the modern ecumenical and interfaith movements and contributed to the emergence of the academic study of religion in North America.¹¹⁷ With regard to the latter, the Parliament revealed the value of learning about other religious traditions on their own terms. From this the discipline of *Religionswissenschaft* (the scientific study of religion, comparative religion, or the history of religions) developed.¹¹⁸ Yet the research carried out by these scholars was better classified within the arts and humanities—for example, involving literature,

¹¹⁵ The documents of the Parliament were published immediately in John Henry Barrows, ed., *The World Parliament of Religions*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Parliament Publishing Company, 1893).

¹¹⁶ See Wayne Teasdale and George F. Cairns, eds., *The Community of Religions: Voices and Images of the Parliament of the World's Religions* (New York: Continuum, 1996).

¹¹⁷ Diana L. Eck, "Foreword," in *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices from the World's Parliament of Religions, 1893*, ed. Richard Hughes Seager (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1993), xiii-xvii. For further assessment of the First Parliament, see also the essays in Eric J. Ziolkowski, ed., *A Museum of Faiths: Histories and Legacies of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), part 3.

¹¹⁸ See Joseph M. Kitagawa and Joachim Wach, eds., *The History of Religions: Essays on the Problem of Understanding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); and Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, 2nd ed. (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1986).

art, ethics, Catholic studies, Jewish studies, and so on¹¹⁹—than the “harder” sciences. Those attempting the latter were trained more often in psychology, anthropology, and sociology, and there was little collaboration across these disciplinary boundaries during the first half of the twentieth century.

At the same time, scholars of religion came to progressively see there could be no tight disciplinary boundaries separating the various approaches to the study of religion. Rather, our cumulative understanding of religion could actually be enhanced by a multidisciplinary approach. The beginnings of an institutional rearrangement reflecting such an emerging consensus occurred in 1963 when the scholarly organization National Association of Biblical Instructors changed its name to the American Academy of Religion (AAR) precisely in order to facilitate a wider conversation among the many specialized approaches to the study of religion.¹²⁰ The result was the opening up of the AAR to include multidisciplinary approaches to the study of religion. Members of the AAR now bring to bear on the study of religion the disciplinary tools of the cognitive and biological sciences, sociology, political science, economics, psychology, ethnicity, gender, anthropology, cultural studies, and others, but also a hermeneutics of suspicion informed by Marxist, Freudian, Nietzschean, and postcolonial theories.¹²¹ Along with this proliferation of methodologies and theoretical tools in the study of religion has been also the appearance of multiple religious perspectives in the AAR: more and more of its membership include people from diverse faith backgrounds or even no faith at all.

Amidst this “zoo” that is the AAR there are at least three identifiable trajectories that parallel the wider debates in American society about religious pluralism. On the one side are those who are cynical about the direction of the AAR and concerned that the study of religion is disintegrating under a myriad of ideological interests.¹²² On the other side are those convinced that for all its intentions and changes the AAR continues to be dominated (wrongly, for them) by theological (especially Christian religious) interests and that what is needed is a more scientifically and empirically shaped framework for the study of religion.¹²³ In the middle, I would

¹¹⁹ Paul Ramsey, John Frederick Wilson, and George F. Thomas, eds., *The Study of Religion in Colleges and Universities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

¹²⁰ See the “Editorial Preface” to *The Journal of Bible and Religion* 33, no. 1 (1965): 3-4.

¹²¹ Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds., *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London and New York: Cassell, 2000).

¹²² Paul V. Mankowski, “What I Saw at the American Academy of Religion,” *First Things* 21, no. 1 (March 1992); 36-41.

¹²³ Representative of those in this camp is Donald Wiebe—e.g., “A Religious Agenda Continued: A Review of the Presidential Addresses of the American Academy of Religion,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 9, no. 4 (1997): 353-75; idem, “Against Science in the Academic Study of Religion: On the Emergence and Development of the American Academy of Religion,” in *The Comity and Grace of Method: Essays in Honor of Edmund F. Perry*, ed. Thomas Ryba, George D. Bond, and Herman Tull (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern

argue, are those who are concerned that the study of religion is inclusive of all religions, that it deploys whatever tools might be amenable to fostering a better understanding of what is being studied, and that it does not reduce religion to other non-religious categories of explanation. Those working broadly within this framework wrestle with difficult methodological (What difference does the perspectives of insider or outsider make in the study of religion or are the lines between the two unambiguous?), pedagogical (What is the difference between being a *confessor* of a religion and being a *professor* of a religion in the college or university classroom?), and political-ethical (What are the political implications of categorizations made by scholars of religion on those whom they study?) questions.¹²⁴ We will return to some of these issues later.

AMERICAN CHRISTIANS AND INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS

While these debates have been occurring in the AAR, American churches have also been wrestling with how to respond to the increasing sense of religious pluralism after the First Parliament. Although by no means occurring overnight, between 1893 and 1993 intra-Christian ecumenism slowly expanded to include interreligious relations. The First Parliament focused discussion on a conversation that was later picked up, successively, by the International Missionary Council and then the World Council of Churches (WCC). Throughout the histories of both organizations the question of interreligious relations was hotly debated, but over time interreligious dialogue came to be embraced as part of the mission of the WCC.¹²⁵

David Bosch has called attention to how the evolution of themes in WCC conferences devoted to the relationship of Christianity and other faiths has reflected the progression of Christian consciousness (my emphases in what follows):

- Commission for World Mission and Evangelism meeting in Mexico City (1963): “The Witness of Christians to Men of Other Faiths” (one-way monologue directed *at* religious others, although they are recognized as being of faith rather than not);
- East Asia Christian Conference in Bangkok (1964): “The *Christian Encounter* with Men of Other Beliefs” (Christian initiative emphasized, although such interactions involve the responses of people of other faiths);

University Press, 2004), 58-83; and idem, *The Politics of Religious Studies: The Continuing Conflict with Theology in the Academy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

¹²⁴ These issues are discussed in Russell T. McCutcheon, ed., *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (London and New York: Cassell, 1999).

¹²⁵ See Franklin H. Littell, ed., *The Growth of Interreligious Dialogue 1939-1989: Enlarging the Circle*, Toronto Studies in Theology 46 (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989).

- Ajaltoun (Lebanon) (1970): “Dialogue *between* Men of *Living* Faiths” (people of other faiths affirmed positively and as equal dialogue partners);
- Chiang Mai (Thailand) (1977): “Dialogue *in* *Community*” (fully mutual emphasis, including a gender inclusive approach).¹²⁶

On the Roman Catholic side, Vatican II opened the church to engaging not only in the intra-Christian ecumenical discussion but also in interreligious dialogue.¹²⁷

These developments in the WCC and the Catholic Church have raised the question of the relationship between dialogue and proclamation. While there are a few who polarize the issue in terms of advocating only one or the other kind of activity as legitimate Christian witness in a pluralistic world, most wrestle with the recognition that authentic evangelism includes dialogue and vice versa.¹²⁸ On the practical level, most mainline Protestant and Catholic churches in the United States have adopted a posture emphasizing working with organizations representing other faith traditions to achieve common social and political goals, and building relationships with people of other faiths.¹²⁹

These questions are also debated among American evangelicals. While it is surely unfair to divide evangelical approaches into two camps,¹³⁰ I suggest there are also conservative and progressive trajectories that frame the discussion of evangelical theology of religions and their concomitant practices. On the conservative side, the most vocal have not denied the importance of dialogue but insisted dialogue must always serve the purposes of witness and evangelism understood in traditional terms.¹³¹ There are also

¹²⁶ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 484.

¹²⁷ Robert B. Sheard, *Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Church since Vatican II: An Historical and Theological Study*, Toronto Studies in Theology 31 (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987); and Francesco Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church (1963-1995)* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997).

¹²⁸ See Don Pittman, Ruben L. F. Habito, and Terry C. Muck, eds., *Ministry and Theology in Global Perspective: Contemporary Challenges for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); for a brief synopsis of how Roman Catholics are wrestling with this issue, see John Borelli, “Interreligious Dialogue and Mission: Continuing Questions,” in *Evangelizing America*, ed. Thomas P. Rausch (New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2004), 172-98.

¹²⁹ E.g., Harold Coward and Gordon S. Smith, eds., *Religion and Peacebuilding* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

¹³⁰ I discuss the complexity of North American evangelicalism and cite the pertinent literature in my “The Word and the Spirit, or the Spirit and the Word? Exploring the Boundaries of Evangelicalism in Relationship to Modern Pentecostalism,” *Trinity Journal* n.s. 23, no. 2 (2002): 235-52.

¹³¹ See Ronald H. Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 165-69; and Millard J. Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved? The Destiny of Those Who Do Not Hear of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), ch. 14.

some in this camp who have bemoaned the trends toward multiculturalism and multireligiosity in America, believing these have nurtured relativism, decentered Christian faith in the marketplace of competing religions and philosophies, and popularized “spirituality” rather than authentic religious commitment.¹³² For many traditional American evangelicals, the important practices include preaching or bearing witness in such a way as to lead non-Christians to conversion to Christ.

No self-identifying evangelical would deny the importance of public and interpersonal evangelism. At the same time, other evangelicals, such as those associated with the Emerging Church movement, have opted for a less traditional set of approaches to Christian mission. In contrast to attempts to more clearly mark the boundaries between the church and the world, Emerging churches have a much more fluid, organic, and relational self-understanding.¹³³ In this framework, strangers are welcomed and engaged following the inclusive practices of Jesus. Such “practices of inclusion” include creating safe places in the welcome space, getting to know and embracing others who are different, nurturing attitudes that are transparent and humble rather than arrogant, replacing verbal apologetics with relational approaches, and resisting “having an agenda” and allowing instead the agenda to emerge from the relationship. Therefore when applied to relating with people of other faiths, Emergent churches emphasize genuine dialogue, encourage visiting other sacred sites and even participating in their liturgies, and insist on learning about the lives and religious commitments of others. All of these activities are informed by the conviction that there is much to be learned from other cultures, even to the point of being evangelized by those of other faiths in ways that transform Christian self-understandings.¹³⁴ For these progressive evangelicals, evangelizing those in other faiths involves not merely rational apologetics but an embodied and holistic approach that engages people by beginning with where they are, while adapting to those situations in risky ways for the sake of the gospel.¹³⁵

¹³² E.g., David F. Wells, *Above All Earthly Power's: Christ in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, and Leicester, U.K.: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

¹³³ See Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); cf. Ray Sherman Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006).

¹³⁴ See Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, ch. 6, including the following report from Spencer Burke's community in Newport Beach, California: “We have a community hermeneutic. We read other sacred writings, then get back to Scripture and decide together how to interpret what we have read from the literature that other religions hold to be sacred” (p. 132).

¹³⁵ Missiologists advocating the adaptation of old rites or even the creation of new symbols and rituals shaped by the interreligious encounter include Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, and Erina, Australia: Strand, 2003), 189-94. See also Terry Muck, *Alien Gods on American Turf* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor/Christianity Today, 1990), esp. ch.

At one level, my choice of focusing our case studies in these three contexts has been fairly arbitrary: why not any other three countries or interreligious situations? And even in the three cases under consideration, I have in no wise provided an exhaustive assessment of interreligious relations, much less offered a comprehensive typology of different kinds of interreligious interactions worldwide. Yet I believe our discussion so far has been productive of a more limited set of goals. First, I wanted us to observe the many different social and political contexts within which interreligious encounters are taking place, and to note that even in these various locales, multiple forms of interreligious engagements are occurring. Second, I began this chapter with reference to Huntington's thesis of the "clash of civilizations" and noted its limitations. I think it is clear in our case studies, however, that interreligious violence is an undeniable factor of our global situation. While this does not require complete acceptance of Huntington's thesis, Christian theological reflection on interreligious relations cannot ignore the association of religion and violence in a post-9/11 world. Last but not least, our case studies have also noted positive interreligious relations featuring hospitality, dialogue, and mutuality among people of different faith traditions. Together, these observations lead me to believe that Christians need to articulate a multifaceted theology of religions and theology of interreligious engagement that more adequately underwrites the broad range of practices required for a complex post-9/11 world of many faiths. The next three chapters of this book will be preoccupied with precisely such a task before we return in our concluding chapter to revisit the question of Christian practices in Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and the United States as well as in interfaith zones around the world.

6, "Loving Neighbors"; and Irving Hexham, Stephen Rost, and John W. Morehead II, eds., *Encountering New Religious Movements: A Holistic Evangelical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004).