



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Dialogue and Conflict Resolution: Insights from Matthew 18:15–20 for Nigeria

Etta Robert B.

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar –Nigeria

Corresponding Author

Etta Robert B., Email: bobbikometta@gmail.com

Author's Contributions

All authors contributed equally to this research.

Article History

Received: July 21, 2025; Accepted: August 24, 2025; Published: August 30, 2025.

ABSTRACT

Dialogue has emerged as an important phraseology in international politics, as the global community increasingly recognizes its value as a conflict resolution method. This paper explores the expanding role of dialogue in addressing some of the largest threats to humanity, such as war and interpersonal conflicts. Dialogue is presented as both a tool for initiating change and a means of maintaining order and stability, thus allowing diplomacy to utilize reason to navigate complex international politics. The United Nations has championed dialogue, designating 2001 as the "Year of Civilizational Dialogue," with then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan emphasizing its importance for achieving lasting peace and prosperity. Religious leaders, such as Pope John Paul II, have also underscored the significance of interreligious dialogue, rooted in principles of mutual respect and freedom of religious practice. Exploring the process outlined in Matthew 18:15-20, the paper examines the special place given to dialogue by Jesus in the search for reconciliation and resolution of conflict. The three-step approach outlined in this text – one on one dialogue, third-party mediation, and communal intervention - highlights the power of communication in achieving forgiveness and restoring relationships. Ultimately, the paper argues that dialogue is a crucial tool for resolving conflicts at all levels, from the interpersonal disputes to the global warfare. While it may not always lead to immediate resolution, the process of dialogue itself is invaluable, allowing parties to better understand each other's perspectives and work towards constructive solutions.

Keywords: Dialogue; conflict resolution; diplomacy; interreligious dialogue; reconciliation

INTRODUCTION

Conflict and the resultant effect is a daily part of human society. In the search for solution different suggestions have been put forth. Prominent among these is the use of dialogue as a model for resolving conflicts. Recently, dialogue has become one of the new buzzwords in international politics today (Rieker & Thuine, 2015). Global interest in dialogue as a conflict resolution method has increased, making it one of the principal solutions to some of the largest threats to humans, from war and terrible breakups.

Dialogue has become both method of change and a tool for maintaining order, this is so because, it allows diplomacy to use reason to change international politics (Sending 2015). The UN designated 2001 the Year of Dialogue among civilizations. Kofi Annan, then-UN Secretary-General, in a roundtable discussion to honour the event declared, "Without dialogue, no peace could be lasting and no prosperity secure". For Olusegun Obasanjo "dialogue is not an abstract notion, but a fresh and badly needed approach to better understand each other, and to help

build a more effective framework for cooperation” (UNDP, 2019). People of different religions are encouraged to practice dialogue. The Second Vatican Council's document *Nostra Aetate* gives clear indications that inspires dialogue between different religions. They are: respect for one's personal conscience; rejection of all faith-based coercion or discrimination; freedom to practise and witness to one's religion; and respect for all authentic religious traditions. The Document *Gaudium et spes* (The Church in the Modern World) avers.

“Since Christ died for all (Rom 8:32) and since all men are in fact called to one end and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the Paschal Mystery. So people are not to be condemned just because they are not Christians. Recognising that God through the Holy Spirit is at work in them, it is possible to engage in a dialogue which is not mere politeness, but a death to egoism in order to live for others. This is truly a dialogue of salvation (n. 22).”

John Paul II in his Missionary Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (2017), explains that

“Dialogue does not originate from tactical concerns or self-interest but is an activity with its own guiding principles, requirement and dignity. It is demanded by the deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the spirit who blows where he wills.”

Both in mundane or spiritual matters, dialogue is the bride that is loved by both and a vital ingredient in solving conflicts that seem to erupt daily. A close look at the Holy Writ shows the Lord Jesus constantly calling his followers to the use of dialogue in times of conflict (Matthew 18: 15-20; Luke 17:3). This is in agreement with the Old Testament teachings (Leviticus 19:17; Deuteronomy 19: 15). One of the most applicable passages in this regard is Matthew 18:15-20. Here the Matthean Jesus set forth a process of reconciliation where dialogue is a major and consistent ingredient. Can this process help in resolving some of the daily conflicts that have engulfed humanity? The main purpose of this paper is to examine the role of dialogue in conflict resolution, and how this can be a vital tool in resolving conflict. With the help of biblical hermeneutics, this paper will

to show the special place given to dialogue by Jesus in resolving conflict situations in Matthew 18:15-20.

The Importance of Dialogue

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released of February 2009 'Why Dialogue Matters for Conflict Prevention and Peace Building' outlined the following as importance of dialogue:

- I. Dialogue is an inclusive process: It “brings together a diverse set of voices to create a microcosm of the larger society”; people have to develop a sense of joint ownership of the process.
- II. Dialogue entails learning, not just talking: “Unlike other forms of discussion, dialogue requires self-reflection, spirit of inquiry and personal change to be present. Participants must be willing to address the root causes of a crisis, not just the symptoms on the surface”.
- III. Dialogue recognises “one another’s humanity: Participants must show empathy towards one another, recognise differences as well as areas of common ground, and demonstrates a capacity for change”.
- IV. Dialogue stresses a long-term perspective: “Other forms of conversation tend to focus on the symptoms rather than the root cause of problems. To find solution require time and patience. The process can be painstakingly slow, lasting from ten minutes to ten years”.

UNDP (2019) holds that “In dialogue there are no winners; it seeks to bridge communities, share perspective and discover new ideas”. As Nelson Mandela once said “dialogue is resolved through shifts that were unimaginable at the start”. More dialogue is the trend in contemporary international affairs. The challenge is “to capitalize on the respect for dialogue by working to ensure that mediators and others involved are well equipped as possible to deliver effective and long-lasting results”.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many people find David Bohm's claim that dialogue should have no agenda, no leader, and no purpose very strange. This suggestion offers a sense of aimlessness and hopes that something may emerge from this. Bohm's believe that dialogue doesn't require conviction and persuasion is odd – what else makes dialogue important? (Bohm, 1996). Despite Bohm's ground-breaking articulation of conversation

and its role in society, his method (no agenda, no leader, nothing to achieve) makes discussion impossible. Daniel Yankelovich's (2001) idea is revolutionary. He believes "dialogue works its magic because it alone has unique capabilities other forms of talk do not possess". For dialogue to occur someone must be willing to shift ground, build trust and empathy. This researcher agrees with most of Yankelovich's revolutionary approach to dialogue methods in public, business, and private life. However, basing significant national choices on the goodwill of a few media stars will alienate a large portion of population who may not relate to them. Still, Yankelovich's idea will be crucial to this inquiry. In "Diplomacy and Dialogue" by Sending (2015), dialogue makes diplomacy the institutional vehicle for the public use of reason that can temper and transform international politics. Communication and dialogue are means for advancing predefined interest and negotiating with others. This researcher applauds Smocke and Serwer's (2012) work – extension of Track I and Track II diplomacy in "Facilitating Dialogue". Expanding the space allows for more voices to be heard and makes room for inclusivity. Benedict XVI Africae Munus promotes African interfaith dialogue. He proposes ideas that this scholar believes will help reduce religion-related conflict in Nigeria.

Susan Hayward and Lucy Kurtzer-Ellenboger's dialogue facilitation work overemphasised the facilitator's knowledge and credibility. Facilitators are to establish guidelines that attract participants. This level of concentration and dependence on one person makes others observers and limits the participation of many in dialogue. This researcher disagrees with their method. Fahmi's (2015) "Dialogue as Tool for Addressing Religious Tensions" identified outcome and process-oriented discussion, but this may deter dialogue. His thoughts are innovative. Abu-Nimer's (1999) "Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change, Arab-Jewish Encounter in Israel" shows blatant prejudice and assumes Israel is the aggressor and oppressor in the Palestinian Israeli conflict. He presents Israeli and Western programmes to help refugees as aimed to sustain the status quo, while Arabs and Palestinians are seen as helpless victims at home. A one-sided attitude makes dialogue difficult or impossible. Crocker, Hampson, and Aall (2004) redefining "intractable conflict" sees conflict as tenacious or tough but manageable. This gives

everyone hope, especially in long-standing conflicts. This researcher supports their promotion of mediation.

Cloke (2013) proposes a novel mediation model in which the mediator's goal is not success because failure and success are connected. This researcher agrees with Cloke that mediators' zeal for success can undermine the process. Omonokhua's (2014) argument that conversation's goal is not to convert people is persuasive and permits individuals to engage in inter-religious discourse without fear. His call for Nigerians to live in peace and harmony despite religious, ethnic, cultural, and political diversity is vital and acceptable to this researcher. Joseph H. P. Golwa edited *Interfaith Dialogue for Peace and Security in Northern Nigeria*. It sought to bring Christians and Moslems parties together to promote peace. For them, violence often call religious may ultimately be more political than religious. This researcher agree with their thinking.

METHADODOLOGY

The researcher used mostly qualitative methods. Most qualitative research is exploratory. It literally describes study findings. Asika (1991) says, qualitative description analysis is used to verbally summarise the information generated in the research. It is a method of inquiry employed in many academic disciplines, especially the arts, social sciences and natural sciences.

Theories of Dialogue

Dialogue theories have been developed by scholars from various academic backgrounds. From religious studies and interfaith interaction to philosophy, social theory, communication, diplomacy, public opinion analysis, and quantum physics. Perhaps this phenomenon indicates that dialogue answers a pervasive need in our society. This work will adopt two theories.

David bohm model

Derived from the Greek dialogos, David Bohm (1996) defines dialogue as "a stream of meaning flowing among and through persons and between persons". This allows the community to share meaning and gain fresh insights. For Bohm something new, which may not have been in the starting point at all arises. This creative, shared meaning binds people and society. He distinguishes between discourse and discussion; he believes discourse goes beyond conversational vernacular and exchange. It examines an

exceptionally wide range of human experience; these include closely-held values; the nature and intensity of emotions; mental process; memory; and inherited cultural myths. Most significantly, dialogue for him examines how thoughts which are seen as limited medium rather than an objective reflection of reality are formed and sustained. Bohm believes daily communication breakdowns occur at every level of human life – personal, family, societal, governmental, etc., and that communication between people, groups, and government can produce new understanding only when people are able to freely listen to each other, without prejudice, and without trying to influence each other. In dialogue, Bohm holds, nobody is trying to win, everyone wins if anyone wins. In dialogue, avoid defending beliefs since group thought is stronger than individual thought. Bohm then proposes a dialogue without an agenda, with no goal, and no leader, for when goals or helpful purposes are set, there will be assumptions about what is useful, this will limit people. He recommends sitting in circles of five to forty persons for this discourse. In the process, people begin to observe the deep assumptions in themselves and others that block internal and external communications and fragment their lives when discussing anything of interest. Real transformation of consciousness begins by experiencing without judgement the movement of thoughts, its assumptions, and contradictions. This shift must be personal and collective. Bohm wants it done together. The power to create something in common.

Daniel Yankelovich model

For Yankelovich (2001), dialogue is a special conversation which has capacity to work magic, “because it alone has unique capabilities other forms of talk do not possess”. He sees dialogue as a process in which people penetrate behind the polite superficialities and defences in which they habitually armour themselves. They listen and respond to one another with an authenticity that forges a bond between them. He distinguishes between dialogue and conversation and debate. In debates, parties assume they have the right answers and aim to win by proving others wrong. Dialogue assumes that both sides are telling the truth and that working together to understand can lead to a better solution. For dialogue to occur three conditions are essential: Firstly, participants must meet as equals; secondly, they must listen with empathy to grasp each other's

perspectives. Empathy is the closest thing to an ‘open sesame’ for dialogue. In the heat of disagreement, a surprising gesture of empathy is your best chance to start a conversation. Third, they must analyse their own and others' assumptions without judgement. For Yankelovich, An important aspect of dialogue skill is being willing to entertain the possibility that one's own assumptions might be wrong and those of other participants might be right. Meeting the above conditions will eliminate many people. He holds that revealing one's own assumptions first, rather than speculating on someone else's will set an example of openness in clarifying what could become hidden roadblocks. For him, conflict should be seen as between people's ideals and beliefs rather than individuals. He separates time spent in dialogue that builds trust and understanding from time spent on decision-making, this should make decision-making more productive. Yankelovich believes that that ability to dialogue well is a skill only few people have. Most people don't and many organisations do poorly.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Structure and Organization of Matthew 18:15-20

The pericope of Matthew 18:15-20 can be divided into the two principal sections:

- vv. 15-17 – Dialogue in Conflict Resolution
- vv. 18-20 – Interface between the Earthly and Heavenly Communities

Each of these two sections can be further divided.

- vv. 15-17 – on Dialogue in Conflict Resolution can be further divided thus:
 - v. 15 – One-on-One Dialogue
 - v. 16 – Third Party Dialogue
 - v. 17 – Communal Interface

vv. 18-20 on Interface between the Earthly and Heavenly Communities can be further divided thus:

- v. 18 – Agreement between Heaven and Earth
- v. 19 – Community, Prayer and God
- v. 20 – Community, Prayer and Jesus

Exegetical Appreciation of Matthew 18:15-20'

Jesus' method in Matthew 18:15-20 seeks not only to correct the stray but also emphasises restoration and reconciliation. Humble, loving pastoral concern (Matthew 18:1-14) and mercy and forgiveness (Matthew 18: 23-35) underpin Jesus' instruction on how to address strays. For Kemp this arrangement “emphasises the fact that the nature of this process is

not something done to a fellow believer in a punitive sense, but rather a practice engaged in for the welfare of the person and the community concerned, with reconciliation and restoration clearly in view". It shows that the community does not exist solely for the discipline of its member, but that the community is defined by its members' disciplined commitment to support one another to live the way prescribed by Jesus. And this initiative begins with the individuals.

One on One Dialogue

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother" (Matthew 18:15 RSV).

The term ἀδελφός (adelphos) refer to a male from the same womb (Mtt. 1:2). It is also used to refer to persons viewed or seen as a brother in terms of close affinity; and association. This second meaning is implied in Jesus reference in Matt. 12:50 (Bauer & Danker, 2000). It could also refer to a fellow disciple man or woman.

The word "does something wrong": means to sin; to commit a wrong (in the sense 'transgress') against divinity, custom, or law. Leviticus 6:2-7 is an example. Verse 2 equate "does something wrong" with being Unfaithful to the Lord. 1Cor. 8:12 is a good illustration of this (Bauer, Danker 49).

The phrase 'against you' is uncertain, only 50% of manuscripts include it (D L W O 078). Two scenarios are possible. Without the phrase 'against you', the following passages seem to allude to pursuing the 'stray' of the preceding verses. The focus is on the offender and role of finding the culprit is a corporate one; while a second scenario that has 'against you', would focus on the one offended against. The offended must find the offender. Offended parties is the one that seeks reconciliation. This is an affirmation of Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus advised his disciples to reconcile with those who have something 'against you'. Both options have the same process. The purpose is to lovingly restore a person to the community so that 'none may be lost'. When read with the call to forgiveness that follows, Jesus is giving his disciples the individual corporate means to nourish one another and maintain community togetherness. This researcher will adopt the second scenario that includes 'against you'.

Nolland (2005), considers 'against you' as secondary. A brother or sister who sins is like a child who stumbles (v.6) or a sheep that is led astray (vv.10-14).

He recommends viewing brother or sister as a fellow disciple of Jesus as in 12: 49-50, not as a fellow Israelite as in 5:22 and other verses. Matthew often uses the noun 'sin' or 'sinner', but this is his first use of the verb. Except for v. 21, he will use the verb again only of Judas's sin. (27:4). "Sinning is seen here as separating the perpetrator from the people of God ". He argues that "the privacy of the initiative protects the dignity of the person, even at the point of serious sin allowing sin to be addressed without public shame. For Nolland, the privacy of this dialogue allows the sin to be handled without much publicity, the matter is to be dealt with at the lowest possible effective level and the circle of knowledge restricted as much as possible.

Closer reading demonstrates that the text "does not elaborate the sin committed." This is because the process didn't prioritise that. The question is "who?" not "what?" Instead of asking, ' what kind of sin or offences need to be addressed by this process, better question: "Is this situation jeopardising my relationship with this person and God? Thus, sin remains serious and the inquiry broadens and intensifies the application of the process to incorporate more than overt sin" (Kemp, 2010). Jesus' first instruction to his followers is; "Go and have it out with him alone" (Matthew 18:15). At first appearance, Jesus' advice seems obvious. Go straight to the cause of a conflict or disagreement and seek resolution, thereby avoiding rumour which can divide communities. One-on-one meetings allow both sides to clarify the facts and avoid public humiliation. But a deeper reading that considers scripture's broader context yields more insights. First, talking to a brother one-on-one is hard. If done with humility and a willingness to resolve the disagreement, it shows a community's commitment to honouring that person's dignity. According to Leviticus 19:17-18, reproving one's neighbour is the same as "love your neighbour as yourself." Talking things over is an act of love. Most people feel justified by sharing the occurrence with a third party or taking a support person. Jesus' message contradicts that by emphasising private face-to-face discussion to restore unity through forgiveness and reconciliation. Thus, "the dialogue is principally motivated, not by the offended party's need to feel vindicated, nor by the offenders need to be shown their faults, but rather by a desire to restore the broken relationship" (Kemp 2010). Second, while face-to-face discussion has hazards, it allows one

'see that of God in the face of one's enemy' (Lederach, 1997). The natural response in conflict is withdrawing from the other party, Jesus urges his followers to engage with the person and bridge the gap created by such personal encounter. This follows Jesus' prior teaching on revenge in Matthew 5:38-48, which urges relentlessly movement towards one's enemy, not away from them. Thirdly, "Preparation for a challenging encounter can be an invitation to see things as they really are. As fresh wounds reveal what lies beneath the surface, so it is with emotional wounds people inflict on one another. For Robert Schrieter (2006), "wounds are question mark about existence". And a dedication to resolution "involves finding our wounds and seeing if they can be a source of healing rather than of ever greater misery".

"Hence, whatever the sin or conflict is about, and whatever wounds are inflicted in the process, there is potential for self-examination and transformation to occur if the invitation to something greater and deeper than the presenting issue is embraced" (Kemp 2010).

On the other hand, if the meeting is about confronting a fellow believer about sinful behaviour, both the lead up and the encounter can be opportunities to grapple with just what constitutes sin and on what basis the person is to be challenged. At its basic, the lead to challenge a fellow believer's action is first and foremost a call to examine one's own life before God. Jesus highlights this in Matthew 7:1-5. Thus, the first step in this process is much more than a confrontation over a particular issue. For going to a brother in private creates room for the possible resolution of the conflict and restoration of a broken relationship: "If he listens to you, you have gained your brother" (Matthew 18:15). Conscious of one's humanity, and the possible unpleasant result of one-on-one dialogue due to the limited capacity of the individuals to see or hear the other's point of view, and influence of emotions over judgement; many people at this point walk away. Jesus' teaching present the next possible option.

Third Party Dialogue

"If he does not listen, take one or two along with you; that every word be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses" (Matthew 18:16).

"ῥήμα" – the testimony, that which is said, word, saying, expression, or statement of any kind (Danker & Bauer, 2000).

At first glance, this second step in the process seems to open the situation up to greater polarization and more conflict. Bringing in two or three others could be interpreted as drawing a battle line or as licence for intimidation or coercion. This is far from Jesus' intention. The instruction is a reaffirmation of the Deuteronomical law (Deuteronomy 19:15-19). In its original context, the witnesses were called for the protection of the accused not for the bolstering up of the accuser's position. According to Bauer,

"A single witness cannot suffice to convict a man of a crime or offence of any kind; whatever the misdemeanour, the evidence of two witnesses or three is required to sustain the charge. If a malicious witness appears against a man to accuse him of rebellion, both parties to this dispute before Yahweh must be brought before the Priests and Judges then in office. The Judges must make a careful inquiry, and if it turns out that the witness who accused his brother is a living witness, you must deal with him as he would have dealt with his brother. You must banish this evil from your midst" (Deuteronomy 19:15-19).

Wright Christopher (2004) commenting on Deuteronomy 19:15 notes that,

"The purpose of the plurality of witnesses (cf. 17:6) is clearly for the protection of the accused, especially the protection of the weaker individual from the vindictiveness of a more powerful opponent ... This text is notable ... for its insistence on greater care and diligence in establishing the truth of each case, on the assumption that all matters of justice are decided in the presence of the Lord, the Supreme Judge."

Jesus reversed the witnesses' order to stone a woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11 because he believed the accused should be protected. The witnesses were clearly harsh and merciless, and Jesus' reaction was clear: "let he who has not sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). Jesus exposed the accuser's duplicity and meanness (8:11), without endorsing the woman's adultery. Bringing "forth two or three witnesses is one of discernment and clarification as safeguards against false accusation; with" forgiveness, reconciliation, and fellowship as priorities. Since "every word may stand"

(Matthew 18:16), compile all sides' words on the topic.

All effort is focused on understanding the problem and reintegrating the straying one. The community process of discernment identifies the 'straying one' because both accuser and accused may have strayed, or the accuser may need to be persuaded to follow Jesus' teachings. Yoder (1985), warns against litigiousness and libertarianism when sin is disputed. Jesus' command to discourse with two or three could mitigate both risks. Litigiousness arises when rules take primacy, justice is linked with punishment, and rules are imposed strictly regardless of mitigating conditions. It is simpler to apply a harsh norm to an absent person and 'other' than those present (Schreiter, 2006). Jesus' advice to bring a third party and have a second conversation helps avoid litigiousness. The desire to take further steps shows a commitment to the estranged party: both belong to a community of faith and are worth the time and efforts to resolve and restore fellowship. Both have the chance to convey their story in the dialogue. Understanding the context of the perceived offence might help clarification and repentance. The witnesses attest to the facts as well as a shared humanity, dependency on God, and commitment to one another in community (Kemp, 2010). Yoder believes the "decision to pursue reconciliation is based not on the magnitude of a particular sin, but on whether or not there has been a loss of fellowship". In contrast, avoiding litigation risks "sacrificing all moral-bindingness and all community by adopting in advance, in a general way, a rule-against-rules" (Yoder, 1985).

A one-on-one contact with a third party reduces the possibility of looking the other way because of "love". Coming together, seek clarity, truthfulness, and prayerful discernment shows the offender that the matter is serious. It makes it obvious that any sin that causes communal division should be addressed and resolved. The presence of two or three witnesses calls the straying one to reconcile and embrace his/her rightful identity as a Christian and disciplined community member (Hays, 1996).

Communal Interface

"But if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen to even the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:17 RSV).

The outcome of the first two steps will affect the integrity of the entire community. If the offender remains unrepentant at the second stage, and shows no willingness to work towards reconciliation through repentance and forgiveness, the conflict is to be brought to 'the church'.

The word ἐκκλησία, ekklesia means Church, community of "a specific Christian group or assembly; gathering ordinarily involving worship and discussion of matters of concern to the community" (Danker & Bauer, 2000). Translated with "Church", it is a reference to the Old Testament "holy assembly". (The Greek Old Testament translates "assembly" with ekklesia (Dt. 4:10; 9:10) – the official gathering of the people of the covenant: Dt. 18:16.

Τελώνης (telōnēs) refers to a tax-collector; revenue officer. These are higher officials usually foreigners who own tax farms. When mentioned in the synoptic it refers to their underling hired by them; who as a rule were taken from the native population (Jews). It was their responsibility to collect the taxes from fellow Jews. The prevailing tax collection system during the time gave room for greed and unfairness by these Jewish tax collectors, hence, they were particularly hated and despised as a group. Their daily contact with non-Israelites in the cause of their work rendered them ceremoniously unclean for conservative Jews (Danker & Bauer, 2000).

Gentile or pagan ἔθνικος (ethnikos) someone who has never been a member of the brotherhood in a community. In the New Testament it is a non-Israelite/gentile in contrast to descendants of Abraham (Mtt. 5:47; 6:7). People, groups, foreign to a specific national group, unbelieving, worldly, polytheistic. Those who do not belong to the group professing faith in the God of Israel (Danker & Bauer, 2000). The personal pronoun *you* is used in the singular, therefore the treatment of a sinner as a gentile or tax collector is a matter for the individual offended and not the community.

However, the person may not respond positively to the second step's greater initiative, then the church is called in. Nolland (2005) sees "intensification" is marked by change of verb from "does not listen" to "refuses to listen". Containment is no longer viable; now the whole Church must support the effort to restore an erring brother or sister. Use of ekklesia (Church) here and in Matthew 16:18 is crucial. Kemp believes that given Jesus' prior concern to respect the offender's integrity in the first two steps of the

process, this final step likely refers to the community where offenders find their home.. However, Nolland believes “the use of the word *ekklesia* by Matthew in 16:19 and later in 18:17 should be understood in relation to a fresh gathering of a restored Israel”. The restoration of Israel doctrine states that the Jewish people are God's elect and will remain separate forever. They will return to Israel, their ancestral home. Third, that Israel would ultimately acknowledge Yeshua (Jesus) and submit to his kingdom. What if the person remains hard-hearted following church intervention? After others become involved, the focus shifts again to the sinner and the one who takes the initial step to restore the sinner. The first to recognise the problem must take a stand (Nolland, 2005). To him or her, the offender is a Gentile or tax collector. Many scholars interpret this verse as formal excommunication, cutting the party out from the communion with community (White and Blue; Morris; Hagner, France). Tax collectors were reviled by Jews and Gentiles and "were outside of the Jewish community of faith," but Jesus ate with them and became known as "friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Mtt. 11:19). Matthew's missionary interest for other nations is also shown. Now treat the person as an outsider, not as one who must stay outside permanently. The spirit will be same as one of love of enemies (5:43-48).

Scholars disagree on the step in Matthew 18:17, they also agree on the need for perseverance in search of reconciliation. Carter (2004), believes that formal excommunication is not intended, but the offender's frequent disobedience has shattered the relationship, therefore informal recognition that the relationship has been broken is necessary. He concludes that excommunication is just a tool to help the offender recognise the harm they have done to others and the community and towards a resolution of the situation. Carter's conclusion is logical given Jesus' exhortation (Matthew 18:12-14; 21-35) that the disciples be part of a society defined by forgiveness and seeking out the lost. Jeschke (1972), says "excommunication is the form under which the church continues to make grace available to the impenitent". Whether Jesus is referring to formal excommunication or simply a change in the basis on which the relationship is pursued, the erring believer first excludes themselves by continuing to behave contrary to Jesus' teaching and by refusing to do things that bring peace. In spite

of this, the community is called to persevere in their efforts to restore them".

"...it is not the case that certain sins in themselves are thought to merit excommunication; it is persistent impenitence on the part of the offenders that attracts the penalty. For this reason excommunication can be seen as a kind of self-judgement, or more accurately as an external, symbolic enactment by the Church of what the offender has already done at a moral and spiritual level-separated himself or herself from the sanctity of the community" (Marshall 2001).

For Marshall (2001), therefore, communal discernment of acceptability or otherwise of an action is very important. The focus like in the "first two steps (Matthew 18:15-16) is not on the exact shape of any excommunication or disciplinary action, but rather on the commitment to restoration" through dialogue. The next verses (Matthew 18:18-20) make this same emphasis. Whatever step taken after the second face to face dialogue, should be characterised "by prayerful discernment and openness to the spirit of Jesus in seeking to rehabilitate and restore the offender" to the community.

Earthly Community and Heavenly Community Connection

"Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mtt. 18:18-20 RSV).

The word *deō* means to bind, to constrain by law and duty. The unmerciful servant's parable (Mtt. 18:23-35) shows this binding: "In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he pays back all he owes". The unmerciful servant had to repay everything (Danker & Bauer, 222).

The term "*λύω*" refers to loosening or untying anything, set free (Danker & Bauer, 606-607). The legal link between man and wife in marriage, was also denoted by both words: "are you free from a wife, i.e. not bound to a wife?" (1Cor. 7:27; Rom 7:2). The legal meaning of "to bind" and "to loose" is needed to understand this section.

Verse 18 begins with Matthew's favourite "Amen, I say to you," and it is a near duplicate of 16:19, except

it changes from singular "you" to plural; from Peter to the church. Nolland (2005), believes binding and loosening regulates behaviour. It involves imparting Jesus' significance on potential disciples. Jesus ordered the church to prohibit and command with his support. Binding and loosening were related with teaching and forgiveness of sins in ancient Judaism. In this passage, the phrases also denoted judicial authority to include or reject people from the faith group (Mitch & Sri, 2010). Binding and loosing come from rabbinic Judaism. These idiomatic expression have at least three meanings according to ancient texts. Binding and loosing can indicate teaching authority. Rabbis, who rendered authoritative pronouncements on lawful and illegal action and teaching, were said to bind and loose. The expression can also allude to juridical authority. This means the power to accept or deny a person's fellowship in the community of faith, including authority to excommunicate and restore membership (Mitch & Sri, 2010). Finally, binding and loosing may indicate spiritual authority to pardon or retain sins. In the Greek bible the verb "to loose (luein)" means "to forgive" e.g., Job 42:9 LXX, Sir 28:2, and Revelation 1:5. This pertains to the apostles charged to teach the gospel, keep discipline in the Church, and absolve or retain sins in Jesus' name (John 20:23). In Mtt. 16:19, Peter alone is given the authority, but now in Mtt. 18:18, it is given to all the disciples. "It refers to their authority to make decisions regarding the status of unrepentant sinners in the Christian community (Mitch & Sri, 2010).

Yoder suggests binding and releasing have two meanings. The first is forgiveness in the sense of the communal decision to withhold fellowship (bind) or to forgive (loose). Second, and in line with rabbinical tradition, the community discerns the moral need of the situation, where to bind was to prohibit or constrain and to release was to allow. Clearly, Yoder's first meaning aspect requires the second. The communal decision clarifies and ratifies the basis for exclusion and inclusion. Offenders must decide whether to belong by their conduct or exclude themselves by not living as those who belong. This transforms binding and loosing from a punitive activity to one that clarifies the community's identity and frees its members to reconcile without criticism. For Carte what is ratified is not the permanent exclusion of the offender, but the difficult job of restoration. Marshall

(2001), sees the implications beyond just church discipline.

"... when seen as the heart of the entire subsection of Matthew's narrative, the saying can be applied to every aspect of discipleship discussed in the larger context. All actions of disciples should be characterised by an agreement between heaven and earth – that is, by an effort to act on earth in a way that corresponds to God's will in heaven."

For him, this binding and losing is a dynamic interaction and agreement between earth and heaven and is at the heart of being the church. By promising to be present when two or three gather to tie and loose, Jesus places this authority on himself. The claimants to any disciplinary authority stand only when those who seek it bow to Jesus and each other in a community of loving discernment. Finally, since this practice of discernment is set in the context of seeking out a fellow believer for a perceived transgression supports employing Matthew 18:15-20 in conflict situations rather than just in cases of overt sin in the community.

The Imperative of Dialogue

In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus clearly outlines a process set out in stages that will lead to the restoration of peace among brothers in conflict, and return of the parties to harmony with the community. He sees dialogue as the vehicle that can help bring about stability to individuals and the community, because dialogue creates a sense of shared ownership of the process that leads to change which is sustainable and inclusive. It allows people to become critical voices in bringing new ways of addressing common difficulties. Dialogue give a human face to a problem, allowing those involve show empathy, and demonstrate a capacity for change. In discourse, people see differences as well as areas of common ground, and demonstrate a capacity for change. Learning through dialogue transforms how people talk, think, and communicate, requiring self-reflection, curiosity, and openness to the other person's ideas, unlike other types of debate. Dialogue emphasises long-term thinking, and seeks sustainable solutions by addressing core causes, unlike other conversations that focus on symptoms. Dialogue demands patience, it may not solve all world crises, but gives people an opportunity to listen to each other. It is a simple weapon for policymakers, a flexible and adaptable procedure that is especially beneficial when conflict

parties are not ready for formal negotiations. Dialogue requires a strong power balance and political resolve, participants should be encouraged to speak their mind without fear of retribution or rejection. This process is different from other conversation because dialogue has no winners. Negotiation seeks a specific settlement, but conversation bridges groups, shares viewpoints, and discovers new ideas time and again, as Nelson Mandela put it, "conflicts are resolved through shifts that were unimaginable at the starts" (UN-conversation 2). Dialogue is informal communication between political and civil society parties. Successful processes always require a willingness to learn and be persuaded by the stronger argument (Rieker & Thune, 2015). Though it might reduce tension and prevent confrontation, this readiness can be regarded as weakness (Kagan, 2008).

The Nigerian Experience:

Resource Control and the Movement for the emancipation of the niger delta

In Nigeria, ethnic militia groups like the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Odua People's Congress (OPC), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) fought the state due to the complex mix of religion, politics, ethnicity, control of natural resources, and environmental care. Although it got noisy in the early 1990s, the "Niger Delta struggle" is as old as Nigeria. Isaac Adaka Boro and others declared the Niger Delta Republic in 1967 while advocating for regional independence. Though brief (12 days), the revolt inspired minority groups in the region to seek liberation. Years later, poet and author Ken Saro Wiwa led the resource control movement and "formed MOSOP aimed at the self-determination of the Ogoni people. The group's non-violent demonstration turned violent when youngsters assassinated famous Ogoniland residents, accusing them of government collusion against their people. Leaders of MOSSOP were arrested by the government, a kangaroo court was set that tried and sentenced Ken Saro Wiwa with nine others to death, and were eventually hanged. The punishments were widely condemned by the international community, Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth and General Sani Abacha's Government sanctioned. The killing of Saro Wiwa escalated the violence, leading to the emergence of new more extreme militant groups

like the Niger Delta Volunteer Force under Asari Dokubo and MEND under Henry Okah. These two groups imposed maximum pressure on Nigeria's oil wells, resulting in a large loss in daily oil production and government revenue (Nwankpa 2018).

The "Niger Delta struggle is motivated by the demand for resource control, equitable wealth distribution and protest against the flagrant and damaging (ecological) activities of oil Multinational Companies (MNCs) operating in the region" (Nwankpa 2018). Decades of oil exploitation, environmental degradation and state neglect have created an impoverished marginalised and exploited citizenry (leading to) a resistance with youths at the vanguard (Ikelegbe 208). This led to intense hostilities, violent confrontations, and criminal violence, between the Nigerian Armed Forces, community, ethnic, and youth militias, armed gangs, pirates, cultists, and robbers. The Nigerian economy suffered, and the government was unable to meet its daily obligations to the citizenry. In response, the Nigerian government which typically used force, mostly through its joint task force (JTF), this time adopted a nonviolent approach which included the formation of various development intervention agencies. The Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) was established in 1961 by the Niger Delta Development Act, the Oil and Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) was created by Decree 23 of 1992, the NDDC established in 2000, and the Ministry of Niger Delta in 2008. The Nigerian government uses these developmental agencies for infrastructural upgrade in the region, engagement with host communities, and joint efforts to reduce militancy. In June 2009, the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's government engaged the militants in a dialogue, consensus was reached and an amnesty was proclaimed, Militants surrendered arms for cash and rehabilitation. Ex-militant who were qualified were give scholarship to study in local and international Universities. Asari Dokubo, Henry Okah, Tompolo and other leaders of different militant groups were awarded contracts for the protection of oil installations. The amnesty programme was a product of dialogue, it help to restore peace to a trouble region and allowed growth in oil production which is the major source of revenue for Nigeria.

Boko haram and religious insurgency in northern Nigeria

The Federal Government has for a while been engage in confrontation with Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda' Awati Wal Jihad (Boko Haram), which has committed various human rights atrocities against both civilians and security agents. According to Human Rights Watch, Boko means "Western education" or "Western influence" in Hausa, and Haram means "sinful" or "forbidden" in Arabic. The group likes the initial name "Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda' Awat Wal Jihad"—"people committed to the propagation of the prophets teachings and Jihad." Since 2009, Boko Haram has become a notorious rebel group. Proscribed by the UK and labelled a terrorist outfit by the US, its fame is global. Boko Haram has carried out attacked against different groups, Police stations, military barracks, government buildings, media outlets, and foreign organisations (UN building in Abuja). Churches, market places, IDP camps, and mosques have not been spared, killing priests, pastors, and worshippers. Suicide attacks, bombings, assassinations and kidnapping of foreign nationals are part of their tactics. Most of these attacks occurred in states in Northern Nigeria, especially Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe. Kano, Kaduna, and Sokoto have also been attacked. While it is widely believed that Boko Haram was founded in 2002 by a radical Islamist preacher named Mohammed Yusuf, other observers suggest that the group has existed prior and functioned under several identities including the Nigerian Taliban and Yusufiyya. The "main objective" of Boko Haram is to Islamize Nigeria. As with most religiously driven groups, Boko Haram's religious rationale for its atrocities, notably its intolerance of other religions, has been questioned.

The Nigerian government quickly responded to the Boko Haram threat with a major military counter-terrorist operation led by the JTF. Later, other non-military counter-terrorist strategies were employed, like the use of counter-narrative, and formation of a committee to advice the federal government on "dialogue with Boko Haram insurgents, with the possibility of granting amnesty granted to the group. Call for Dialogue: in search for a more enduring solution to these threat to national security, several prominent Nigerians attempted to initiate peace between the government and Boko Haram. Former military head of government, Gen. Abdulsalam

Abubakar urged the government to talk to the organisation so as to stop the northern conflict, he called for openness and dialogue for the achievement of sustainable peace and development. (pmnewsnigeria). Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, former President recommended a carrot-and-stick approach, with talks as the incentive. To demonstrate his commitment to dialogue and to broker peace, Obasanjo travelled to Maiduguri in 2011 and spoke with Mohammed Yusuf's in-law, who they believed could help the dialogue the process. This meeting had tragic results, Boko Haram killed Obasanjo's host and a family member, showing the group was not yet ready for any dialogue with government. But government persisted in the call for dialogue. On August 18, 2012, the Minister for information, Labaran Maku conveyed government willingness to listen to Boko Haram's complaints, hoping to restore peace, security, and tranquilly in the north. Ahmed Datti was nominated as mediator between government and Boko Haram group to shows the administration's commitment to negotiation.

To help move things forward and show his commitment to peace through dialogue, President Goodluck Jonathan established the Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of security challenges in the North in 2012. The aim was to identify and constructively engage Boko Haram leaders and develop a framework for amnesty and disarmament (Amaliya & Nwankpa, 2014). The group continued in their atrocities, and eventually led to the kidnapping of 315 girls from a government secondary school in Chibok, a Christian community. Even after this incident the government continued her attempt to engage the sect but "efforts by the government to engage the group in talks failed mostly due to difficulties in identifying Boko Haram's demands" (Thurston, 2015), and the group's seeming unwillingness to engage in dialogue with government.

The Nigerian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (The Oputa Panel)

The Oputa Panel, or the Nigerian Human Rights Violation Investigation Commission, was established shortly after the inauguration President Obasanjo in 1999 as the first President of Nigeria's 4th Republic. In the backdrop of several successful national conventions, it was inspired by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and was embraced as a symbol of a new democratic age after 30 years of military rule (Pilay and Scanlon 2007).

The commission's creation garnered media attention and public support. This was mainly owing to the panel's esteemed members. The chairman was retired Justice Chukwudifu Oputa, and six members including Father Mathew H. Kukah, a former Secretary General of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria. After many years of undemocratic military rule, where freedom of speech was restricted, the panel gave Nigerians a chance to talk. They were authorised to investigate grave human rights breaches from January 15, 1966, when the first civilian administration was toppled, to May 28, 1999, when a civilian president was elected. Expectations for the commission were high. This was not surprising as Obasanjo said the commission's goal was "complete reconciliation" (Yusuf, 2018). Nigeria has over the years been divided by ethnic, cultural, and religious cleavages and plagued by communal violence, the expectations of the commission were high. The commission received over 10,000 petitions alleging physical and mental torture, unlawful arrest and detention, murder/assassination, and assault/violence, disappearance (Pilay & Scanlon, 2007). Two hundred cases were heard in six national zones and the sessions were publicly broadcast. The commission submitted an eight-volume, 15,000-page report on military-era human rights crimes to the government in June 2002, but the report is still not published. The commission prioritised reconciliation through an integrated approach that included retributive and non-retributive measures. Some public hearings were held to reconcile conflicting communities because the panel recognised the need to address community violence. Conciliatory remarks were planned for the panel's final report, and the commission held a public hearing where victims and witnesses of human rights abuses spoke. For her the hearings should represent the 'voice for the weak' (Nigerian Human Rights VIC; 30).

Given the prejudice and partisanship of both government-run and privately owned mass media, what happens when citizens without access to sympathetic media are violated? The commission public hearing was held to give aggrieved persons and communities a chance to have their complaints heard (HRVIC 29-30). Perpetrators could ask victims for forgiveness and reach a compensation arrangement at these sessions. This followed President Obasanjo's call for reconciliation in his inaugural address. According to Yusuf (2018), the

commission was created to show the administration's commitment to healing past wounds and promoting reconciliation based on truth. Thus, the Oputa Panel saw "its key objective as securing forgiveness and reconciliation through dialogue". But the commission's critics think the Oputa Panel failed to achieve this goal. They remark that alleged criminals denied guilt despite overwhelming evidence, leaving the public hearings' reconciliatory element uncertain (Yusuf, 2018). Efforts were made by the commission to reconcile communities that were in disagreement:

"During our session in Lagos, Lagos State, we reconciled the quarrelling communities of Marakow Village. We also records our first major breakthrough when the warring Ife and Modakeke communities in Osun State signed a Memorandum of Understanding and a Joint Declaration to the report pledging to live in peace and harmony and to adopt only peaceful means in pursuing their respective rights and entitlements (HRVIC 9)."

The commission took various reconciliation steps that were arrived at through dialogue. The final report sought to acknowledge victims' pain, quench revenge, and create a common memory from which conflict resolution institutions and policies may arise. The commission suggested several reconciliation initiatives, but due to its limited capacity, it limited itself to inviting community leaders, local, state, and federal authorities to resolve communal conflicts, which were considered the biggest threat to national peace. Through dialogue, the Oputa Panel brought reconciliation to individuals and communities that before seemed impossible, and worked to restore peace to a broken nation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the contemporary world, dialogue has become the hallmark of diplomacy and often the instrument for resolving many conflicts. But for some, it is seen as a sign of weakness because it requires openness to others perspectives, empathy and willingness to shift ground. Matthew's three stages – one-on-one, third-party, and communal interface outline clearly the critical role dialogue plays in achieving forgiveness, restoration and resolution of conflict in the community. Matthew's final advice – treat him like a gentile or tax collector should be understood in the context of efforts to restore an offender to communion with the community, not punishment. Dialogue has become a

critical ingredient in the search for global peace, even if it does not prevent all wars, it helps terminate open interstate hostilities and reduce local disputes. Nigeria has over time used dialogue to reconcile many religious and civic disputes, making it a reliable and indispensable tool for peace building. Jesus insistence that the offended party should engage the offender as difficult as it may seem creates an opportunity for both parties to begin a dialogue that could lead to a reduction of tension. For talking is the only alternative to violence, even if it may not work always. Dialogue is thus crucial to resolving conflict in the Christian community, nations, communities, families, and workplaces. Dialogue is a process, not a destination. Inability to restore instant serenity typically leads to dissatisfaction and disappointment when seen as a destination. But each deadlock is a stage in the dialogue process that should be built

REFERENCES

- Abu-Nimer, M. (1999). *Dialogue, conflict resolution and change: Arab-Jewish encounters in Israel*. Albany, N.Y: Sunny.
- Ajayi, V. O. (2018). Primary source of data and secondary source of data. <https://www.researchgate.net>. Retrieved September 18, 2018.
- Amaliya, M. & Nwankpa, M. (2014). Assessing Boko Haram: A conversation. *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 5, 1, 81-87.
- Asika, N. (1991). *Research methodology in behavioural sciences*. Lagos: Learn Africa.
- Bohm, D. (1996). *On dialogue*. London: Routledge.
- Boring, E. M. (1995). "The gospel of Matthew: Introduction, commentary, and reflections." In *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, viii.
- Brown, R. E. (2014). *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Bangalore: Theological Publications.
- Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A. & Murphy, R. E. (1990). *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. New York, NY: Geoffrey Chapman.
- Carter, W. (2004). *Matthew and the margins: A socio-political and religious reading*. London: T & T Clark International.
- Ceadal, M. (1987). *Thinking about peace and war*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

upon. This is the basis for Matthew 18:15-20's three-step method.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. That conflict and disagreements be seen as inevitable part of human society and that should be expected and accepted whenever it occurs.
- II. That dialogue should become for all people and nations a major method for conflict resolution.
- III. That dialogue be carried out with humility, empathy towards the other party and openness to forgiveness and reconciliation.
- IV. That the principles of dialogue as put forth by the Matthean Jesus be adopted and internalized among the multi-religious groups in Nigeria.

Cloke, K. (2013). *The dance of opposites: Exploration in mediation, dialogue and conflict resolution system design*. Dallas: Goodmedia.

Crocker, C. A., Hampson, F. O. & Aall, P. (2004). *Taming intractable conflicts: Mediation in the hardest cases*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace.

Danker, F. W. Bauer, W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Defranzo, S. E. (2018). *Qualitative research*. <https://www.snapsurveys.com>. Retrieved July 15, 2018.

Fahmi, G. (2015). "Dialogue as tool for addressing religious tensions: Containing the violence, or true conflict resolutions." In Rieker and Thune (Eds.). *Dialogue and conflict resolution: Potentials and limits*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2015, 189-207.

Hays, R. B. (1996). *The moral vision of the New Testament*. San Francisco: Harper.

Iroegbu, S. (2016). The intrigues, twists and turns to freedom for 21 Chibok girls. *ThisDay*, October 16, 2016. Retrieved from; <http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/10/16the-intrigues-twists-and-turns-to-freedom-for-21>. Accessed August 18, 2018.

- Jeschke, M. (1972). *Discipline the brother: Congregational discipline according to the Gospel*. Scottsdale: Herald.
- John Paul II. (2017). *PostSynodal apostolic exhortation (Ecclesia in Africa)*. <https://w2.vatican.va>John-Paul-II>documents>. Retrieved May 4, 2017.
- Kagan, R. (2008). *The return of history and the end of dreams*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Kaiser, W. C. Jr. & Silva, M. (1994). *An introduction to biblical hermeneutics: The search for meaning*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.
- Kemp, K. M. (2010). "Transforming congregational conflict: An integrated framework for understanding and addressing conflict in Christian faith communication". *An unpublished thesis submitted to Department of Religious Studies*, Victoria University of Wellington.
- Lederach, J. P. (1995). *Preparing for peace: Conflict transformation across cultures*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. Washington D.C: United States Institute of Peace.
- Lederach, J. P. (2003). *The little book of conflict transformation: Clear articulation of the guiding principles by a pioneer in the field intercourse*. Pennsylvania: Good Book.
- Lederach, J. P. (2005). *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marshall, C. D. (2001). *Beyond retribution: A New Testament vision for justice, crime and punishment*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.
- Marshall, I. H. (1992). *New Testament interpretation: Essays on principles and methods*. Carlisle: Paternoster.
- Mitch, C. & Sri, E. (2010). *The Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Naseri, C. (2013). The purpose of the Gospels and its implication for contemporary preachers/interpreters. *American Journal of Social Issues and Humanities*, 3(3), 103-118.
- Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans.
- Nwankpa, M. (2018). The politics of amnesty in Nigeria: A comparative analysis of the Boko Haram and Niger Delta insurgencies. *Journal of Terrorism Research*. <https://www.researchgate.net>publication>. Retrieved August 23, 2018
- Ogundipe, S. (2016). Nigerian government says Boko Haram ready to negotiate release of 83 more Chibok girls. *Premium Times*, October 16, 2016. <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/212893-nigerian>. Retrieved August 18, 2018.
- Omonokhua, C. A. (2014). *Dialogue in context: A Nigerian experience*. Kaduna: Virtual Insignia.
- Omonokhua, C. A., Falola, A. & McGarvey, K. (2014). *Peace and reconciliation: A Nigerian conversation*. Abuja: Sovereign.
- Pilay S. & Scanlon, H. (2007). Peace versus justice? Truth and reconciliation commissions and war crime tribunals in Africa. *Policy Advisory Group Seminar Report*, Cape Town, South Africa, 17th – 18th May, 2007.
- Rieker, P. & Thune, H. (2015). *Dialogue and conflict resolution: Potential and limits*. Dorchester: Ashgate.
- Salkin, N. J. (2018). *Primary data source*. <https://www.sagepub.com>. Retrieved July, 4, 2018.
- Schreiter, R. J. (2006). *The ministry of reconciliation. Spirituality and strategies*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Sending, O. J. (2015). "Diplomacy and dialogue." In; Rieker, P. and Thune, H. (Eds.) *Dialogue and conflict resolution: Potentials and limits*. Burlington: Ashgate, pp. 15-27.
- Smocke, D. R. & Serwer, D. (2012). *Facilitating dialogue: USIP's work in conflict zones*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace.
- Ukpong, C. (2016). Red Cross speaks: Our role in release of 21 Chibok girls. *Premium Times*, October 14, 2016, 7. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines>, Retrieved July 18, 2018.
- United Nations Development Programme UNDP (2019). "Why dialogue matters for conflict prevention and peace building". <http://www>. Retrieved February, 20 2019.
- Wambui, M., Tanui, E., & Ngaruiya, B. (2016). *Relationship between Teachers' Support and Care and Students' Subject Choice in Public Secondary Schools in Nairobi County, Kenya*.
- Wright, C. (2004). *Deuteronomy*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson.

Yankelovich, D. (2001). *The magic of dialogue: Transforming conflict into cooperation*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Yoder, J. H. (1985). "Binding and loosing". In; White, J. and Blue, K. (Eds.). *Healing the wounded: The costly love of church discipline*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity, 211-234.

Yusuf, B. (2018). *Nigeria interfaith activities for peace building*. Retrieved from; <https://www.allafrica.com/nigeria>. On July 20, 2018.

Yusuf, H. O. (2007). Travails of truth: Achieving justice for victims of impunity in Nigeria. *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 1, 268-286.