



Religious Cooperation in Plural Ghana: Challenges and Ways for Improvement

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ABSTRACT

There is a global call for religious cooperation and tolerance, and it is a non-negotiable necessity for Ghana, through a collective responsibility. This study thus investigated the perspectives of Ghanaians on the religious situation in Ghana. It looked at whether or not Ghana is a “one religion” State, by exploring the existence of several religions in Ghana. The global advocacy for religious cooperation motivated this study to explore some challenges hindering religious cooperation in Ghana, and ways for improvement. Using a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative designs, the study sampled 225 individuals ethically from the Faculty of Social Sciences in KNUST, Kumasi, Ghana. Primary data was obtained through questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed that Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion are the three main religions amongst others in Ghana. A majority of 179 respondents indicated that Ghana has plural religions and is not a “one religion” State, hence, a non-negotiable advocacy for religious cooperation. The majority of these advocates are youth within the age brackets of 15-25 years, followed by adults within 36-45 years. Despite challenges hindering religious cooperation in Ghana such as religious, social, cultural and political barriers, the practice of respect, tolerance and value toward one another and interfaith relations, could guarantee some improvement. Therefore, whether Christians, Muslims, Traditionalists or the Other, one has to be and behave religiously inclusive, tolerant, and humble toward the other. Whether in speech or actions, one should give a listening ear to the other. This paper is relevant for peace and interfaith studies.

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INTRODUCTION

The existence of some religions and the rise of new religious movements in Ghana today leaves one in the psychological space wondering whether or not Ghana is a “one religion” State. The world can be described as a plural world and Ghana is not exempted. Samwini has emphasized that Ghana is a plural country.¹ Its plurality can be seen from several areas including ethnicity and religion. While counting the emergence of several faiths in Ghanaian society, there exist three well-known and

¹ Nathan Iddrisu Samwini, “Religious Toleration as a Key Factor for Social Stability in Plural Ghana,” *IISTE* 4, no. 12 (2014): 112–18.

constitutionally approved religions predominant in Ghana, namely, African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam. Coupled with their diverse and multiple religious professions are the massive (over 60) varying ethnic groups in Ghana, living in different cultures. Agreeing with Samwini as he refers to Ghana as 'Plural Ghana' is laudable.² Thus unarguably, Ghana is a plural country, with plural cultures, plural religions, plural ethnicities, and plural traditions among several plurals. He indicates that Ghana's religious situation is such that religious people feel uncomfortable and wish the *other*³ is nonexistent.

Despite the several religions, ethnicities and cultures in Ghana, a gap exists. As to whether or not these religions are united in understanding the differences in one another's affiliation is uncertain in scholarship. Meanwhile, there is a global call for religious cooperation and tolerance, and it is a nonnegotiable necessity for Ghana, through a collective responsibility since religion and its practice has a positive relationship with socioeconomic, cultural, political and national development.

This study therefore investigates some challenges that may be or are hindering religious cooperation and explores some ways for improvement through a survey on the perspectives of some Ghanaians. The subsequent sections of this paper outline in sequence the review of related literature for discussion, the methodology employed, results and discussion from analyzed survey data in terms of challenges against and practical ways of improving religious cooperation, and the study's recommendation and conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Religious Cooperation

By the term "theology of religion," Marbaniang indicates that the phenomenon of religion has a theological basis. His work indicates that *religious cooperation* comprises the religious appreciation of pluralism, *inclusivism*, tolerance and freedom as against religious extremism or exclusivism.⁴ Being the proponent and chief expounder of the philosophical view of religious pluralism, John Hick in his book *God and the Universe of Faiths* argues that Christianity cannot claim religious absoluteness, uniqueness and finality as being the only means to salvation.⁵ Instead, it is only one religion among several. Therefore, instead of putting Christianity or Christ as the centre of world religions, God rather, to whom all souls, nations and faiths are known, must be at the centre.⁶ Indicated in the work of Okholm and Philip, McGrath expresses his support for the pluralistic view of Hick not because such claims are true but because such a view seeks to promote tolerance within and among religions.⁷ Moreover, Allah through the Qur'an has cautioned all Muslims: "Let there be no compulsion in religion, Truth stands clear from error,"⁸ and "Do not argue with the people of the Book..."⁹ Frimpong and Kuwornu-Adjaottor indicate that the religious consciousness of serving God is good; however, religious persons, especially Christians should first be humane before thinking about spirituality and that, religious African Christians should rather hold in high esteem the poor and uncomely nature of their neighbours and environment.¹⁰ That is, they posit that the practice of religion should rather make peace in the sense that neighbours and the environment of religious persons should be highly valued and cared for so much that the Christian is mindful of the Other.

² Samwini, "Religious Toleration as a Key Factor for Social Stability in Plural Ghana," 112.

³ This concerns all persons who do not belong to one's faith, church, or religion. For example, as a Christian, all those who are non-Christians are the *other*; for Muslims, all those who are non-Muslims are the *other*; etc.

⁴ Domenic Marbaniang, "Theology of Religion: Pluralism, Inclusivism, Exclusivism," ResearchGate, 2007, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330958955>.

⁵ John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (London, Palgrave: Macmillan, 1973).

⁶ Marbaniang, "Theology of Religion: Pluralism, Inclusivism, Exclusivism."

⁷ Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy Philips, *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publication, 1996).

⁸ Surah 2:256, *Holy Qur'an*

⁹ Surah 29:46, *Holy Qur'an*

¹⁰ Ernest Jnr. Frimpong and Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Jesus and the Temple Offerings: An Exegetical Study of Luke 20:45-21:4 and Its Socio-Economic Implication for African Christianity," *IBSA-West Africa Journal* 1, no. 1 (2023): 34-42.

Theological Basis for Religious Cooperation

There are *theological bases* for religious cooperation. God owns the world and everything in it including all human beings.¹¹ Everything is good to him.¹² He has established his name in every nation and people.¹³ All religions, cultures, societies, economies and governments are subject to him. Though He is one, He acknowledges all the diversities and loves to relate, tolerate and cooperate with all. The Biblical experiences of Peter and Paul attest to religious pluralism, toleration and the need for cooperation.¹⁴ Also, the Qur'anic texts from Surah 2:256; 29:46 and 8:20 among others, indicate clearly that Islamic orthodoxy supports religious tolerance and cooperation.

Therefore, in an age in which all of humanity is faced with an inevitable emergence and multiplication of diverse beliefs, practices, cultures, societies and religions, it is proper to agree with Zuo'an that it is important to build and promote the new concept of religious harmony to meet the challenges posed by religious diversity in a globalized world. More importantly, because of the challenges and opportunities that nations and the world could face, it is very pragmatic for faith communities, governments, and other stakeholders to bear responsibilities and prevent religious conflicts and terrorism through a combined effort to advocate the need for religious cooperation through cultural, social, economic, political and religious harmony and tolerance.¹⁵

METHODOLOGY

The sensitive nature of the issue and exposure of the participants in this survey necessitated some ethical considerations. Steered by the ethical rationale of Fleming and Zegwaard, the research design and approach of this study were guided by participants' informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary involvement and anonymity in relation to the presentation and communication of results.¹⁶ Through a mix-methodology of quantitative and qualitative designs, the study employed the tools of questionnaire and interviews for primary data collection from a sample of 225 individuals from the Faculty of Social Sciences in the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ghana. All 225 individuals answered the questionnaire, and in addition, five (5) of them were interviewed. The rationale was to compare their interview responses with their responses to the questionnaire, and five (5) interviews were satisfactory. With participants' informed consent and voluntary involvement, a majority of 135 postgraduate and undergraduate students were purposively sampled from the Department of Religious Studies while the remaining 90 students were randomly sampled from other departments of the Faculty. Analysis of data was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for the quantitative descriptives. Results were presented in Frequency tables and Cross-tabulations for relational emphasis. Five (5) people were interviewed and their qualitative responses to open-ended questions were sorted, analyzed and presented in quotations. These five interviewed individuals included the 1st, 51st, 101st, 151st and 225th participants from the sample size.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from Table 4.1 revealed that Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR) were the three main amongst other religions in Ghana. Out of the 225 respondents, 11 (4.89%) respondents indicated their affiliation with other religion(s) apart from the three main, 12 (5.33%) respondents indicated affiliation with ATR, 24 (10.67%) respondents showed affiliation with Islam and 178 (79.11%) respondents indicated affiliation with Christianity. Even though Christianity has the majority in terms of quantitative representation, the values for the other three show significant representation

¹¹ Ps. 24:1ff.

¹² Gen. 1:31.

¹³ Mal. 1:11

¹⁴ Acts 10:1ff; Acts 17:16ff, 1 Cor. 9:22 and Rom. 14:1ff

¹⁵ Wang Zuo'an, "Religious Harmony: A Fresh Concept in the Age of Globalization," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 77 (2013): 210–13.

¹⁶ Jenny Fleming and Karsten E Zegwaard, "Methodologies, Methods and Ethical Considerations for Conducting Research in Work-Integrated Learning.," *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning* 19, no. 3 (2018): 205–13.

and thus provide a concrete basis to establish Ghana’s religious situation as more plural than a “one religion” state.

Table 4.1: Religious Affiliation, Religious Cooperation Advocacy and Age Cross-Tabulation

Religion	Advocacy for Religious Cooperation	Age bracket (years)				Total	Percent
		15-25	26-35	36-45	46-55		
	Responses						
Christianity	Yes	79	31	44	24	178	79.11%
Islam	Yes	12	12	0	0	24	10.67%
ATR	Yes	12	0	0	0	12	5.33%
None	Yes	10	1	0	0	11	4.89%
Total		113	44	44	24	225	100%

Source: Authors’ Construction from Survey, 2024

Also, while 46 respondents define Ghana as a “one religion” State, a majority of 179 respondents disagreed and posited that Ghana has plural religions, as shown in Table 4.2 below. Again, it is observed that in terms of age, the early young adults in the bracket of 15-25 years obtained the highest representation of 113 “No” responses, constituting 50.2% for those who disagree that Ghana is a “one religion” State. Probably, these young adults recognize the contemporary concerns of globalization and a plurality of religions and ethnic varieties in the face of religious freedom in Ghana. This is followed by adults within the age bracket of 36-45 years and they indicated 44 “No” responses, constituting 19.56%. These adults may be influenced by the contemporary situation of the emergence of new religions and movements coupled with the fast-changing face of today’s world from an anciently held tradition into a more culturally and religiously dynamic state. While these observations are from individual views, the findings clearly indicate that the new generation of young Ghanaians would rather advocate for peace, unity and safety in a plural Ghana than uphold some illusion that Ghana belongs to one religion as though the other religions are non-existing. Given that, most Ghanaians, according to this survey, could feel the tensions and in the future of Ghana as a result of any dominance from one religion that will seek to relegate both the religious and national relevance of the others, hence an urgent call for the acceptance and appropriation of the reality that Ghana is a religiously plural state, but not a “one religion” state.

Table 4.2: Ghana’s Religious Situation and Age bracket cross-tabulation

Religious Situation	Age bracket (years)				Total	Percent
	15-25	26-35	36-45	46-55		
Is Ghana a “one religion” State?						
No	113	22	44	0	179	79.56%
Yes	0	22	0	24	46	20.44%
Total	113	44	44	24	225	100%
Percent	50.22%	19.56%	19.56%	10.67%	100%	

Source: Authors’ Construction from Survey, 2024

Table 4.3 below shows a mutually exclusive situation in which one is to choose between one’s religious affiliation and one’s heritage as one’s first national identity. From the findings, a significant 16% of the respondents chose religion which comprises 10.67% for Christianity and 5.33% for African Traditional Religion. Nonetheless, it is obvious from the table that the majority of 189 respondents, constituting 84%, prioritized their heritage and nationality over their religious affiliations. In that, they

would prefer to be identified as first being “Ghanaians” before they are religious. Significantly, young adults have the maximum influence in such a choice for heritage as their first national identity (FNI) instead of religion. This is very crucial for Ghanaians and possibly all Africans to prioritize their people over their religious affiliations for the common good of the nation, continent and its community.

Table 4.3: First National Identity and Age bracket cross-tabulation

Who are we first?	Age bracket (years)				Total	Percent
	15-25	26-35	36-45	46-55		
Responses						
We are first Christians	12	0	12	0	24	10.67%
We are first Muslims	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
We are first Traditionalists	12	0	0	0	12	5.33%
We are first Ghanaians	89	44	32	24	189	84.0%
Total	113	44	44	24	225	100%

Source: Authors’ Construction from Survey, 2024

Factors that Inhibit Religious Cooperation in Ghana

While Religious cooperation is so needful towards the national development of Plural Ghana, certain factors make it difficult for her to both realize and improve it. Amongst the weighty list of factors that pose a hindrance to the realization of religious cooperation globally, John Madeley indicates five common factors, namely: (i) Religious factors, (ii) Socio-economic factors, (iii) Religio-Political factors, (iv) Cultural factors and (v) Educational factors.¹⁷ The following are the findings and discussion on the challenges facing religious cooperation in Ghana. Table 4.4 below presents interview responses from five participants, purposively selected and sorted for discussion. Among the factors hindering religious cooperation in Ghana, the sorted responses from the findings in the table indicate that ethnic, religio-cultural, socio-religious, religio-political, socioeconomic, educational and cultural barriers are some common factors.

Table 4.4: Challenges Against Religious Cooperation

Respondent	Interview Response	Sorted Responses
1 st Participant	discriminations, varying religious doctrines	Ethnic and religious factors
51 st Participant	doctrinal issues, cultural issues	Religio-cultural barriers
101 st Participant	discrimination, lack of tolerance, respect for one another's religious values	Socio-religious barriers
151 st Participant	doctrinal differences, educational restrictions	Religious and educational barriers
225 th Participant	religious terrorism, political power, economic competition, ethnic rivalries	Religious, political, economic and cultural barriers

Source: Authors’ Construction from Survey, 2024

Religious factors pose many challenges to cooperation. Madeley and Jamali have indicated the threats of religious factors in politics and the cyber world respectively.¹⁸ This is evident among

¹⁷ John T S Madeley, “Church and State: Political Science Aspects,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2001.

¹⁸ Raza Jamali, “Religious Attitudes in the Cyber World,” *Online Arab Spring*, 2015.

religious extremists and exclusivists such as Christians, Muslims and Jews. Influenced by Aristotle and his concept that truth is one but not many, religious exclusivists see other religions and their practices as invalid and false, but only theirs is truth. Popular among such proponents and conservatives are Hendrick Kraemar, Leslie Newbiggin and Samuel Zwemer.¹⁹ This, indeed, has created so many wounds in religiosity in Plural Ghana today. While Muslims posit and take the exclusive stand of absoluteness against Christianity and other faiths, Christianity turns to claim religious finality. This creates much more tension than good. In jobs and homes, it has become extremely disharmonious for a Muslim to accept a Christian, and vice-versa. Moreover, the religiously exclusive urge to *force proselytization and conversion* can break interreligious peace and cooperation. However, all religions should cooperate through tolerance and harmonious living to build a better Ghana despite being plural.

Socio-economic factors make religious cooperation difficult. Grammy and Kasselstrand's "Factors hindering Religious freedom," reveals that both social and economic factors inhibit religious freedom,²⁰ hence making it difficult for religious cooperation. Even though religion is seen to be one way to ensure economic growth,²¹ some socioeconomic factors make it difficult for religions to cooperate and tolerate one another. Ghana's situation is not different. Socially, regions and places where a particular religion dominates in population, instead of being cosmopolitan, can trigger religious intolerance if the existing and dominant religious group sees any newcomer (other religion) emerging in such communities or regions. Grim and Fink refer to such occurrences as regional segregation.²² Economically, where income distribution by the state is not equitable to all religions and societies due to religious favouritism by the State's affiliation to a particular religion, such instability and unfairness could explode unstoppable chaos and religious conflict. Ghana can face such if one particular religion is given an advantage over others in matters of her socio-economic benefits and development. It is of no surprise that some religions have shown their objection toward the State's decision led by the President to build a 'National Cathedral' for Christianity. This might threaten religious coexistence, tolerance, harmony and cooperation since its construction might have some benefits to the nation somehow.

Religio-political factors also contribute to the difficulty facing religious cooperation in Ghana. Religion and politics are interdependent. The duo forms a system in which individuals and groups exercise their beliefs in making decisions to affect human lives.²³ Belief is religious, and decision is political. In a country where religion and politics have formed a 'state religion' for citizens in favour of a particular religion, such an alliance can really trigger religious conflicts where other religions feel uncelebrated. Religious incarceration is an attempt by a state or government to arrest an individual or group for their religious beliefs or affiliation.²⁴ In Plural Ghana where the constitution allows freedom of worship and association to the religion of choice²⁵, any attempt either by the State, a religious body, or a group in leadership to arrest people for exercising their beliefs can lead to religious chaos when such a State or government is religiously biased and is in favour of one against others.

Cultural factors such as ethnicity, culture and tribal affiliations could hinder religious cooperation in Ghana. Grim and Firk refer to *culture and ethnic identity* as the rate at which a particular culture or ethnic group has a particular religious affiliation.²⁶ Samwini's *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950* reveals several findings about how Muslims emerged and dominated the northern

¹⁹ Ken Gnanakan, *The Pluralistic Predicament* (Bangalore: TBT, 1992), 23.

²⁰ Abbas P Grammy and Isabella Kasselstrand, "Factors Hindering Religious Freedom: International Evidence," *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 4, no. 13 (2013).

²¹ Robert J Barro and Rachel M McCleary, "Religion and Economic Growth across Countries," *American Sociological Review* 68, no. 5 (2003): 760–81.

²² Grammy and Kasselstrand, "Factors Hindering Religious Freedom: International Evidence," 45.

²³ Mirjam Kunkler and Julia Leininger, "Religion and Politics," *Washington, D.C.: CQ*, (2011): 1450
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279060090_Religion_and_politics

²⁴ Grammy and Kasselstrand, "Factors Hindering Religious Freedom: International Evidence," 45.

²⁵ See *Article 21(1)(c) of Ghana's 1992 Constitution*

²⁶ Brian J Grim and Roger Finke, "International Religion Indexes: Government Regulation, Government Favoritism, and Social Regulation of Religion," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 2 (2006), 22-30.

part of Ghana and the northern kingdoms.²⁷ Because of such dominance, several ethnic groups such as the Gonjas, Wala, Mamprugu, and Dagomba, among many others, are more Islam-affiliated than they might want to become or associate with other religious people. Sometimes, the mere awareness that some tribes and ethnic groups are strongly affiliated with a particular religion makes it easy for religious stereotyping and prejudices, and sometimes such places may be tagged as ‘no-go areas’ for the *other*. These threaten religious cooperation as the *other* may not feel welcomed in such ethnicities or groups.

Educational factors contribute hugely to why Ghana faces and can face religious intolerance, hence impeding cooperation. Interestingly, in their exploration of “Education and Religion,” Glaesar and Sacerdote’s inquiry reveals that the attainment of higher education, vis-a-viz religion, is positive when individuals reduce religious beliefs in institutions and behave accordingly as though they are in a secular institution that needs their compliance to rules.²⁸ This is worth noting in the case of Plural Ghana. In as much as there is freedom of association, there is also freedom of worship; and both are stipulated understandably in the same 1992 Constitution of Ghana. Therefore, even though every child has the right to education and the freedom to enrol in any school or college of their choice, there is a limitation posed by one’s choice and freedom toward religious affiliation in Ghana. In Islamic educational institutions, Christians and others are unable to fully exercise such freedoms in the expression of their faiths. This is because education is a whole unit on its own, having its own rules for complete adherence by all students who enrol by choice. Thus, while some Christians continue to complain and frown at religious restrictions and rules in Islamic institutions, Samwini and Makafui who are championing interfaith relations in Ghana and West Africa would respectfully plead that Christians should tolerate and cooperate if they wish to learn in such institutions and the same way Muslims should tolerate if they enroll in Christian institutions for further studies. These educational differences influenced by religion can inhibit Ghana’s religious progress toward cooperation. However, simple compliance and toleration can help.

Improving Religious Cooperation in Plural Ghana

Zuo’an asserts:

Within a religion, it is important to approach issues of faith and doctrine with tolerance and enhance coordination and cooperation between different denominations. Also, when addressing inter-religious issues, we should respect and accommodate each other, enhance empathy through dialogue and build trust through cooperation.²⁹

Table 4.5 below shows the qualitative views about suggested ways of ensuring religious cooperation. Having sorted the interview responses from the five (5) respondents represented by the 1st, 51st, 101st, 151st and 225th participants, the roles of tolerance, humility, love and respect toward one another were highly emphasized.

Table 4.5: Promoting Religious Cooperation

Respondent	Interview Response	Sorted Responses
1 st Participant (N)*	open-mindedness, welcoming, tolerating others	Tolerance, Open to all
51 st Participant (ATr)*	intermarriages, cooperation, mutual respect, open-minded and welcoming	Interrelations, Respect, Accommodating

²⁷ Nathan Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950: Its Effects upon Muslims and Muslim-Christian Relations* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006), 22-30.

²⁸ Edward L Glaeser and Bruce I Sacerdote, “Education and Religion,” *Journal of Human Capital* 2, no. 2 (2008): 188–215, <http://post.economics.harvard.edu/hier/2001papers/2001list.html>.

²⁹ Zuo’an, “Religious Harmony: A Fresh Concept in the Age of Globalization.”

101 th Participant (I)*	tolerance, cooperation, avoiding hostility toward the others, humility, accepting the views of others	Tolerance, Humility, Valuing Others, Unity-centered
151 st Participant (I)*	love for one another	Love
225 th Participant (C)*	respect one another, promote cooperation, peace	Respect, Unity-centered, Peace-seeking

*Source: Survey, 2024 (N – None; ATr – African Traditional Religion; I – Islam; C – Christian;)**

In the quest to explore some practical ways of promoting and improving religious cooperation in Plural Ghana, a proposed case was studied and responses were collected. The typical case was situated in a Ghanaian compound house which accommodated four different religious tenants in four different rooms living in the same house. The four included a Christian, a Muslim, a Traditionalist and a Hindu. In seeking ways for the harmonious living among them towards the development of both the house and the nation, the views of respondents were sought. Qualitative findings from the views of four respondents: Christian (the 225th participant), Muslim (the 101st participant), Traditionalist (the 51st participant) and Other (the 1st participant) have been quoted as follows:

A non-believer – the 1st respondent, who belongs to probably a different religion other than the above-stated three, gives this recommendation:

Tenants should realize they are first Ghanaians before they are either religious or ethnic persons. Therefore, according to their tenancy requirements and duties, they should avoid discrimination and religious extremism despite their varying religious doctrines, beliefs and practices to prevent conflict. Meanwhile, they should be intentional in welcoming one another with equal respect, tolerating one another and prioritizing peace and unity as one people.

An African Traditional believer – the 51st respondent, responded this way:

Even though they may be from different tribes and faiths, the fact that they are tenants living in the same house means that they are required to seek a common good for one another. Therefore, they should put far away from any cultural and belief differences as well as any elements of misunderstanding and self-centeredness. Rather, they should practice mutual respect, open-mindedness and appreciation of individuals' views on tenancy matters of the house for their personal development and that of the house. They should live as one people and make their religious affiliations their individual uniqueness without hurting one another.

The response from a Muslim (the 101st respondent) contains these words:

Islam appreciates values. Therefore, Muslims and others should not be hostile, selfish, violent and discriminatory toward one another. Religious values of their individual faiths should be welcomed and respected by one another. Notwithstanding, none of them should use their religious teachings and practices to disturb or create any sort of tension and discomfort in the house. Rather, humility, acceptance interreligious cohabitation and peace should be practised and promoted among themselves as one team of Ghanaians.

A Christian, the 225th respondent, gives this view:

The fact that Ghanaians are religious does not mean religious affiliations are above human and communal centeredness. Despite one another's unique tribe and faith, these tenants were accommodated by the Landlord as tenants and social people who should relate and live cordially and cooperatively. Therefore, any attitude of religious terrorism, political rivalries, economic competition, or ethnic rivalries which shall negatively affect the communal, religious, social, economic and political peace of one another, the landlord and the development of Ghana should be refrained from.

Instead, respecting one another, promoting cooperation, being peace-seeking, tolerant and living for the common good should be the binding symbols of their tenancy. Peace and unity will give them safety and soundness.

Thus, in response to the above-quoted responses and expanding the scope to include a collective responsibility of individuals, families, societies, government, Religious Groups, Civil Society Organizations and other bodies, some six (6) ways of improving religious cooperation/harmony are as follows:

1. Religious dialogue and interfaith relations, guarding against forms of religious extremism/exclusivism while promoting religious inclusivism, should be encouraged.
2. Religious Advocacy toward “harmony without uniformity,” but “harmony with diversity” should be desired.
3. Ensuring mutual respect and freedom of religious beliefs as Tayviah’s quest to identify some common grounds for inter-faith relations revealed that religious people can both understand and have mutual respect through a successful interfaith prayer.³⁰
4. Sharing socio-economic-political responsibilities together and equitably as Nonterah et al. have researched and identified the role of faith (religion) in the socio-economic development of Africa, looking at the mission of the Church in education, politics and servant leadership in Africa. This she calls “Faith in Action.”³¹
5. Opposing any attempt to use ‘religion’ to propagate ill and/or selfish purposes instead of national/universal development, especially in Ghana.
6. Putting Ghana and the common heritage of belonging to the same motherland as the priority despite individual socioeconomic, cultural and religious differences, should be the prime of the campaign for religious cooperation and peace in Plural Ghana.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In Plural Ghana, people and peace should be placed above religious affiliations. Religious cooperation is a non-negotiable necessity for Ghana, and it is a collective responsibility. Therefore, whether Christians, Muslims, or Traditionalists, one has to be and behave religiously inclusive, tolerant, and cooperative toward the *other*. Whether in speech or actions, one should give a listening ear to the *other*. Despite the challenges posed by religious, socio-economic, religio-political, cultural and educational factors that threaten religious cooperation in Ghana, collective efforts from government, religious groups, civil society organizations and individuals could provide some improvement. Also, citizens should guard against religious extremism through inter-faith relations. Moreover, there should be equitable contribution and distribution of socio-economic benefits, no ethnic/religious favouritism, but ensuring mutual respect and religious tolerance in promoting religious harmony with diversity, using languages and approaches that will attract the other to give listening ears, without compromising one’s faith and neither offending the other. The findings would be relevant for the Peace Council of Ghana, Peace studies, national policies and further research related to religion and human development, religious unity and world peace.

CONCLUSION

This paper has identified some challenges hindering the promotion of religious cooperation in Ghana and explored some practical ways for improvement through questionnaires and interviews with 225 respondents altogether. Findings affirmed the existing fact that we are in a Plural world and Ghana is not exempted. Ghana has several religions, ethnicities and cultures. The Biblical experiences of Paul

³⁰ Margaret Makafui Tayviah, “Prayer in Christianity and Islam: A Common Ritual for Inter-Faith Relations,” *ERATS*, 4. no. 1 (2018): 183-190.

³¹ Nora K. Nonterah, Stan Chu Ilo, Idara Out (eds). *Faith in Action: Reimagining the Mission of the Church in Politics, Education and Servant Leadership in Africa*, Vol III (Abuja: Paulines, 2020).

in Acts 17:16ff, 1 Corinthians 9:22 and Romans 14:1ff advocate the religious need for Christians to give a listening ear, be kind and sensitive toward people's cultures in religiously and culturally harmonious (peace-loving and peace-practising) ways at all times with all manner of persons – the *other*. Moreover, the Qur'anic texts from Surah 2:256; 29:46 and 8:20 among others, indicate clearly that Islamic orthodoxy supports religious tolerance and cooperation and thus should be practised as such. This study is significant for research, studies and strategies that seek to promote peace, religious harmony and interfaith cooperation.

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