

# Religious Exclusivism and Logical Implication of Religious Pluralism: The Nigerian Context

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# Introduction

**The Nigerian Context:** *Constitutions* - “Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief...” (Article: 37).

**Three major religions:** Christianity, Islam and the Traditional Religions.

**Concepts:** Religion, Religious Exclusivism, & Religious Pluralism.



# Theory

- **Two theories:**
- i) “Live and let live” a theory used during the First World War to spontaneously arrive at a non-aggressive co-operative.
- Ashworth (2000) research showed the existence of the theory in the content of diaries, letters, and testimonies of veterans from the First World War.
- ii) *Èjì-Ogbè an Ifá Chapter, Se jé kin se tè mi* –act and leave me to act,
- These theories helped in developing the idea of INFORMED EXCLUSIVISM against RIGID EXCLUSIVISM found largely in Christianity and Islam .

# Statement of problem

- The *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* allows religious pluralism. but the members of various religious groups are largely exclusive in their attitude.
- Religious pluralism, implies the existence of different equally valid religions, but exclusivism gives an impression, that other religions are recognised, but are not possible means of salvation.
- This paper examines how a Christian/Muslim/*Aládìmuúlà* who realizes that THERE ARE OTHERS who seem as knowledgeable and devout BUT hold incompatible religious perspectives should respond.

# Methodology

- A pilot study to validate hypothesis: 'members of each religion in Nigeria are religious exclusivists'.
- This was complemented by literature review on the belief about i) God and ii) salvation in the three religions.
- The findings were analysed using tables and descriptively method.

# Result on God: Tables 1, 2 & 3

S/N	%	Religion	Comment
1	73%	Christians	Christians and Muslims worship the same God.
2	32%	Christians	Christians and Traditionalist worship the same God.
3	32%	Christians	Muslims and Traditionalist serve the same God.

	%	Religion	Comment
1	47%	Muslims	Muslims and Christians worship the same God.
2	40%	Muslims	Christians and Traditionalists worship the same God.
3	21%	Muslims	Muslims and Traditionalist worship the same God.

	%	Religion	Comment
1	84%	Traditionalists	Traditionalists worship same God as the Christians.
2	84%	Traditionalists	Traditionalists worship the same God as the Muslims.
3	100%	Traditionalists	Christians and Muslims worship the same God.

# Possibility of Salvation: Tables 4, 5 & 6

S/N	%	Religion	Comment
1	97%	Christians	Christians think that Christians will be saved.
2	82%	Christians	Christians think that Muslims will be saved.
3	59%	Christians	Christians think that Traditionalist will be saved.

S/N	%	Religion	Comment
1	90%	Muslims	Muslims think that Muslims will be saved.
2	36%	Muslims	Muslims think that Christians will be saved.
3	31%	Muslims	Muslims think that Traditionalists will be saved.

	%	Religion	Comment
1	100 %	Traditionalists	Traditionalist believe that they will be saved.
2	84%	Traditionalists	Traditionalist believe that Muslims will be saved.
3	84%	Traditionalists	Traditionalist believe that Christians will be saved.



# Result, Comparing studies

Religion	Pilot	Literature
Christianity	Exclusivist	Pluralist
Islam	Exclusivist	Pluralist
Traditional Religions	Pluralist	Pluralist

This table shows a comparative analysis of the results of the Pilot study and the literature review on the idea of God and salvation in the three religions.



# Issues of Religious Exclusivism in Nigeria

- **In Christianity:** Jesus Christ is *“the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him”* (John 14:6).
- **In Islam:** “Muslims maintain that “whether a person is ‘saved’ or not is principally determined by whether he or she responded appropriately to Islamic belief” (Aijaz 2014, 194).
- **The Traditional believers** are committed to their way of religion, BUT also recognise other religions. “Live and let live” (*Se jé kin se tè mi*)

# Implications of Exclusivism

- Members of different religions quarrel with one another over doctrine.
- Members of different religions evangelize others forcefully.
- Members of different religions see other religions as less.
- **The survey:** most people believe that a person must come to understand and follow the unique way of a specific religion to be able to make it to salvation.

# Relationality & Pluralism

- Karl Rahner: the ‘**ANONYMOUS CHRISTIANS**’. “all have been invited to salvation and can possibly be saved. Although “Christianity, cannot recognize any other religion as providing the way to salvation.
- It **HOWEVER**, believes that God is love and desires everyone to be saved, God can apply the results of Jesus’s atoning death and resurrection to everyone, even to those who have never heard of Jesus and his death or have never acknowledged his lordship” (Peterson et al. 2013, 334–335).
- Mutahhari, “Non-Muslims are at a disadvantage because it is the Islamic Divine Law that leads people to God. And those who fully understand this law (Islam) but choose not to accept the truth will be damned.
- **HOWEVER**, in accordance with Islamic jurisprudence, God will be merciful to those who seek the truth but from whom, through no fault of their own, the truth is hidden. Such people cannot be called unbelievers; they are “**DISPOSITIONAL MUSLIMS**” since it is possible to possess the requisite spirit of submission without being Muslim in name” (Mutahhari, 2006).

# Logical Implications

- In the Nigerian Context:
- There cannot be a strict religious exclusivist, at best one should be an INFORMED RELIGIOUS EXCLUSIVIST.
- Religious exclusivists should know that others also have “at least the right to assess [their] beliefs in the face of religious diversity” (Basinger, 2018).

# Conclusion

- Exclusivists - INFORMED EXCLUSIVISTS, even as they are doctrinally different in their beliefs.
- They must learn to remove prejudice.
- There should be dialogue among these religions.
- Religious people should consider one another as equal and there should be no forceful conversion of people from one religion to the other.

Thank for listening