

***Nostra Aetate* and the effect of Segregation on the attitude of children: a call for a dynamic re-evaluation of pedagogical policy in a pluralist society**

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Abstract

Since it is a known fact that the *point de depart* of *Nostra Aetate*¹ is the recognition of diversity, pluralism, and inclusiveness in modern society in its declaration more than forty years ago, it is the aim of this paper to point out the pedagogical problems and difficulties underlying the continued and intentional segregation of children from the same or within the same society based on religious belief and faith, especially in line with the noble intention of the same document to enhance mutual relations with other non-Christian religions, especially Muslims and Jews (as well as Buddhists, Hinduists) etc. There are two ways of looking at this: from the point of view of the type of education given to children and young ones in the name of religious beliefs and from the type of social attitudes they are meant to exhibit, which cuts them off from normal interaction with other children. The conclusion of the paper will point to the type of danger associated with this kind of segregation or isolation, leading to discriminative behaviour - especially as it works against the dynamic² principles of social behaviour, based on openness and the moral values of justice, love, and honesty. The paper, whose approach is interdisciplinary, also shows that religion when mishandled, could be a major instrument of social disruption, especially in a pluralist and multi-cultural society, thus working against the very purpose of writing *Nostra Aetate* by the Second Vatican Council Fathers.

1. Introduction

In November 2005, the whole world celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the special document of the Catholic Church (*Nostra Aetate*), a document, which marked a turning point in her relations with other religions³. That anniversary has called for the need to evaluate not only the successes and failures encountered during the past four decades, but also the challenges it poses for all in future. One of these major tasks is the consideration of the possible effect of continued segregation based on religious differences and cultural diversity on the attitude of the young ones, especially children in a pluralistic society. Nigeria, a country in sub-Saharan Africa with a growing profile of Christianity and Islam could be a real test-case for a dynamic evaluation of the type of pedagogical policy that should accommodate and enhance the dialogical *leit-motif* of *Nostra Aetate*.

I have chosen the theme of segregation, especially in a pluralist society like Nigeria because it is implied by *Nostra Aetate* as one of the evils to be denounced in enhancing dialogue and mutual relations between the non-Christian religions and the Church, when it stated that the Catholic church “rejects nothing that is true and holy in the religions of the world”⁴. Applying this language of inclusiveness and pluralism – without denying the particular identity of Christianity – to the Muslims, for instance, the document makes it clear that the Church “holds in esteem the Muslims who adore the one God” (NA 3), and maintain a special Abrahamic link with Jews as well.

There is the theological implication that *all* should work hard to end past quarrels and hostilities based on religion. In sub-Saharan Africa, one could rightly demand a genuine effort from Christians and Muslims who form the bulk of its growing religious population by promoting mutual understanding, social justice, moral welfare, peace, and freedom of worship⁵. The last aspect of this call extraordinarily questions the vigorous

¹ *Nostra Aetate*(NA) is a Document of the Catholic Church issued by the Vatican II Council Fathers on 28th October, 1965 declaring the relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions. It is a document that promotes sincere dialogue between different religions, especially with Muslims “in our own time”. This is its relevance in this article contextualized in Nigeria where Muslims and Christians, as well as traditional religionists must live together as brothers and sisters.

² Cf. Thelen, E. & Smith, L.B., “Dynamic systems theories”, in W. Damon & R.M. Lerner (eds.), *Handbook of Child Psychology vol. 1*, New York: Wiley, 1998, p.587. The key feature of such dynamic systems is that they are composed of very many individual, often heterogeneous parts: molecules, cells, individuals, species. The patterns organise themselves.

³ We know that it was the open-minded and sincere dialogue initiated by Pope John XXIII, the convoker of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), consisting of more than 2000 bishops from all parts of the world that gave birth to the document, the “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” (*Nostra Aetate*, or “In these our times”).

⁴ Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam are mentioned specifically but the teaching is not limited to those four religions. That is why the text states that the Church sees in other religions “a hidden power present in the events of human history”.

⁵ The Press Release of the *Islamic-Catholic Liaison Committee* (9-08-2002) after their eighth meeting in Markfield –UK, 2-3

attempt by some political agents to effect segregational educational policies, as presently experienced in some states of Northern Nigeria through forceful introduction of divisive Sharia laws. This paper insists that segregation, especially based on religion, is certainly counter-productive for the next generation of children and the dialogical intent of *Nostra Aetate*.

2. What is Segregation?

Segregation is a simple synonym of Discrimination. It is a situation whereby a person or group of persons impose undue boundaries in order to make those concerned to realize that they do not really belong to a group or another group, either on basis of religious, cultural, political, social, or even economic differences. Limits are set for them in order to prevent them from associating with, or belonging to these groups or associations. In short, they are severely restricted in their attempt to associate with their peer groups or fellow citizens in the same country or society. The created boundaries could be strong as to talk of 'apartheid' or 'sectarianism', 'cultism', 'occultism', and even 'preferentialism'. These are realities of our present world, and they block attempts to relate positively and 'humanely'. In the final analysis, it leads to crisis, conflicts, and violence of various kinds in the society. Segregation is mainly outstanding in multi- and pluri-religious environments like Nigeria. It is also this fact that makes the admonition of *Nostra Aetate* extraordinarily relevant for Nigeria as a country of great diversity – religiously, culturally, linguistically, and socially. Segregation excludes and discriminates. On the contrary, inclusiveness is an approach which promotes dialogue and growth in a diversified society. The danger of segregation is that it is particularly dangerous for children and that is why they are vital in this exposé.

3. The Birth of every Child - a phenomenon of Uniqueness

For Martin Buber, if the phenomenon of the birth of every child is a phenomenon of uniqueness, that is, one that is more than just begetting and birth, then it is the obligation of education and the wider society to preserve the might of this newness called the child⁶. If we took Martin Buber's proposition seriously, which we should do, then the fundamental basis for the realisation of the goal of *Nostra Aetate* for humankind, especially through dialogical education, is already shaken through the multitude of segregational attitudes prevalent in the society. Most children today learn the wrong thing because they are taught the wrongly. Could so many countries at religious and other types of ideological war against one another deny this devastating effect on the future of children? It would be a denial of the obvious. In such prevailing situations, instead of personalising relationships and making life a 'real meeting', they are unnecessarily objectified. Thus, for a child to grow up today as a complete person, at least in the spirit of *Nostra Aetate*, the education of the same child should entail an education by authentic relationships and mutual dialogue. But, how can any country attain this noble goal by allowing a philosophy of education based on segregation and divisive religious policies? To approve of such a derailment is to destroy genuine freedom and demolish responsibility on the part of the citizenry.

4. Segregation and conventional approach to attitude

We can rightly argue that *Nostra Aetate* has opened a window for positive interaction and learning, not only theologically, but also psychologically, and philosophically – for both old and young. On their own part, children are very receptive with respect to new attitudes and learning. They can feel, perceive, sense, and even imagine to a great extent what their parents, as well as older siblings teach them. They can learn quickly from their religious background. When those early experiences are positive, they grow up to be friendly, altruistic, and 'other-minded'. They will be open to the world around them, as well as to reality. Their attitude to life will be positive, encouraging and attractive. In short, they would be dynamic. But, the direct effort to *enclose* children within a system, especially a religious system of intolerance, fanaticism, and fundamentalism – as exhibited in the

Jumada 1 st 1423 equivalent to 12-13 July 2002 is important for this goal. The topics addressed during the meeting included Religion and Racism, as well as efforts towards enhancing a culture of Dialogue. The Committee, which was represented on the Catholic side by Francis Cardinal Arinze (then, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican) and Prof. Kamel Al-Sharif (Secretary-General of the International Islamic Council for Da'wah and Relief, Cairo, Egypt) agreed upon the following: 1) We affirm that our religions both teach that almighty God has created all people equal in dignity, and therefore we reject every form of racism; 2) We condemn the racist practices which exist today in many societies and we accept our responsibility to endeavour to eliminate misconceptions and prejudices which in turn generate racial discrimination; 3) we call upon individuals, educational and social institutions, and the media to join this effort against racism; 4) we believe that adherence to religious values and engaging in dialogue to achieve mutual understanding and mutual respect are conducive to a world of justice and peace; 5) we commit ourselves to continue to promote a culture of dialogue and to work together in order to introduce this culture of dialogue into our respective communities and more specifically in educational and cultural programmes.

⁶ cf. Buber, M., *Between Man and Man*, translated by Ronald Gregor-Smith, London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1947, p. 98.

imposition of a separate faith-based schooling in a pluralist society like Nigeria – could make them static, narrow-minded and egoistic. We know that egoism as a term used in Philosophy and Psychology to denote self-interest, contrasts itself with altruism. We know that every creature strives to preserve itself. But, self-preservation, which is not negative in itself, could be, especially in its connection with egoism, which renders it dangerous to social harmony and progress.

5. Segregation and Dynamic Systems theory

To understand the distinction between segregation and dynamic systems theory, which I like to make in this paper, it is important to know their relationship to pluralism. For instance, according to Peter Figueroa, “the term pluralism (from Latin *plus, pluris*: “more”) is used descriptively to indicate a diversity as a fact, normatively to signal a value commitment to articulated diversity as a means or as an end, or philosophically and theoretically to provide an account by appealing to a diversity of principles or basic realities and their interaction”⁷. Thus, the dynamic principles of a society entail 1) that diversity is necessary, otherwise there is no development, 2) that lack of diversity precludes the emergence of new forms, and 3) that the unity of the diverse cultures is necessarily of the nature of a project, a becoming, a working toward, and so is always a pluralistic and changing unity⁸. In this sense, people interrelate without merging their identities, and sustain their identities by communication rather than segregation. From the foregoing, it is clear that the type of attitude children acquire have far-reaching effects in their lives and later development as persons. In this regard, I agree with the view point of Anna Bosman that “at the heart of pedagogy is change”⁹, which implies “development, learning, and intervention”¹⁰. Taking the example of a sectarian school system for children once again, it is easily noticeable that the attitudes of the children involved become unfavourable to social growth. They might become ‘pious’ and ‘very religious’ in that particular system of education, but they lose the ordinary feeling of human touch and love. Thus, in the light of dynamic systems theory, one can rightly fault a segregative theory or system of learning as static, whereby only stability, means, and cognitive architecture are emphasised¹¹.

If segregation stifles development, which is often defined as something that increases in complexity, then the main task of educational planners and religious leaders in any pluralist society like Nigeria should be to evolve education for children in view of helping them to increase complexity, novelty, and new behaviour or organisation. But this is only possible in an open system – one that is far from equilibrium. In fact, it is one that makes energy enter into it. This would be in contrast to a closed system where everything strives for an equilibrium, thus allowing only a minimal level of energy flow. In other words, a closed system, which in my view, a segregational educational policy and practice manifest, is an indication of a maximum level of entropy or chaos¹². According to Alfred G. Smith, “entropy, as Saint Jerome said of love, knows no order”¹³.

6. Dynamic Systems Theory and Conventional Approach in Conflict: Segregation as an example

Since one of the major qualities or aims of *Dynamic Systems Theory* (DST) is to show that the system’s history affects its future development, I like to take one practical and glaring example of a segregational policy of education based on a conventional religious law called *Sharia* or Islamic law, which can negatively affect the social behaviour of children in relation to children of other religious faiths or beliefs. The choice of Shariah is appropriate because it is a misnomer in a secular state like Nigeria. This is to say that there might be also other forms of economic, marital, and social policies of segregation based on the Sharia. With regard to the selected example for this paper – educational policy, one could argue that the growing tendency to implement a separate and fundamentalist faith-based schooling system in some Northern States¹⁴ of Nigeria since October 1999 has proved a clear example of what a closed system could look like in a democratic environment. How it affects the social and moral behaviour of children as well as the bleak nature of their future development in such a complex society. The issue at stake has gone beyond pedagogy to raise the question of what political and social policies (dynamic) would foster the health of communities without requiring the same communities to become fanatical (conventional) political pressure groups. Segregational policy is discriminatory, and as such, acts against the

⁷ Figueroa, Peter, “Pluralism”, in *Philosophy of Education. An Encyclopedia*, edited by J.J. Chambliss, New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996, p. 491 (pp.491-492)

⁸ Figueroa, Peter, *op.cit.*, p.492.

⁹ Bosmann, A.M.T., *Dynamic Systems in Theory: A Wonderful Alternative*, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, Sectie Orthopedagogiek van Ler en Ontwikkeling, p.7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Cf. Bosman, A.M.T., *op.cit.*, p.9.

¹³ Smith, Alfred, G., “Entropy and Synopsis”, in *Communication: Concepts and Perspectives*, edited by Lee Thayer, London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1967, p. 426 (pp.425-430).

¹⁴ Twelve states in the Northern part of Nigeria have already applied the Sharia since 1999 with their attendant implications for segregational policies of education.

dynamic development of individuals and groups. A concrete example is the banning of non-indigenous children in its schools by Zamfara State Government (a predominantly Muslim area in the Northern part of Nigeria) – obviously based on its tight and close adherence to Shariah or stringent traditional Islamic religious laws¹⁵. It is long discovered that the Governor (Yerima) who introduced the issue of Shariah in all facets of life in Zamfara lost grip of his religious intransigence even before he left office. Since then, it is clear that the protagonists of the Shariah law were not in the moral position to live it practically.

Such a segregational law certainly violates **sections 18 (41) and 42** of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which amounted to a threat to the unity and cohesion of its corporate entity. Whereas Section 18 of the Constitution provides that government is to ensure equal and adequate educational opportunities for all Nigerians, **section 41** provides that every citizen of Nigeria is entitled to move freely throughout the country and to reside in any part thereof. Section 42 states that all Nigerians are guaranteed right to freedom from discrimination.

It is pertinent to emphasise the underlying danger¹⁶ of this kind of development in a complex society as Nigeria with a population of over 150 million people – Muslims, Christians, Traditional religionists, etc. This is because the inter-group and intercultural conflicts that may arise in such a situation could lead to crisis of identity, expressed through the *Us/Them* dynamics. In the light of the negative consequences such an ugly development may have on the lives of children, such chaos calls for a re-definition of the real identity of Nigeria as a federating unit. If not checked early and effectively, there may arise a pathological situation, which degenerates into genocidal violence or even to some grievous insidious injustices that reflect a mismanagement of dynamics created at the group psychological level.

As we approach the year 2011, we have also started to hear threats of Nigeria crumbling or dissipating as a nation if ‘this’ or ‘that’ did not happen. This is no democracy and there are dynamics in such religio-politically motivated threats in a diversified country like Nigeria. The use of unwholesome language constitutes a deep sign of poor educational pedagogy and closed system of up-bringing, which leaves no room for acceptance of the principles of the dynamics systems theory of change and development. From the religious perspective, there is not much opportunity for dynamic dialogue, which is the principal goal of *Nostra Aetate*.

7. Vital issues for Dynamic Pedagogical Discussion

It has become necessary to raise certain pertinent issues for dynamic pedagogical discussion, especially based on the foreseen effects on the development of children. They include questions concerning:

the relationship between one faith and the other world religions within the same society;
what difference it makes in one’s personal life to belong to one religious tradition or another;
what my attitude should be to other people I encounter everyday in the street or at work;
the relevant meaning of religion in a new world, contemporary world, one that has now become multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious.

In the light of the above questions and observations, I like to subscribe to Jacques Dupuis’s position in relation to inter-religious interactions, thus: “openness to positive relations of encounter ... require from us – albeit not exclusively – that memory and language be purified”¹⁷.

Contextually, the history of our past relationships in Nigeria as a pluralist society should be radically re-evaluated to make for a dynamic future, in which the self-esteem of each person is highly promoted and enhanced. According to Tom Pyszczynski, “...one’s sense of personal value is highly dependent on the cultural worldview to which one subscribes. Thus, depending on the precepts of one’s worldview, any given behaviour could increase, decrease, or have no effect on self-esteem”¹⁸.

8. Segregation, Dynamism and Revision of Attitude

To progress in a pluralist society like Nigeria, there is need for a radical revision of our concept of attitude, which according to J. Richard Eiser has been seen from the traditional point of view of social psychology as a point on a linear continuum of favorability¹⁹. A shift from the linear continuum is a move towards a dynamical

¹⁵ Onwubiko, E., “Government Accuses Zamfara Government of Treason”, in *The Guardian*, Wednesday, September 8, 2004.

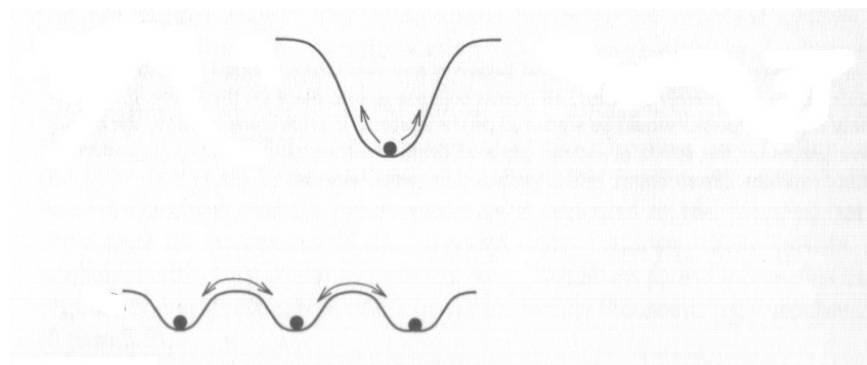
¹⁶ Soyinka, W., “North breaking away”, in *Daily Champion*, Friday, September 10, 2004.

¹⁷ Dupuis, J., *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002, p.7.

¹⁸ Tom Pyszczynski, Jeff Greenberg, and Jamie L. Goldenberg, “Freedom versus Fear: On the Defense, Growth, and Expansion of the Self”, in *Handbook of Self and Identity*, edited by Mark R. Leary & June Price Tangney, New York/London: The Guilford Press, 2003, p.316 (pp.314-343).

¹⁹ Eiser, J.R., “Towards a Dynamic Conception of Attitude Consistency and Change”, in Vallacher, R.R. & Nowak, A. (eds.), *Dynamical Systems in Social Psychology*, New York: Academic Press, 1994, p.197.

systems view of attitude. In other words, attitudes can best be regarded as attractors within a particular kind of phase space, and in this case it is the pluralist formation called Nigeria, as shown below (see diagram) in a landscape with valleys and hills. This means that diversity of attitudes is represented as a landscape with many hills and valleys; the valleys being the attitudes shared by a community. In a pluralistic society, different valleys may emerge and disappear as the result of natural development. In a society in which one attitude prevails, only one valley with a very deep well, (i.e., that of the dominant group), will emerge. Development within such a landscape is restricted towards that one valley. This in turn, makes new developments almost impossible, because such a society is stable and at the same time very resistant towards development. Thus, the diagram below is a means to illustrate the difference from a dynamic system point of view. The bottom diagram represent the pluralist society that Nigeria always was, whereas the top diagram is a way of depicting Nigeria's future route if segregational policy takes over.



Top diagram represents a society without diversity and the bottom diagram represents one with a dynamic diversity

From the above illustration, it is reasonable to argue that a dynamic systems approach in relation to segregation and the negative impact they have on children, especially in Nigeria strongly:

questions the same negative attitudes towards “others”, as well as biased evaluations of existing religious traditions that have characterized centuries of religious history in general, but which are now seen to be inappropriate, especially in relation to proper education of children;

questions such negative attitudes, which constitute a past that demands reconciliation and forgiveness among those involved. In other words, separate and fundamentalist faith-based schooling can only aggravate progress already made in enhancing education.

9. Present Questions for Better Educational Results in Children in relation to Nostra Aetate

It would be static to restrict this inquiry to the past mistakes of educational planners, policy makers and intolerant religious leaders. That is why the present demands dynamic questions for a better result in the attitude of children in relation to their wider society. Such questions would be:

What should be our real attitude today, and what should be our educational assessment of such religious problems, especially as connected with discrimination in the education of children?

What type of help do both teachers and students of educational philosophy of our time in Nigeria require to enhance a better humankind, especially for the benefit of children?

How to interpret the problem of the true meaning of the practice of a separate faith-based schooling in a multi-religious society? In other words, it is a question of how we manage to understand others as they understand themselves, not as we, often according to stubborn traditional or conventional prejudices, thinking or presuming we know who they are. It entails unrestricted acceptance of “others” even in their differences, in their irreducible identity. In view of the above, we can learn a lot from Pope John Paul II's effort to promote dialogue in relation to Nostra Aetate, and for the benefit of growing ones. In fact, his pontificate was a challenge to dynamic relationships.

10. Nostra Aetate and the Challenge of Pope John Paul II

It is not long since Pope John Paul II took his glorious exit from our mortal history, leaving behind him a legacy of continuing the injunction of *Nostra Aetate* to promote peace and harmony based on the recognition of

diversity and true values of other religions. His life and long papacy (1978-2005) taught both Muslims and Christians alike, as well as Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, and adherents of traditional religions the deep-rooted values of theological tolerance, which he manifested in his papal pronouncements, intellectual works, broadmindedness and actions. A few years after the assumption of his Pontificate, John Paul II visited Morocco and addressed the Muslim youth in 1985, recognising the religious values Christians have in common with Islam²⁰. He emphasised the same belief at a general audience in 1999, where he stated that Christians joyfully recognize the religious values they have in common with Islam²¹. Being the first Pope to enter a Muslim house of worship, when he spoke to Muslims at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus in 2001, he invoked the importance of John the Baptist to both Christians and Muslims, and of Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as re-emphasised the need for “respectful dialogue”²². It has been widely accepted that Pope John Paul II’s most systematic treatment of Islam is found in the book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*²³. The most relevant aspect of the book to our purpose here, is where he mentioned that fundamentalist attitudes make reciprocal contacts very difficult. This is because for Islamic fundamentalists “religious freedom comes to mean freedom to impose on all citizens true religion. But, his broadmindedness and openness to dialogue is shown in the last part of the chapter where he stresses, “all the same, the Church remains always open to dialogue and cooperation”²⁴. This spirit of honest tolerance challenges any form of segregation, especially in areas where religious apparatus is used to exclude growing children from obtaining adequate education and social justice.

In the light of the example of Pope John Paul II, which the current Pope Benedict XVI has continued tirelessly (let us not forget that he also prayed in the Blue Mosque in Turkey In 2006), the constant religious crisis and conflicts in Northern Nigeria leave much to be desired. The latest of its kind being the menace of the sectarian group called Boko Haram where hundreds, if not thousands of innocent lives were lost in 2009 for the flimsy reason of carrying out a jihad against every type of western influence in the Nigerian society, especially in education. In fact, Boko Haram in its literal interpretation means that western education is forbidden. It has long been understood that the sect of Mohammed Yusuf (1970-2009) was not only religiously misled, he was also a politically and culturally misguided youth who in turn deceived other unwary young men and women into wasteful extremism and fanaticism.

11. Conclusion

From the foregoing, we could assert that the challenge of a dynamic pedagogical science of education, especially for children in a pluralist society, consists of the acceptance of the unique difference found in others in the same society. Thus, one might conclude that whereas mixed and open-based schooling leads to mutual enrichment in education, lack of consideration for other opinions leads to contempt and entropy. A dynamical approach to the education of children on the other hand, leads to a positive and critical appreciation of each other, and the fortieth birthday of *Nostra Aetate* cannot expect anything short of openness, mutual trust, tolerance, and mutual co-existence in all its ramifications. The fruitful collaboration in this direction can only be successful in a vigorous fight against increasing moral confusion, greed, violence, and selfishness – factors which militate against dialogue. Children, who are the hope of the society, require protection from all against these evils, especially based in the spirit of *Nostra Aetate*. Indeed, the document can be said to recognise, not only the particularity of the group to whom revelation of the uniqueness of Christ is given, as manifested in the dialogue between Jesus and Jude in John 14:22-23, but also the necessity of dialoguing with other religions (NA 3), as well as reminding all of us that the great Muslim Book, The Qur’an enjoins all, especially Muslims that there is no compulsion in religion (Surah 2.256). Instead of propagating the doctrine of hatred and antagonism, it might benefit the human society to apply the words of Jesus in Jn.13:34-35 and the injunction of Allah in Surah 2:224, where love and peace are given pride of place and consideration.

References

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²⁰ „Interfaith Relations with Muslims“, www.columban.org.au/Christian-Muslim/Bridges_Oct00_4.htm

²¹ „Muslims and Christians Adore the One God“, www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP2MUSLM.HTM

²² cf. Pope John Paul II Address at Ommayyad (sic) Mosque of Damascus – 6 May 2001, www.catholic-forum.com/saints/pope0264qr.htm See also *Nostra Aetate*, No. 3. It is interesting to know also that the Quran has 34 verses which name Mary. In fact, this is more than there are in the New Testament. Although Mary is not venerated in the same way as in Christianity, where Mary is Mother of God, „Theotokos“, Islam honours her as the mother of the prophet Jesus.

²³ *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Vittorio Messori, ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), pp.91-94.

²⁴ *Op.cit.*, p.94.

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²⁰ “Interfaith Relations with Muslims”, www.columban.org.au/Christian-Muslim/Bridges_Oct00_4.htm

²¹ “Muslims and Christians Adore the One God”, www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP2MUSLM.HTM

²² cf. Pope John Paul II Address at Ommayyad (sic) Mosque of Damascus – 6 May 2001, www.catholic-forum.com/saints/pope0264qr.htm See also Nostra Aetate, No. 3. It is interesting to know also that the Quran has 34 verses which name Mary. In fact, this is more than there are in the New Testament. Although Mary is not venerated in the same way as in Christianity, where Mary is Mother of God, „Theotokos“, Islam honours her as the mother of the prophet Jesus.

²³ Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Vittorio Messori, (ed.), (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), pp.91-94.

²⁴ *op.cit.*, p.94.