

Religious Alliances, Divisions, and Conflicts: Endless Dialogues between the Past and the Present in Historical Perspective

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This article is not a metaphysical or a theological study of religion,¹ rather it simply terms religion as a creed that has been variously defined and expressed by diverse people throughout the world to seek not only their respective spiritual salvations, but to also protect their sacred, ethnic, racial, and national identities usually at the expense of those of others. Examining the impacts of religion in its various forms on people in specific regions in Africa, Asia, and Europe, the Middle East, the article summarily tests the proposition that religion has been among the means used to ensure and validate alliances, divisions, and conflicts in human societies since the beginning of such societies more than 40,000 years ago.²

¹ Publications which have metaphysically and theologically treated religion in its various forms include the followings: John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (New York, 1985); John Bowker, *The Religious Imagination and the Sense of God* (London, 1978); Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (London, 1967); __, *Early Christian Thought and Classical Tradition* (London, 1966); Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, Second Edition, (New York, 2001); Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford, UK, 2000); Yoram Hazony, *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture*, (Cambridge, UK, 2012); S. H. Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology: From the Assyrians to the Hebrews* (Harmondsworth, UK, 1963); Thomas Hopkins, *The Hindu Religious Traditions* (Belmont, CA, 1971); E. O. James, *The Ancient Gods: The History and Diffusion of Religion in the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean* (London, 1960); Steven T. Katz, ed. *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (London, 1983); J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Cristian Creeds* (London, 1950); Thomas E. Lawson, *Religions of Africa* (New York, 1984); Trevor Ling, *Buddha: Buddhist Civilization in Indian and Ceylon* (London, 1973); Andrew Lowth, *The Origins of Christian Mysticism: From Plato to Denys* (London, 1975); John Meyendoff, *Byzantine, Theology, Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York, 1975); Robert C. Mitchell, *African Primal Religion* (Niles, Ill, 1977); Candida R. Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford, UK, 2010); Noel Q. King, *African Cosmos: An Introduction to Religion in Africa*, (Belmont, CA, 1986); John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (New York, 1970); Geoffrey Parrinder, *West African Religion: A Study of the Beliefs and the Practices of Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo and Kindred* (London, 1961); Raimundo Pannikar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (New York, 1973); Michael J. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divination in Early China* (London, 2002); Benjamin C. Ray, *African Religions: Symbol, Ritual, and Community* (Englewood Cliff, NJ, 1976); Thomas A. Robinson and Hillary P. Rodrigues, *World Religions: A Guide to the Essentials*, Second Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI, 2006); Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (London, 1982); Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (New York, 1990); Brian K. Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion* (New York, 1989); Howard Smith, *Chinese Religions* (London, 1968); Ninian Smith, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (London, 1979); David S. Sperling, *The Original Torah: The Political Intent of the Bible's Writers* (New York, 1998); Gerd Theissen, *The Followers of Jesus: A Sociological Analysis of Earliest Christianity* (London, 1978); Keith Ward, *The Concept of God* (London, 1974); A. J. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed, Its Genesis and Historical Development* (London, 1932); Richard woods, ed. *Understanding Mysticism* (London, 1980); Evan M. Zeusse, *Ritual Cosmos, the Sanctification of Life in African Religions* (Athens, OH, 1979).

² Louis Jacob, ed., *The Jewish Religion: A Companion* (London, 1995), P. 418; James, *The Ancient Gods*, p. 89; Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology*, p. 83; Jacob Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man* (Boston, 1973); pp. 86-88; Gerhard Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Power Stratification* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1966.), pp. 189-90; James Mellaart, "Early Urban Communities in the Near East, 9000 to 3400 BC" in P. R. S. Moorey, ed., *The Origin of Civilization* (London, 1979), pp. 22-25); World Council of Churches, *Violence, Nonviolence and the*

The mentioned features were said to have characterized ancient religion such as Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and many others. This could be said about the religion of ancient Egypt beginning about 3100 BC when one of the early kings or pharaohs named Narmer was portrayed as the incarnation of the gods, and a source of survivability and productivity of the kingdom. He also symbolized the spiritual and secular identity of the Egyptian people, an image that the Egyptians used not only to distinguish themselves from Libyans, Abyssinians, Nubians, Jews, Palestinians and others, but they would use it to justify their imperial expansion in the territories of the mentioned groups.³

Similarly, Jews used Judaism to invoke their Jehovah not only to bring the Jewish people together and liberate themselves spiritually, but also to free themselves from Egyptian enslavement. Such an initiative would help to specify their identity, an identity that was religiously and secularly exploited by the Romans, Catholic Church in the middle ages, and from then on by a number of other secular and spiritual institutions and leaders.⁴

Struggle for Social Justice (Geneva, 1972); p. 6; John Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empire, Second Edition*, (London, 1997), pp. 15-6, 107; Bruce Lincoln, "The Role of Religion in Achaemenian Imperialism" in Nicole Brisch, ed., *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond* (Chicago, 2008) pp. 36-40, 223; Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (New York, 2014), pp. 21-45, 155-77; Louis Renou, *Religions of Ancient India* (London, 1953), pp. 6, 220-25; Hopkins, *The Hindus Religious Traditions*, pp. 50-1; Wendy Doniger, *An Hindu: Alternative History* (London, 2009), p. 165; Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (London, 1952), p. 102; Howard Smith, *Chinese Religions* (London, 1968), pp. 1-11; James Lewis, ed., *Violence and New Religious Movements* (London, 2011), pp. 15-7; James Rives, *Religions in the Roman Empire* (London, 2007), pp. 13-20; Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000* (Oxford and Malden, UK, 1996), pp. 18-9; W. H.C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of the Conflict from Maccabees to Donates* (London, 1965); pp. 331; Garth Fowden, *From Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 13-16; Theissen, *Sociology of the Early Palestinian Christianity*, pp. 92-95; Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the Ethics of Violence* (New York, 1993), pp. 28-36, 41-62, 152; Reuven Firestone, *The Origin of Holy War in Islam Jihad*: (New York, 1999), pp. 42-5; __, *Holy War in Judaism: The Rise and Fall of a Controversial Ideas* (New York, 2012), pp. 26-40; Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History* (Princeton, NJ, 2006), pp. 46-54; Robert L. O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men: A History of War, Weapons, and Aggression* (New York), pp. 69-81; W. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome* (London, 1979), pp. 51, 6; E. N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (Baltimore, MD, 1976), pp. 25-6, 41-2, 46-7; Susan P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (Berkeley, CA, 1999), pp. xii-222.

³W. Y. Adams, *Nubia-Corridor* (London, 1977), p. 203; Armstrong, *The Fields of Blood*, pp. 41-2, 104, 106, 109, 134, G. Mokhtar, ed., *General History of Africa: Ancient Civilizations of Africa Vol. 2, Abridged Edition*, (Berkeley, CA, 1990), pp. 62-4, 68-9, 71, 73, 75-80, 82-4, 86-91, 94-5, 98-9, 102; J. D. Fage, *A History of Africa* (New York, 1978), pp. 34-56; Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa Third Edition* (New York, 2012), pp. 33-42; Graham Connah, *African Civilizations: Precolonial Cities and States in Tropical Africa, an Archaeological Perspective* (New York, 1986), pp. 35-38; Roland Oliver, *The African Experience: Major Themes in African History From Earliest Times to the Present* (New York, 1991), pp. 51-63; Cyril Aldred, *The Egyptians* (London, 1961), pp. 51-3; C. F. V. G. Child, *New Light on the Most Ancient East* (London, 1954), pp. 82-8; A. J. Arkell, "The Valley of the Nile" in ed., Roland Oliver, *The Dawn of African History* (London, 1968), pp. 1-12; A. A. Kwapong, "Carthage, Greece, and Rome" in Roland Oliver, ed., *The Dawn of African History*, pp. 13-21.

⁴ Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, pp. 104, 108-09, 131-41, 145-47; ---, *A History*, pp. 19-21; Yitzhak Baer, *The History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia, PA, 1961), pp. 1-34, 94-110, 130-69, 170-227, 229- 43, 244-76, 424-23, 425-444; Richard A. Horsley, "The Historical Context of Q" in Richard A. Horsley and Jonathan A. Draper, eds., *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performances and Traditions in Q* (Harrisburg, PA, 1999), pp. 51-54; Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (New York, 1987), p. 76; Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (London, 1978), p. 121; Benno Muller-Hill, *Murderous Science: Elimination by Scientific Selection of Jews, Gypsies, and Others in Germany, 1933-1945* (New York, 1988), pp. 22-38, 40-65; Gotz Aly, Peter Chroust, and Christian Pross, *Cleansing the Fatherland: Nazi Medicine and Racial Hygiene* (Baltimore, MD, 1994), pp. 1-21, 22-93, 99; Stefan Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism and German National Socialism* (New York, 1994), pp. 24-6, 97-9;

Although they used Christianity to bring people of different ethnic, social, and racial background together since the first century AD, early Christian leaders' inconstant doctrines of the existence of God in three and his existence in one did cause divisions among the members of the new religion. The disagreements were further reinforced by pro-Romans' position of a number Christian leaders that included Aurelius Augustinus also named Augustine of Hippo, and by 400 Donatist Christian bishops' opposition to the Romans and their Christian allies. The bishops disliked the Romans and anyone associated with them because of their persecution of thousands of Christians and their continued attempts to undermine Christianity beginning from the first century AD through 312 AD.⁵

While the Trinity's concept of God became the ideological foundation of the Roman Church, the Monophysite or oneness's concept of God became the theological foundation of bulk of the Egyptian, Nubian, Abyssinian, and Berber Christians, especially from the 300 AD through the 600 AD. Their Monophysite perspective of God was obviously informed by Judaism that had been influenced by Zoroastrianism and other earlier religions.⁶

Using the trinity's notion of God, the Roman Catholic Church beginning with St. Paul from about 533 AD would spell out what constituted Christianity in Western Europe; and this would persist to the early fifteenth century. The Church through its power hierarchy that comprised of pope, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, parish priests, monks, and nuns, became more powerful not only religiously, but also secularly than queens and kings in Europe, mainly in the thirteenth century. The Church used its increasing religious and secular authority, influence, and its material holdings such as land to convert most Europeans to Christianity. As the Church struggled to bring European peasants and landowners together as Christians it simultaneously moved to check those who posed threats to Christianity and its leadership.⁷

Pope Gregory V11 (1073-1083) the heir of Saint Peter, undertook to fulfill the mentioned task after he was informed that non-Christian Turkish had attacked Christians in Byzantine. He thereafter called upon the Christian faithful of Europe to amass and liberate the Christians in Byzantine. He added that the holy lands that included the city of Jerusalem must be liberated from its Muslims' conquerors. Against this background and because of his fear of oppositions from other Christian leaders, the Pope decided to bolster his leadership by declaring that he had received heavenly order to lead the Christian world.⁸

Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York, 1967), pp.37-98, 103-129, 150-170, 175-176, 200-220, 221-240.

⁵ Karen Armstrong *A History of God: The 4, 000 Years Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York, 1993), pp. 79-83, 86-106, 107-31; Shillington, *History of Africa*, pp. 69-79; Mokhtar, ed., *General History of Africa*, pp. 133-40; Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, p. 300; Louth, *The Origin of Christian Mystical Tradition*, pp. 79-80; A. Marmorstein, *The Rabbinic Doctrine of God, The Name and Attributes of God* (London, 1927), pp.171-74; Kenneth Sawyer and Youhana Yousseh, "Early Christianity in North Africa" in ed., Ogbu U. Kalu *African Christianity: An African Story* (Trenton, NJ,2007), pp. 44-74; Robert K. Ritter, *Egypt Under Roman Rule: The Legacy of Ancient Egypt*, in Carl F. Petry, ed., *The Cambridge History of Egypt Vol. 1*, (New York, 1998), pp. 1-115; C. G. Grigg, *Early Egyptian Christianity From Its Origins to 451 CE* (New York, 1990), see chapter 4.

⁶ Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man*, pp. 46-7; Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, pp. 123-36; Armstrong, *A History of God*, pp. 107-131; Louth, *The Origin of Christian Mystical Tradition*, pp. 79-80; Gregg and Groh, *Arianism*, p. 66; Prestige *God in Patristic Thought*, p. 300; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: Global Rise of Terror Religious Violence* (Berkeley, CA, 2000), pp. 190-218; Herald A. Drake, *Constantine, and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore, MD, 2000), pp. 431-36; G. W. Bowerstock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1990), pp.2-5.

⁷ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, pp. 18-9; Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, pp. 13-20, 114, 207-08; Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, pp. 141-54.

⁸ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and Idea of Crusading* (London, 1986), pp. 17-22; Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, pp. 203-30; Michael Gaddis, *there is No Crime for Those Who have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (London, 2005), pp.334-35; John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York, 1993), pp.283-89; J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (1983, London), pp. 183, 245; Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, pp. 254-57, 276-302, Karl Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church*, 300-28

Pope Gregory's attempt to ensure his dominance did not, however, succeed; he was ousted, and his leadership assigned to an appointee of the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV in 1084. The Pope and the Emperor had been at war with each other for nearly eight years regarding whether the former or the latter should lead the Christian world. The encounter between Pope Gregory VIII and Emperor Henry IV clearly showed that Christians not only disagreed with other Christians, but they also fought among themselves.⁹

Thus, conflicts over leadership fought between pontiffs and emperors were not only informed by religion; they were also motivated by material passions or interests. As suggested, such wars had been in the making long before the one that took place between Pope Gregory and Emperor Henry IV. The king of ancient Franks, Charles Martel's led army, not only defeated the advancing army toward southern Gaul, but would also plunder material items of the Christian villages in the region in 772 AD. Moreover, Martel's son Pippin and his troops would force the Lombard ethnic group to surrender one third of their material wealth to them. Such acquisition would help to develop a well-established Catholic and Roman district north of the Alps.¹⁰

Thus, the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne (772-814) would ruthlessly conquer northern Italy; Gaul that included what became known as France, Luxembourg, and Belgium; most of Switzerland, central Europe, and western Hungary between 785 and 792. Like the wars led by Emperor Martel, the ones led by Emperor Charlemagne were similarly driven by material and religious interests. Charlemagne's led wars were likewise designed to extend his imperial control. For example, while there were great deals of baptisms of the people, especially the peasants in the mentioned conquered areas, papal emblems were also hosted in such territories as symbols of imperial controls. No wonder Pope Leo III officially declared Charlemagne as a Holy Roman Emperor in the Basilica of St. Peter on Christmas Day in 800.¹¹ In return for his coronation, Charlemagne informed Pope Leo III that his goal as a Holy Emperor was to foster and protect the Church of Christ in all places.¹²

Again this background, Europeans of privileged and mostly of peasant background would continue to defend and promote mercilessly Christianity in Europe, the Middle East, and other places outside Europe. Pope Urban II would reinforce the mentioned endeavors. Like Pope Gregory before him, Pope Urban II called upon European Christian crusaders not only to free Christians in Eastern Europe from the despotism of Muslims, but he would also tell them to liberate Jerusalem from Muslims, and to defeat those he assumed failed to accept Christ as their redeemer.¹³

Pope Urban's plea for a holy war against non-Christians was carried out. His holy warriors that were initially in the thousands would slaughter nearly eight thousand Jews in their respective communities in Europe in 1096.¹⁴ The crusaders would also massacre some thirty thousand Jews, Muslim Turks, Saracens, and other non-Christians within three days following their capture of Jerusalem on July 15, 1099.

1140 (Princeton, NJ, 1969), pp. 378; Rosamund McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians, 751-987* (London, 1883), p. 62.

⁹ Armstrong, *The Fields of Blood*, pp. 202-03.

¹⁰ Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom*, pp 254-57, 276-302.

¹¹ Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church*, p. 378; McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdom Under the Carolingians*, pp. 62-63; Brown, *World of Late Antiquity*, pp.134-35; Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, p. 86.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Armstrong, *The Fields of Blood*, pp.208-30; Riley-Smith, *First Crusade*, pp. 7-8, 17-27, 48-9; Tomaz Mastnak *Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World and, Western Political Order* (London, 2001), pp. 130-36; Benjamin Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches to Muslims* (Princeton, NJ, 1984), p. 101.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

These horrific episodes were followed by the establishment of five petite self-styled crusade states in the conquered areas of Jerusalem, Edessa, Antioch, Galilee, and Tripoli.¹⁵

Although they were united by Christianity and its holy mission, the Christian conquerors were also divided by their respective ethnic backgrounds and social circumstances. For example, the crusaders included knights or aristocrats, traders, small landowners, peasants, Dutch, English, French, Germans, Portuguese, Spaniards, and others. Despite the mentioned differences, European Christian leaders such as Popes Gregory 11, Gregory 1X, Urban, Innocent 111, Innocent IV, Emperors Frederick Barbarossa, Frederick 11, Kings Philip and Louis V11 of France, and Kings Richard 1 and Henry 11 of England, King Ferdinand of Aragon, and Isabella of Castile did one way or another use Christianity to rally the mentioned ethnic and social groups in support of their respective crusade and secular missions usually at the expenses of non-Christians, especially from the tenth century through the fifteenth century.¹⁶

While it brought Christians of different social and class backgrounds together before the fifteenth century, the Catholic Church continued to validate the class and social divisions that existed in Europe. The Church's legitimatization of its swelling bureaucracy, the privileged status of European kings, queens, landlords, and other nobilities, and its indifference to the poor conditions of the peasants and other oppressed social groups from the tenth century through the fifteenth century bear testimony to the above point.¹⁷

The Church's monopoly over the interpretation of Christian religion and its increasing secular authority did cause divisions among Christians. Martin Luther (1483-1546) an ordained German Catholic priest, had questioned the Church's set of guidelines that a person would gain salvation by believing in God, by performing good work, by living a virtuous life, by visiting holy places, by accepting the rituals that comprised of baptism, mass, and self-control, by asking Christ and the saints for clemency, and by buying pardons from the Church. Luther maintained that salvation could not be won through the observance of the mentioned canons; rather it could only be attained through faith. He added that salvation was a "free gift" of God. He would become exceptionally critical of the Catholic Church as was illustrated by his attachment on the door of a local house of worship his famous 95 theses. The treatise accused the Catholic hierarchy for exchanging indulgences for partial remissions of punishment for sins.¹⁸

¹⁵ Keegan, *The History of Warfare*, pp. 295-97; Armstrong, *The Fields of Blood*, pp. 215-217; and Chattris Fulcher, *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1098-1127* trans. and ed. Frances Rita Ryan (Knoxville, TN, 1969), p. 725; Riley-Smith, *First Crusade*, p. 91.

¹⁶ Armstrong, *The Fields of Blood*, pp.202-16; Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade*, 17-27, 74; Karl Leyser, "Money and Supplies on the First Crusade," in T. Reuter, ed., *Communities and Power in Medieval Europe: Gregorian Revolution and beyond* (London, 1994), pp. 77-96; Bonner, *Jihad in Islam History* (London,2006), pp. 137-38; Keegan, *The History of Warfare*, p. 295-97; Mastnak, *Crusading Peace*, 130-36; Fulcher, *History of Expedition*, pp.66-7; Amin Maalouf, *The Crusade Through the Eyes of Arabs* trans. Jon Rothschild (London, 1984), pp. 2-3, 38-9.

¹⁷ Thomas A. Robinson and Hillary P. Rodrigues, *World Religions: A Guide to the Essentials*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI, 2014), pp. 84-8; Euan Cameron, "The Power of the Word: Renaissance and Reformation" in ed., Euan Cameron, *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History* (London, 1999), pp. 197-205; Richard Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian Between God and Death* (London, 1999), pp. 73-74, 214-215, 486-87; Steven Ozment, *The Reformation of Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven, CT. 1975), pp. 10-11, 123-25, 148-50; Henry Heller, *Iron and Blood: Civil War in Sixteenth-Century France* (Montreal, 1991), pp. 63, 109-111, 26; Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years' War* (London, 1984), pp. 29-33, 59-64, 195.

¹⁸ Marius, *Martin Luther*, pp. 73-74, 214-15, 486-87; Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, 242-46; Robinson and Rodrigues, *World Religions*, pp. 78, 82, 85, 86; Ozment, *The Reformation of Cities*, pp. 148-50.

Luther was expelled from the Catholic Church, because of what the Church leader's considered to be his profound criticism of the Church. Such counter-responses to Luther's charges against the Catholic Church not only made him popular among those who quietly questioned certain practices of the Church, but led to founding of the Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Church would become very influential, particularly in Scandinavian countries.¹⁹ Luther was to be followed by other reformers. Among such reformers was John Calvin (1509-1567) especially in the 1530s. Calvin's doctrine of predestination posed a serious challenge to the Catholic Church, since it suggested that the place of every individual in the secular world had been predetermined by God long before he or she was born. This doctrine contradicted the doctrine of the Catholic Church, since the former unlike the latter maintained that the present and future secular and non-secular circumstances of humankind had long been decided by God.²⁰ Thus, while Calvin urged Christians to advocate for social and leadership modifications to coincide with God's messages in the Bible, Luther called upon Christians to accept the existing social systems. The mentioned different religious and social perspectives and that constituted the Protestant Reformation did further splinter the unity of Christendom in Western Europe beginning in the early sixteenth century. For example, while Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain stayed steadfastly Catholic, England, France, Netherlands, Scotland, and Switzerland had either overriding or considerable numbers of Calvinists. Most Scandinavians and Germans remained Lutherans.²¹

Indeed, King Henry VIII of England not only severed relationship with the Catholic Church and established the Church of England, but he also declared himself the leader of his newly instituted church, for the reason that Pope Clement VII refused to annul his marriage with Queen Catherine of Aragon and to allow him to marry his concubine, Ann Boleyn, because the Queen gave birth to a daughter rather than a son. Although it stayed fundamentally Catholic in its principles and sacraments, the Church of England's independent existence clearly showed that divisions existed among Christians.²²

The mentioned brief descriptions illustrate that while Christianity divided Christians, especially European Christians into different dominations, it at the same time defined them as one religious group. Among the group were Christians who assumed that they were assigned by God to spread Christianity throughout the world. Thus, such a mission was used to justify Europeans' renewed imperial expansions in Africa, Asia, and in the Americas that began in 1415 in Ceuta, a town located in the coastal area of what became part of Morocco in northwest

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ For different perspectives on what scholars have said about Calvin's religious and secular views see the following publications: Brian Gerish, *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago, 1982), pp. 27-248; James B. Torrance, "The Concept Federal Theology-Was Calvin a Federal Theologian?" in Wilhelm H. Neuser ed., *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor (Grand Rapids, MI, 1994)*, pp. 15-40; Frank A. James, Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination: The Augustinian Inheritance of an Italian Reformer (London, 1998); Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: Seventh Century* (New York, 1939), pp. 93-7; Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Formation of a Theological Tradition* (New York, 2000), pp. 118-39; ____, "Placement of Predestination in Reformed Theology: Issue or Non-Issue" in *Calvin Theological Journal* Vol. 40, No 2 (2005), pp.184-210; Alister McGrath, "Calvin and the Christian Calling" in *First Things*, Vol. 4 (1999), pp. 31-5.

²¹For details of how the religious and secular views of Martin Luther and John Calvin were similar and dissimilar, see the following publications: Francois Wendel, *John Calvin: The Origin and Development of His Religious Thought* (New York, 1963); Alister McGrath, *The Life of John Calvin* (London, 1990); Edward Booth, *Martin Luther: The Great Reformer* (Philadelphia, 1999); Michael Mullet *Martin Luther* (London, 2004).

²²H. Maynard Smith, *Henry VIII and the Reformation* (London, 1948), pp. 251-62; E. G. Rupp, *Studies in the Making Protestant Tradition* (Cambridge, U.K., 1947), pp.18-9; F. M. Powicke, *The Reformation in England*, (London, 1941), pp. 2, 6- 10; G. B. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remarking of England* (London, 2007); Thomas More, *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, in ed., Thomas M. C. Lawlor, New Haven, NJ, 1981), P. 416 ; Armstrong, *Fields Blood*, pp.246-249; Ozment, *The Reformation of the Cities*, pp. 10-11, 123-25, 148-150; Brad S. Gregory, *salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1999), pp.77-79, 285-86.

Africa. As part of Europeans' overall imperial undertaking, Christianity was also used to rationalize Europeans' subjugations of Africans, American Indians, and Asians, especially Southeast Asians.²³

Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam would become a major religion. Prophet Muhammad began Islam in Mecca in Saudi Arabia in 622 AD. As Judaism, Islam constituted the oneness of God; nevertheless, it was dissimilar to Judaism and Christianity in that its canons were ordinary. Allah's wills were revealed to Prophet Muhammad whose own words were recorded in the *Quran* or the *Holy Bible* of Muslims. Islam merely called for routine personal appeals to Allah and firm rules of fasting before the holy banquet of Ramadan.²⁴

Islam brought the Arabs a new sense of brotherhood, unity, nationalism, and power. Against this background, the Byzantine imperial leadership in Egypt was overthrown by Muslim Arab army in 642 AD. This was followed by the weakening of the Coptic Church and the Islamization of most people in Egypt, Nubia, the coastal areas of north and northeast Africa. Islam would further advance in Asia, Europe, especially in Spain, Portugal, and West Africa and Central Africa beginning in the 700 AD. The clarity of Islam, and the fact that Islam allowed polygamous marriage and communal social arrangements, that conformed to social practices of the Berbers in North Africa and of blacks in Central, East, and West Africa, enhanced the acceptance of the new religion by a significant number of the mentioned people.²⁵

Nevertheless, Muslims like Christians were divided over the interpretation of Islam. For example, while some Muslims promoted the Tijani doctrine or the spiritual, evangelical, puritanical, or moral aspects of Islam, others endorsed the Qadiriyya's order or the theological approach to the interpretation of Islam by Islamic intellectual nobility. The Jijaniyya maintained that divine salvation could be earned by anyone who practiced high moral standards which included apathy to material pleasures such as tobacco and alcohol consumption, or excess of wives beyond what the Quran approved. Despite such divisions they still defined themselves as Muslims.²⁶

As noted the Egyptians used their religion to justify the oppression of the Jews. The Romans acted similarly as shown by their persecutions of Jews and Christians. The Jews used their religion to combat their oppression and to define their identity.

²³C. R. Boxer, *Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion, 1415-1825: A Succinct Survey* (Los Angeles, 1967), pp.1-22, 23-44, 45-70; Bernard Lewis, "The Invading Crescent," in ed., Oliver The Dawn of African History, pp. 30-6; Basil Davidson, *The Growth of African Civilization: History of West Africa, 1000-1800* (London, 1965), pp. 173-86; William H. McNeill, *The Age of Gunpowder Empires*, in ed., Michael Adas, *Islamic and European Expansion: The Forging of a Global Order* (Philadelphia, 1993), pp. 107-25; Alfred W. Crosby, "The Columbian Exchange and their Historians," in ed., Adas, *Islam and European Expansion*, pp.159-61; Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill, NC., 1975), pp. 15-31, 229; David E. Stannard, *The Conquest of the New World: American Holocaust* (New York, 1992), pp. 149-93, 195-96; Forest G. Wood, *The Arrogance of Faith: Christianity and Race in America from the Colonial Era to the Twentieth-Century* (New York, 1990), pp. 3-38.

²⁴ Muhammad A. Bamyeh, *The Social Origins of Islam: Mind, Economy, and Discourse* (Minneapolis, 1999), pp. 11-2; R. A. Nicholson, *A Literacy History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, UK, 1953), pp. 18-45, 83; Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History* (Princeton, NJ, 2006), pp.25, 193; Reuven Firestone, *The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (New York, 1999), pp. 42-5; W. Montgomery Watt, *Mohammad's Mecca: History of the Quran* (Edinburgh, UK, 1988), p. 25; Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, pp. 180-201; Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa Third Edition* (New York, 2012), pp. 79-83; Richard M. Eaton, "Islamic History as Global History" in ed., Adas, *Islam and European Expansion*, pp. 5-33.

²⁵ Shillington, *History of Africa*, pp.79-83; Robert W. July, *A History of the African People Fifth Edition* (Long Grove, IL, 1988), pp. 198-99; Eaton, "Islamic History as Global History" in ed., Adas, *Islam and European Expansion*, pp. 8-12; J. D. Fage, *A History Africa* (New York, 1978) pp.143-57.

²⁶ Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (London, 1984), pp. 244-59; Robinson and Rodrigues, *World Religions*, pp. 109-41; Shillington, *History of Africa*, pp. 79-83; Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, pp.180-201; Knut S. Vikor, "Sufi Brotherhoods in Africa" in eds., Nehemiah Levtzion, and Randall L. Pouwely, *A History of Islam in Africa* (Athens, OH, 2000), pp. 441-68.

Similar techniques were used by Christians, Muslims, and by other religious groups not only to counteract their oppressors, but to also promote their respective religious and secular interests at the expenses of those they portrayed as nonbelievers.²⁷

Europeans used Christianity to justify the conquests and enslavements of non-Christians. Their use of Christianity to rationalize the subjugation of Native Americans and their sponsorship of the transatlantic slave trade that sent some twelve million enslaved West and Central West Africans to the Americas from 1518 through 1880 bear testimony to this. Although it was mainly motivated by economic greed, Europeans' ventures in Africa, Asia, and in the Americas were also inspired by the desire to promote Christianity. No wonder Christian missionaries in the mentioned regions, especially in Africa in the 1880s were portrayed as agents of imperialism or colonialism.²⁸

Similarly, Muslims not only used Islam to define their spiritual and secular identities, they also used it to justify the wars they waged against those who did not accept Islam. Against this background their war-makings were reinforced. Such wars against non-Muslims were obviously given spiritual blessing by Prophet Muhammad's heroic return to Mecca in 630 AD. Muhammad's triumphant reappearance in Mecca had one other important spiritual implication: Muslims, especially Muslim Jihadists now held the view that warring on non-Muslims at anytime and anywhere was among Allah's wills. The mentioned said view would strengthen early Muslims' resolve for global conquest. And of course, Muslims had used Islam to vindicate the wars they fought to take over new territories, trading centers, and routes. The attack in 627 AD on traveling non-Muslim traders from Mecca by some seventy Muslims who had settled in Medina with Prophet Muhammad in Medina in 622 AD, because the latter wanted the re-tailed items of the former bears testimony to the mentioned points. The massacring of some seven hundred Jewish and Nidir men and the enslavement of their wives and children also in 627 AD, because they were said to be potential allies of the non-Muslim leadership of Mecca, is another indication that Muslims like the other mentioned religious groups were capable of inflicting cruelty on those who were non-Muslims. Their reduction to eunuchs of significant numbers of enslaved non-Muslim male teenagers of African, Asian, and European backgrounds for sexual and spiritual purposes gives example of the noted explanation.²⁹

Thus, the use force to accomplish both spiritual and secular objectives was employed by nearly all the Muslim leaders who came after Prophet Muhammad 632 AD. Khalifa or Abu Bakr who succeeded the Prophet in 632, chose, for example, to conquer several non-Muslim communities in Arabia on the ground that only through this Arabia would become stable. Against this backdrop, he would reinforce the newly commenced Pan-Islamic movement. Similarly, Uman ibn al-Khattab (634-644), the successor of Bakr held the view that harmony would be well promoted and upheld in Arabia through the conquest of those who internally and externally posed material and spiritual challenges to Islam. Nevertheless, his advances in Arabia were primarily motivated by his desire to take over the areas, especially the areas where productive agricultural activities were obvious.

²⁷ See citations 2 and 3.

²⁸ Parry, *The Establishment of the European Hegemony, 1415-1715*, pp.26-38, 60-7, 162-69; Boxer, *Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion, 1415-1825*, pp. 1-21, 23-44; July, *A History of the African People, 150-172*; Amos J. Beyan, "Transatlantic Trade and Coastal Area of Pre-Liberia" in the *Historian* Vol. 57, No. 4 (Summer, 1995), pp. 757-68, Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade*, (New York, 1997), pp.114-27; Walter Rodney, *A History of Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (London, 1970), pp. 106-21; Colin Palmer, *Slaves of the White God* (Cambridge, MA), pp. 70, 112; John Hamming, *The Conquest of the Incas*, (London, 1970), p.150; --, *Red Gold* (London, 1978), p. 37; David Brian Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, NY, 1966), p. 106; ---, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca, NY, 1975), pp. 100- 01, 203, 222, 261; Bernal Diaz, *The Conquest of New Spain*, Reprinted (Baltimore, 1973), pp. 353-413; Moses Finlay, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London, 1981), p. 23; Shillington, *History of Africa*, pp. 296-303; Forest Wood, *The Arrogance of Faith: Christianity and Race in America from the Colonial Era to the Twentieth Century* (Boston, MA, 1990), pp. 216-17; Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York, 1947), pp.45-6.

²⁹ Firestone, *Jihad*, pp. 42-45, 49-65, 73-157; Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, p. 25; Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, pp.184-190; Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York, 1990), pp. 3-15, 24, 56, 59; John Hunwick and Eve Troutt Power, *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton, NJ, 2002), pp. 97-120.

The foregoing activities clearly showed that the motives for territorial expansion by Jihadist Arabs were secular and non-secular in nature.³⁰

Muslims under the leaderships of Umar ibn al- Khattab and other leaders after him did force the Roman soldiers to escape from Syria in 636 AD. They also defeated the dwindling Persian military in 637 AD, Egypt in 641 AD, and Iran in 652 AD. Indeed, through their military efforts, Muslim Arabs extended their imperial domain from the Himalayas in Asia to the Pyrenees in Europe. The victories by Arab Muslims were followed as before, by the adaptation of Islam and Arabic by a significant number of the people in the conquered regions.³¹

No wonder Muslims from the Arabian Peninsula would use Islam to validate their conquest of Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, northwest Africa, Gibraltar, Sicily, Corsica, Cyprus, Carthage, Cyprus, parts of Portugal and Spain, western Iran, and other parts of western and central Asia from 632 AD through 1200 AD. Jerusalem that had been captured by Christians in 1099 was recaptured in 1187 by Muslim Jihadists who were led by Salad al-Din ibn Ayyub. The Jihadists would also use power to penetrate Hindu and Buddhist societies in India. They also advanced in Central, East, and West Africa by means of trade and carnage beginning in 700 AD.³²

Like the Europeans who used Christianity to justify the enslavement of non-Christians, Muslims used Islam to justify the enslavement of Europeans, Africans, and Asians who were non-Muslims. The enslavement of substantial numbers of Africans from Bilah-al-Sudan or Land of the Blacks to North Africa commencing in the 700s AD, serves as evidence of this. Likewise, ample number of blacks from East Africa were enslaved in Yemen, Arabia, Iraq starting in the early 700s AD.³³

Likewise, Europeans would further advance their respective material and religious interests abroad. For example, under the sponsorship of Queen Isabella and that of Ferdinand, Portugal and Spain would accidentally carry out their religious, but mainly their imperial missions to the Americas beginning in the 1490s. The two kingdoms signed what became known as the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. It divided the newly discovered places in Africa, Asia, and the Americas between the two kingdoms. The treaty was backed by the Catholic Church and the Spanish powerful naval fleet or Armada. As such, the dominances of the two predominantly two Catholic kingdoms in the newly discovered places would continue until the Spanish naval fleet was destroyed mostly by sea waves in 1588.³⁴

The demise of the monopoly Portuguese and Spain had established over the newly founded lands, especially those in the Americas was followed by religious, but mainly imperial expansions by other Christian nations that included France, England, Netherla

Like the imperial advances of Portugal and Spain, those of France, England, Netherlands, and other Christian nations in the America were characterized by not only extreme forms of cruel treatments of Native Americans, but also the gross exploitations of the natural and human resources of the mentioned early inhabitants of the Americas. Christianity was obviously among the justifications used to carry out such actions.³⁵

³⁰ Watt, *Muhammad, at Medina*, pp. 6-8; Bamyeh, *Origin of Islam Social*, pp. 198-99; Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, p. 193; Hodgson, *The Venture Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 198-99.

³¹ Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, pp. 140-142; Keegan, *A History of Warfare*, pp. 195-96; Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, pp. 186-89; Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, pp. 64-69, David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (London, 2005), pp. 22-24.

³² Shillington, *History of Africa*, pp. 165-66; Fage, *A History of Africa*, pp. 145-47; Eaton, "Islamic History as Global History," in ed., *Adas, Islamic and European Expansion*, pp. 1-33; Robinson and Rodrigues, *World Religions* pp. 109-21; Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, pp. 37-42, 37-61.

³³ *Ibid.* and Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, pp. 194, 96; Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, pp. 140-42; Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, p. 26.

³⁴ Beyan, "Transatlantic Trade and the Coastal Area of Pre-Liberia" in *The Historian*, pp. 757-68; Boxer, *Four Century Centuries of Portuguese Expansion, 1415-1825*, pp. 1-21; Parry, *The Establishment of the European Hegemony, 1415-1715*, pp. 45, 50; Wood, *The Arrogance of Faith*, pp. 216-20.

³⁵ Stephen Neil, *Colonization and Christians* (London, 1966), pp. 112-13; Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 97-146; Louis Bright, *Gold, Glory, and Gospel: The Adventurous Lives and the Time of Renaissance Explorers* (New 34

Aspects of the described features of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam could be applied to Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and other religions. Indeed, against the backdrops of their similarities and differences can the issues of religious identity, nationalism, and causes of religiously instigated tensions and conflicts in the current world can be understood.³⁶

Thus, among the legacies of the Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and nearly all other religions are their inspired religious divisions, conflicts, and the tensions. Examples of mentioned point include the ongoing conflicts between Muslims in Pakistan and Hindu in India over Kashmir and the unending wars between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims that intensified when Israel was established in 1947. The Bosnia-Herzegovina conflicts which took place in the 1980s fundamentally belong to the foregoing category. The conflicts by and large included the following major three players: Christian Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslim Bosnia.³⁷

Hence, religion was obviously among the causes of the conflict in the Russian Confederation's religion of Chechnya. The conflict was intensified by secular stakeholders turning Muslim and Orthodox Christian Russians against each other. The Cyprus' conflict between the Greek Orthodox Christians in Cyprus and the Muslims in the southern part of the country is another example of stakeholders such as Turkey and Greece taking advantage of the conflict to maximize their respective religious and secular interests. The conflict that developed between Irish Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland has been said to be among the longest religious wars.³⁸

York, 1970), pp. 264-66; James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial America* (New York, 1985), pp. 303, 323; Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building* (Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1985), pp. 35-45; Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1975), pp. 202-27; Ann Kibby, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism: A Study Rhetoric, Prejudice and Violence* (Cambridge, UK, 1986), pp. 92-120; Ronald Sanders, *Lost Tribes and the Promised Lands: The Origins of American Racism* (Boston, 1978), 339-40; Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry, eds., *Rise of the Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and an American Indian Nation* (Norman, OK, 1990), pp. 72; Michael P. Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of American Indians* (New York, 1975), pp. 132, 218-19, 355; Michel Beaud, *A History of Capitalism, 1500-1980* (New York, 1983), pp.17-9, 41-2.

³⁶ For details of these aspects of religion see the following publications: Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic and Civil Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (London, 2002); Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, and Michael Jerryson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence* (New York, 2013); Jerryson and Juergensmeyer, eds., *Buddhist Warfare* (New York, 2010); Vesselin Popovski, Gregory M. Reichberg, and Nicholas Turner, *World Religions and Norms of War* (New, York).

³⁷ Ibid.; Michael A. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religious Genocide in Bosnia* (London, 1996), pp. xx11-x111, 1-146; Jusuf Salif, "Ethnicity, Religion, and Violence in Bosnia Herzegovina" in *Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective* Vol. 11, No. 2 (2017), pp. 89-103.

³⁸ Adrian Tarin Sanz, "When We Are the Violent: The Chechen Islamist Guerrillas' Discourse on Their Own Armed Actions" in *Journal of Eurasian Studies* Volume 8, Issue 2 (2017), pp. 185-95; John Russell, "Terrorists, Bandits, Spooks, and Thieves: Russian Demonization Before and Since 9/11" in *Third World Quarterly* Vol. 26, No. 1 (2010), pp. 101-16; Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: Global Rise of Religious Violence*, pp. 190-218; Katrien Hertog, "A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: The Seeds of Islamic Radicalization in Chechnya" in *Religion, State, and Society* Vol. 33, No. 3 (2005), pp. 239-52; Michael Given, "Star of the Parthenon, Cypriot Mélange: Education and Representation in Colonial Cyprus" in *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* Vol. 7, Issue 1 (1987), pp.59-82; Frank Tachau "The Face of Turkish Nationalism as Reflected in the Cyprus Dispute " in *Middle East Journal* Vol. 13 (1959), pp. 262-72; Paul S. Cassia, "Religion Politics, and Cyprus during the Turkokratia" *Achieves of European Sociology* Vol. 27 (1986), pp. 3-28; Marcus Tanner, *Ireland's Holy War: The Struggle for a Nation's Soul, 1500 to 2000* (2003).

Other conflicts which were significantly informed by religion include the followings: Buddhists versus Christians in Burma in 1948; Muslims against Christians in the Philippines in 1970; Buddhists combated Christians in Bangladesh in 1973; Muslims versus Christians in Azerbaijan in 1990; Muslims against Christians in Tadjikistan in 1992; Hindus opposed Muslims in Sri Lanka in 983; Muslims versus Christians in Nigeria since the 1980s; and Muslims versus Christians in the Sudan since the 1920s.³⁹

The conflict that took place between Sudanese Christians and Muslims is said to have been among the deadliest religious wars. Over two million, mostly Christians, were killed from the 1980s through the 1990s. Against this background, southern Sudanese with strong support of the International Community decided to declare the independence of their region from the rest of the country. The religious conflict in Nigeria has also been quite expensive, especially in human terms. A significant number Christian and Muslim Nigerians have died since the 1980s as a result of religious clashes.⁴⁰

It is evident that religion played significant roles in the mentioned conflicts. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to say that the conflicts were driven by religious forces alone; other factors such as ethnic, racial, and language sentiments, and the desire for the preservation of national identity played key roles in this. Cultural and social differences and material motives equally played influential roles in this as well. For example, the conflict in the Sudan that would take on religious form began in 1955 when southern black Sudanese rebelled against northern Sudanese, mostly Arab Muslims, because the latter denied them not only representation in the national government and regional autonomy, but pressured them to accept the Muslim faith. The centralization of political and economic powers in the north to the detriment of the south did reinforce the conflict between the two groups, especially from 1983 through 2005. Thus, while the Muslims in the north used Islam and their race to win the support of other Arab Muslims' countries, the black Christians in the south did draw on Christianity and racial solidarity to bring their diverse ethnic groups together against the leadership in the north.⁴¹

Thus, aspects of the mentioned explanations could be applied to the conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and to other religious conflicts in West African countries. Nigerians of Anglican, Catholic, and protestant faiths constituted about forty percent religious population in the 1980s. This number comprised of members of Nigeria's many different ethnic groups. As such, a number of Nigerian Christians choose to use their interethnic connections and Christianity as rallying force to counter the increasing threats posed to their secular and non-secular Interests by Muslims who represented approximately fifty percent of the religious population. Professor B. Salawu maintained that the conflicts caused by Christians versus Muslims in the 1980s were accentuated by the activities of following ethnically/religiously motivated militia organizations: O's Dua People Congress; Bakassi Boys; Egbesu Boys; Ijaw Youth; Igbo People Congress; Arewa Peoples' Congress; and Movement for the Articulation of the Sovereignty State of Biafra.⁴²

³⁹ For the religious aspects of these conflicts see the following publications: Scott R. Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Boston, 2000); Lee Griffith, *The War Terrorism and the Terror of God* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2002); Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (Berkeley, CA, 2001); Robert D. Kaplan, *The End of the Earth: Journey at the Dawn of the 21th Century* (New York, 1996); Richard Cockett, *Sudan: Darfur and the Failure of an African State* (New Haven, Conn.,2010), pp. 2-3, 6-55, 56-95, 96-142, 143-67; See Amos J. Beyan's review of the mentioned Cockett's book in the *Historian* Vol. 74, No.1 (2012), pp. 90-92; B. Salawu, "Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Causal Analysis and Proposals for New Management Strategies" in *European Journal of Social Sciences* Volume 13, Number 3 (2010), pp. 345-53; Armstrong, *The Fields of Blood*, pp. 338-65, 366-92.

⁴⁰ Cockett, *Sudan: Darfur and the Failure of an African State*, pp. 1-4, 56-95, 96-142; Douglas Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Bloomington, IN, 2003), p. 34; M.W. Daly, *Darfur Sorrow: A History of Destruction and Genocide* (London, 2007), pp. 209-11.

⁴¹ Cockett, *Sudan: Darful and the Failure of an African State*, pp. 1-4, 56-95, 96-142.

⁴² Salawu, "Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Causal analysis and Proposals for New Management Strategies," pp. 345-53.

The mentioned developments would reinforce violent clashes between Nigerian Christians and Muslims. Such clashes took place in the 1980s and in the 1990s in Kano and Maiduguri respectively, Jimeta-Y Ola, Kaduna State, at Kafanchan College of Education, Kaduna Polytechnic College; University of Ibandan, Usman Danfodio University, Bulumkutu, and in Kwara State. The introduction of Sharia's laws by Governor Yerima in Zamfara in 1999 and by Governor Makkarfi in Kaduna 2000, would further lead to the deaths of many Christians and Muslim in Nigeria. The continued occurrences of sporadic conflicts between the predominately Christian Tarek farmers and the mostly Muslim Hausa-cattle-herders in Plateau State in Nigeria is another case in point. Tarok famers often accused Hausa herders as outsiders and stealers of their cattle and land, and added that the herders' overall goal was to become economically and politically preeminent in the state. Informed by both religious and secular interests, the noted antipathy made the Plateau State among the most violent regions in Nigeria.⁴³

Exploiting the mentioned conflicts, a Nigeria's based Jihadist movement known as Boko Haram, violently undertook since 2009 to make Nigeria, especially the northern part of Nigeria a separate Islamic state. The group would exploit similar religious/ethnic conflicts in nearby countries such as Niger, Cameroon, Central African Republic, and Chad. Thus, their activities and counteractions to them by mostly the Nigerian Army had caused more than 20,000 deaths, and the displacement of approximately 2.3 million Nigerians since 2009. Boko Haram's exploitation of Islam to justify the mentioned activities and its abduction of some 276 Nigerian girls in April 2014 clearly showed that religion has been a key validating player in its movement.⁴⁴

Similarly, Liberian Christians and ethnic groups such as the Gio, Grebo, Gola, Belle, Kissi, Kpelle, Krahn, Loma, Mino, and other indigenous Liberian ethnic groups continued to portray Mandingo Muslims, especially those who came to Liberia from Guinea and other neighboring countries in large number beginning in the 1960s as strangers and interlopers. The mentioned Christians and ethnic groups maintained that the Mandingo Muslims unlike the Vai Liberian Muslims and other non-Mandingo ethnic groups whose ancestors came to Pre-Liberia from Medieval greater Niger area in the 1500s were simply interested in exploiting or stealing Liberia's natural, material, and cultural assets such as gold, diamond, kola nuts, ivory, and Poro and Sande moveable sacred cultural artifacts or objects. Mandingo Muslims were further accused of using Islam in ways to gain political, economic, and social clouts at the expense of Christians and the mentioned non-Mandingo-Muslim ethnic groups. The politically and opportunistically motivated and the illicit granting of Liberian citizenship to a significant number of foreign Mandingos and the devious appointments of a number of them in key public positions during the tyrannical leadership of Samuel K. Doe,(1981-2003), would fuel the antipathy against the already exceptionally unpopular leadership and the leadership's staunch Doe's ethnic Krahn group and his Muslim Mandingo supporters.⁴⁵

Also in line with the above perspective, is the observation by a distinguished Liberian scholar that leading Mandingo Muslim clerics were among the main descriers of the criticisms levied against the oppressive leadership of Doe by broadminded Liberian Christian clergymen. In return for the mentioned support, Doe would appoint Alhaji Krumah, a Mandingo, as an Assistant Minister of Information and Cultural Affairs.

⁴³ Ibid.; Terhemba Nom Ambe-Uva, "Identity Politics and the Jos Crisis: Evidence Lessons Challenges of Good Governance in Nigeria" in *African Journal of History and Culture* Vol. 2, No. 3 (2010), pp. 42-52.

⁴⁴ Jonathan Reynolds, "Good and Bad Muslims: Islam and Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria" in *International Journal of Historical Studies* Vol. 34 (2001), pp. 601-18; Roman Loimeier, "Boko Haram: The Development a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria" in *Africa Spectrum* Vol. No. 2/3 (2012), pp. 137-55; Scott MacEachen, *Searching for Boko Haram: A History of Violence in Central Africa* (New York, 2018), pp. 197-203; Alexander Thurston, *Boko Haram, The History of an African Jihadist Movement* (Princeton, CONN. 2017).

⁴⁵ John C. Yoder, *Popular Political Culture, Civil Society, and States Crisis in Liberia* (Lewiston, NY, 2003), pp. 192-94; Paul Gifford, *Christianity and the Politics in Doe's Liberia* (New York, 1993), pp. 261-93; Timothy A. Lorkolon, "The Forbidden Marriage" in *Liberian Observer*, October 3 (2017), pp. 1-2; Veronica Nmona, "The Civil War and Refugee Crisis in Liberia" in *The Journal of Conflict Studies* Vol.17, No. 1 (1997), pp. 3-4; Stephen Ellis, "Liberia 1989-1994: A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence" in *African Affairs* No. 94 (1990), pp. 165-87; "Liberia: Human Rights Disaster," in *Africa Watch* (1990), pp. 26-8; Arthur B. Dennis, "Why Mandingoes in Liberia are Labeled Foreigners" in *The Liberian Connection* (TLC) retrieved (July 1, 2018), pp. 1-3; *Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2016—Liberia County Report Gutersloh: Stiftung* (2016), p. 6.

Krumah would influence Doe to add a significant number of Mandingos including foreign Mandingos to the Liberian Army that was dominated by Doe's Krahn ethnic group. Among the main prejudicial side-effects of the noted unprincipled companionship that existed between the Doe leadership and Mandingo Muslim clerics was the evolving view among most Christian and other non-Mandingo Muslim Liberians that all Mandingos in Liberia were Doe's supporters, and that they were doing everything to keep him in power perpetually.⁴⁶

The confirmation of Liberian citizenship to a large number of alien Mandingos during the Doe's leadership in the 1980s that obviously enhanced their economic and political clouts in Liberia would further enrage the noted ethnic groups and Christians, since Mandingos, especially the ones who seasonally traded in northwestern, eastern, and central Liberia mainly from what became Guinea continued to voice out to the 1980s that they and their descendants were Guineans, and not Liberians. Such a pronouncement was noticeably designed to excuse Mandingos even the ones who were born in Liberia from being subjected to what the Gbandi, Gola, Kissi, Kpelle, Loma, and other indigenous ethnic groups of Liberia termed *porotorgee* or interior forced labor policy of the Liberian Government that required ordinary Liberian citizens in the interior to sporadically carry out certain public tasks with no pay for such services. The tasks included the constructions of public roads, buildings, barracks, working on public farms, and the transportations of government officials in hammers who included tax-collectors. Thus, aspects of the mentioned forced labor policy were used to meet the labor needs of the vast American Firestone Rubber Plantation that was established in Liberia in 1926, and of the Spanish coffee plantation established on the Island of Fernando Po in West Africa. The workers forcibly recruited were mostly from the Kpelle, Kru, and Grebo coastal ethnic groups.⁴⁷

The exploitation of Islam to bring together Mandingos from Guinea who individually and seasonally traded in what became Liberia in the early nineteenth century and the Mandingos who migrated to Liberia in a large number starting in the 1960s, because of Liberia's relatively iron ore mining economic boom and for the reason that Sekou Toure, the first president of Guinea was increasing becoming dictatorial, would additionally deepen the animosity against Mandingos, since the call for such an alliance was seen by Christian and other non-Mandingo Muslim Liberians as another effort to promoted the secular and non-secular interests of Mandingos at the expense of the said non-Mandingo religious and ethnic groups who constituted majority of the population of Liberia.

⁴⁶ George K. Kieh, "Religious Leaders, Peacemaking, and the First Liberian Civil War" in *Journal of Religion, Conflict, and Peace* Vol. 5, Issues 1 and 2 (Fall 2011 and Spring 2012), pp. 1-13; Richard A. Corby, *Manding Traders and Clerics: The Development of Islam in Liberia to the 1870s*, in *Journal of Liberian Studies* Vol.13, No. 1 (1988), pp. 42-66.

⁴⁷ Warren L. d'Azevedo "A Tribal Reaction to Nationalism," in *Liberian Studies Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1969), pp. 1-22;___ , "Phantom of the Hinterland: The Mandingo Presence in Earlier Liberian Accounts" in *Liberian Studies Journal* Vol. 19, No. 2 (1994), pp. 192-242; Augustine Konneh, "Citizenship at Margins: Status and Ambiguity of the Mandingo of Liberia" in *African Studies Review* Vol. 39, No. 2(1996), pp. 141-54; Mohammad Alpha Bah, *The Status of Muslims in Sierra Leone and Liberia*, in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* Vol. 12, No. 2 (1991), pp. 464-54; Harrison Akingbade, "The Pacification of the Liberian Hinterland," in *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 79, No. 2 (1994), pp. 277-96; Stephen S. Hlophe, *Class, Ethnicity, and Politics in Liberia: A Class Analysis of Power Struggles in the Tubman and Tolbert Administration From 1944-1975* (Washington, D.C., 1979), pp.111-34; Rennie Smith, "Negro Self-Government in Crisis in Liberia," in *Current History* Vol. 34 (1934), pp. 734-35; Abeodu Bowen-Jones, "The Struggle for Political and Cultural Unification in Liberia" Doctoral Dissertation, Northwestern University, (1962), pp. 220-40; Arthur Knott, "Harvey S. Firestone's Liberian Investment, 1922-1936" in *Liberian Studies Journal* Vol. 14, No. 1 (1989), pp. 13-33; I.K. Sundiata, *Black Scandal: America and the Liberian Labor Crisis, 1929-1936* (Philadelphia, 1980), pp. 1-32; Wayne Taylor, *The Firestone Operation in Liberia* (New York, 1956), pp. 57, 58-9, 65.

The religious/ethnic tension that characterized the relationship that existed between Liberian Christians and indigenous ethnic groups on one hand and Mandingo Muslims on the other, was obviously among the main developments that intensified the on-and-off Liberian Civil War, a war that led to the deaths of some 250,000 Liberians from 1993 to 2003.⁴⁸

While the Civil War came to an end in 2003, the animosity against Mandingos would continue overtly and covertly; and indeed would intensify after Madam Ellen Sirleaf won the Liberian presidential election in 2005. The hatred was hardened somewhat, because like President Doe before her, President Sirleaf's, politically - motivated - pick of several Mandingo Muslims for high strategic public positions. Such positions comprised of her nomination and the subsequent confirmation of Kibenh Janah, a former leading warlord in the Liberian civil war who was said to have a contemporary foreign background, as associate justice to the Supreme Court of Liberia; her choice of Amara Konneh over several intellectually, professionally, and exceptionally qualified and deep-rooted Liberians, for a combined position of Liberian Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs; her appointment of Al-Hassan Conteh as a Liberian Ambassador to Nigeria, the most important economic and military power in West Africa; her selection of Ahlhaji Krumah another brutal warlord in the mentioned civil war as "ambassador-at-large;" and her choice of several Mandingos as leaders in areas where bulks of the inhabitants happened to be Christians and non-Mandingo Muslim ethnic groups. Against this backdrop together with the information that she was once wedded to James Sirleaf, a Liberian with Mandingo background, a substantial number of Liberian Christians and non-Mandingo Muslim ethnic groups continued to complain that she remained more dedicated to the interests of Mandingos and their resolute Liberian supporters than majority of the Liberian people. The mentioned view of President Sirleaf was further reinforced by the leaders of her Mandingo supporters' displays of their newly acquired material, political, religious, and social clouts in Liberia. Such displays included the constructions of additional mosques in strategic areas in the Liberia; the establishment Mandingo caucus in the Liberian House Representative; the falsification of Pre-Liberian history to sustain the allegation that the Mandingo ethnic group was among the ethnic groups such as the Bassa, Belle, Dei, Gbandi, Geo, Grebo, Kissi, Kpelle, Kru, Mano, Loma, Mende, Vai, etc. who settled in Pre-Liberia in the 1500s from the greater Medieval Niger area; and the suggestion that Liberia was among the so-called "Mandingo Nations," a suggestion that implied that Liberia was mainly a Mandingo Muslim nation.⁴⁹

Reciprocally, Mandingos through their leaders that included Kabinah Janeh, Sheik Ali Krayee, Varney Sirleaf, Sekou Konneh, etc. would meet with President Sirleaf on May 10, 2016 to show their gratitude not only for her appointments of Mandingo Muslims, especially Amara Konneh in her government, but also for what the delegates called her strong support for the Mandingo Muslims' "Community" in Liberia. The declaration of allegiance by the mentioned Mandingo leaders to President Sirleaf, and not to Liberia, and the leaders' aggressive or threatening demands to place Islam on equal footing with Christianity in Liberia have further reinforced resentment toward Mandingos.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War* (New York, 2006), pp. 37-110; Kieh, "Religious Leaders, Peacemaking and the First Liberian Civil War" in *Journal of Religion, Conflict, and Peace*, pp. 1-13; --, *Liberia's State Failure, Collapse, and Reconstruction* (Cherry Hill, NJ., 2012).

⁴⁹ Ibid.; Yoder, *Popular Political Culture, Civil Society, and State Crisis in Liberia*, pp. 189-252; Felix F. Gerdes, *Liberia's Post-War Elites: A New Era of Inclusive Ownership or Old Wine in New Bottles* (Hamburg, Germany, 2011), pp. 30-50. Thus, the distortion of Liberian history in this regard has been negated by the following scholarly publications: Andreas W. Massing, "Materials for a History of Western Liberia Samori and the Malinke Frontier in the Toma Sector" in *Liberian Studies Journal* Vol. 111, No. 1, (978/79) pp. 49-67; Christian Kordt Hojbjerg, *Resisting State Iconoclasm Among the Loma of Guinea* (Durham, NC, 2007), pp. 78-89, 262-69; Adam Jones, "Who Were the Vai?" in *Journal of African History* Vol. 22 (1981), pp. 159-78; P. E. H. Hair, "Some Minor Sources for Guinea, 1519-1559: Enciso and Alfonse/Fontenneau" in *History in Africa* Vol. 3 (1976), pp. 30-1; _____, "An Ethnolinguistic Inventory of the Lower Guinea Coast before 1700: Part 1," *African Language Review*, Vol. 7 (1968), pp. 47, 52, 58; Northcote W. Thomas, "Who Were the Manes?" *Journal of the African Society* Vol. 20 (1920), pp. 33-42; Beyan, "Manes and 16th Migrations History of" in ed. Kevin, Shillington, *Encyclopedia of African History* Vol. 2 (New York, 2005), pp. 938-40.

⁵⁰ "Mandingo Community Expresses Appreciation to President Sirleaf," April, 10 (Monrovia, Liberia, 2016), p. 2.

Because of the increasing material, political, and above all, the religious clouts of Mandingo Muslims, Liberians representing their respective ethnic, social, and religious groups voted largely on April 3, 2015 in favor for declaration of Liberia as a Christian state. The call for such a declaration, or what Amos J. Beyan and others referred to as a plea for re- reaffirmation of Liberia's Christian origin and identity by Christians and their non-Mandingo ethnic allies was in line with the historical fact that Liberia in theory and in practice was established in 1822 as a Christian entity by its African American founders under the auspice of American Colonization Society. No wonder the capital of Liberia was initially named by its African American founders "Christopolis" or the "Town of Christ" before it was renamed Monrovia in honor of James Monroe who was the President of the United States when Liberia was established in 1822. Thus, the Declaration of Liberia's Independence was endorsed by seven Christian men in the Providence Baptist Church in 1847. Likewise, its Declaration of Independence, national holidays and songs including its National Anthem, schools, ethics, and political system continue to reflect one way another its overall Christian origin, identity, and practice. Liberia's ongoing Christian tradition that requires high-pitched public officials to repeat the phrase, "So help me God" and kiss the Bible when taking office, and the assigning of Christian names such Saint Paul and Saint John to two of Liberia's important rivers bear testimonies to the mentioned points.⁵¹

Facets of the mentioned accounts can be applied to the Ivory Coast. The crisis associated with the Ivoirian presidential election in 2010 was in making in the 1960s when substantial number of Muslims from neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Mali began to move to the northern and then to the southern parts of the Ivory Coast in search for better opportunities. Their number would increase to about forty percent of the country's population. Against this background, Muslims in the Ivory Coast were depicted as foreigners by indigenous Ivoirians who included Christians and other non-Muslims. Also underpinning resentment toward the Muslim immigrants was the view that they were using Islam as a means to economically, religiously, and politically dominate the Ivory Coast.⁵²

While the mentioned charges were ethically and religiously exploited by southern Ivoirian leaders such as Henri K. Bedie and Laurent Gbagbo to gain political goals, the counter- responses to the charges were similarly manipulated by Alassane Ouattara, a northern Ivoirian Muslim who is said to have a foreign background.⁵³

The noted religious and ethnic tension was hideously exploited by stakeholders such as the United Nations, France, and other Western powers to the advantage of Ouattara and to the disadvantage of Gbagbo, an initiative that helped Ouattara to become President of the Ivory Coast. Yet Christians versus alien- Muslims was obviously among the main forces that precipitated the violence that led to the deaths of some three thousand Ivoirians during the crisis associated with the presidential election held between Gbagbo and Ouattara in 2010.⁵⁴

Drawing on the explanations put forward in the study, it can be reasonably maintained that religion has been among the sources of alliances, divisions, and conflicts in human societies since some 40,000 years ago.

⁵¹ Jerry P. Kulah, "Understanding the Contextual Realities of the Church in Liberia," in *Lausanne World Pulse, Providing Evangelism and Missions, News, Information, and Analysis, Issue 12* (2008), pp. 1-7; Thomas T. Johnson, "Seven Propositions Passed for Referendum" in *Daily Observer* (November, 2, 2016); Beyan, *African American Settlements in West Africa: John Brown Russwurm and American Civilizing Efforts* (New York, 2005), pp. 39-99, 100-17; --,"The American Colonization Society and the Socio-Religious Characterization of Liberia: A Historical Survey, 1822-1950" in *Liberian Studies Journal* Vol. 1, No. 2 (1985), pp. 1-12.

⁵² Femi N. O. Mimiko, "Regional Ethnic Diffusion: State Authoritarianism and Crisis of Post-Colonial Reconstruction in Cote d' Ivoire" in *Journal of Third World Studies* Vol. 23, No. 2 (2006), pp. 189-202; Ragnhild Nordas, "Religious Demography and Conflict: Lessons from Cote d' Ivoire and Ghana, in *International Area Studies* Vol. 17, No.(2014),pp. 149-63; Joseph R. Bassey, "An Assessment of Neglect of History on Political Stability in African Countries: Case of Cote d' Ivoire" in *African Journal of History and Culture* Vol. 6, No.9 (2014), pp.149-63.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to say that such alliances, divisions, conflicts were caused by religion alone; other factors such as the attempts at protections of cultural, ethnic, racial, and national identities and the desires for economic, political, and social dominations of others played and continue to play key roles as well.