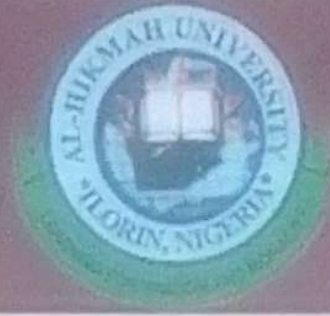


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SAYYID QUTB'S RENDITIONS ON FULFILMENT OF PROMISES AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

To honour one's promise is paramount as far as Islam is concerned. Emphasis is placed on the fulfillment of promises in Islam to the extent that consequences await its non-fulfillment. This is because; it is the essence of honesty and integrity, both personal and social. In fact, fulfillment of promises and honoring trust are mentioned in different places in the Qur'an and Hadith, both with regard to pledges given to people or to God, by the individual, community or state, ruler or ruled. Practically, Islam has set an example for such fulfillment which humanity has never seen except under Islamic rule. However, Nigeria politicians are known with blank promises and care free for honesty and integrity. This could be inferred from their bogus manifestos during the campaign when they are in need of electorates. Thus attempt is made in this paper to examine the importance attached by Islam to the fulfillment of promise, honoring trust and the practices among the Nigeria politicians. This paper intends to map road from side to side the exposition of SayyidQutb on fulfillment of promises vis-à-vis the situation in Nigeria, the politicians to be specific. The method adopted in this work is descriptive because it addresses the issue that is contemporary. Findings in this research work show that the concept of fulfilling promises is of great importance, its non-fulfillment results to hypocrisy as far as Islam is concerned. The paper concluded that there exist a wide gap between the Islamic obligation of promise fulfillment and what is obtainable among the Nigeria politicians. Thus this paper recommends honesty and integrity to be our priority as this provides us the assurance for peace and tranquility in this world and hereafter.

Keywords: Fulfillment of Promises, SayyidQutb's Renditions, Relevancy, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

One of the virtues talked about in the Holy Quran is Keeping of Promise or Covenant. It has been mentioned as one of the special and distinct features of the faithful. Qur'an says:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ

"Those who faithful observe their trusts and their covenants" (Q23:8)¹ It is not humorless in Islam for one to breach his promise. This is because it is the essence of honesty and integrity which are among the cardinal principles that Islam guides against. In fact, breaking of promise or breach of a covenant has been called therein as one of the habits of the polytheists (*Mushrikun*) and hypocrites (*Munafiqun*).² Hypocrisy, double-facing, breaching vows and ignoring promises are some of the worst qualities of man.³ Against this background, the Prophet was reported to have enumerated three points which make out hypocrisy viz:

'Shows dishonesty when trusted, Tells a lie while speaking and Breaks a promise'.⁴

Furthermore, giving fake promises is a common practice among the politicians in Nigeria. A lot will be promise during their electioneering campaigns, out which noting or few will be fulfilled. This they do without any compunction. Against this background, attempt is therefore made in this paper to investigate the Qur'anic legislation on fulfillment of promises as contained in SayyidQutb's work *Fi Zilāl'l-Qur'an* vis-à-vis the practices among the Nigeria politicians.

SAYYIDQUTB (1324/1906–1386/ 1966) IN BRIEF

His full name is SayyidQutb ibn Ibrahim Ibn Husayn As-Shadhili. He was born in 1906 CE in a Village called Moshe, in Asyut district of Egypt.⁵ His father was a reputable Muslim figure in Egypt. He memorized the Qur'an at the age of eleven. In 1919, he joined *Dāru 'l-'Ulūm* for elementary and higher level studies where he specialized in Arabic

Language and its Literature. At the age of 27, he obtained his Bachelor Degree with Graduate in Education.⁶ Thereafter, he joined the Ministry of Education, Egypt where he was posted to teach in schools, in Beni Sueif and Dumyat spending a year each in the two places before he was transferred to the Ministry.⁷

In 1948, he was among the Egyptian youths that were sent to United States of America to under study their pattern of Education. He declined the offer stating that it is designed to de-Islamize Egypt but he was prevailed upon by the government.⁸ Upon his return, he became a thorn on the government's flesh and he was retired in 1953. He was equally an active member of *Al-Ikhwānu 'l-Muslimūn* (The Muslim Brotherhood) and had immense contribution to its formation, growth and consolidation. In fact, many literature describe him as the leading ideologue of the Brotherhood.⁹

Sayyid Qutb's writings majorly centered on opposition both to the West and toward the leaders in Islamic countries he saw as violating the precepts of Islam. He served as a liaison between the Brotherhood and the Free Officers who overthrew the monarchy in July 1952, perhaps expecting cooperation between the military leadership and the Brotherhood in establishing an Islamic state in Egypt.¹⁰ When it became clear that Jamal Abd al- Nasser and the military leadership intended to create a secular state, Qutb and the Brotherhood distanced themselves from the new government. They embarked on intense campaign against the government. In January 1954, the government banned the Brotherhood and imprisoned many of its key figures, including Qutb, because of their increasing criticism of the regime's domestic and foreign policies.¹¹

The decree was rescinded three months later. In October 1954, following an assassination attempt on Nasser by a member of the Brotherhood, Qutb was again arrested and severely tortured, despite his frail health. In July 1955 he was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment. It was therefore from the prison that he wrote two most influential works of his.¹² These are a *Tafsir* of the glorious Qur'an, entitled *Fi zilal al-Qur'an* (In the shade of the Qur'an) and in

1962 and *Ma'alimfi'l-Tariq* (Milestones) in 1964. His writings have inspired numerous Islamist revolutionaries. Shortly, after the release of the second work from the prison, SayyidQutb was released from prison in 1964, but he was rearrested in 1965, tried, and executed by hanging in 1966.¹³

A SYNOPSIS ON HIS *TAFSĪR(FI ZILAL 'L-QUR'ĀN)*

As briefly pointed out above, SayyidQutb was one the kingpins of the Muslim Brotherhood. He therefore wrote this *Tafsir* to amplify the tenets of the group and to provide Quranic relevance and justification for their course. Although the work was written under a tight atmosphere, there is nothing to reflect the minus this would have caused to the work. He referenced major works and sources as if they are with him. Leaman remarks:

'As far as is possible Qutb relies on the Qur'an itself for interpretation, but he also considers the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad authoritative and refers with some frequency to the Sira of Ibn Ishaq (transmitted by Ibn Hisham) and the hadith collections, especially those of Ahmad Ibn hanbal and Malik Ibn Anas. He largely avoids the detailed grammatical, linguistic, theological and fiqh discussions of the classical commentaries, since he considers that they veil the Qur'an from its readers. He does not, however, entirely ignore these commentaries or these issues, but makes frequent reference to Ibn Kathir, al-Tabari and Zamakhshari, and less frequent reference to several others. Among modern commentaries he refers most often to the Manar commentary, written by Rashid Rida under the influence of Muhammad (Abdu, sometimes agreeing with it and sometimes criticizing its rationalist and modernist tendencies. He also refers to other modern writers such as AbulHasan Nadwi, Abu l-A'la) Maududi (although apparently he was not acquainted with his commentary, *Tafhim al-Qur'an*), Muhammad Asad and his own brother, Muhammad Qutb.¹⁴

Yusuf's appraisal of the work covering different aspects of it, reveals various uniqueness that are embedded in it. He explains that the work is a *Tafsir* that is geared towards building the bridge between Islamic text and the modern developments. Its explanations are details with simple expressions. Its narratives are often appealing to senses because they carry concrete examples that can make the analysis appropriate.¹⁵ The work has been translated into different languages of the world including English, German, French, Urdu, Turkish, Indonesian, Persian, Bengali and Malayalam among others.¹⁶ The work is actually a demonstration of the author's mastery of Qur'anic messages and ability to view the society with the lens of Al-Qur'an.

As for the content, Leaman observes that the teachings of Fi Zilal cover different aspects of ranging from creed to transactions among others. It makes God and worshipping Him, the central point of discussion both in spiritual and mundane matters. Qutb viewed every action of man as worship, thus he designates man as the best of creatures and the very vicegerent of God. He also submits that the main role of man on earth as the vicegerent of God, after worshipping is to conquer the universe and make every other creature subservient to him. This underscores his calls for rational interpretation of the Qur'an which will lead Muslim to science and technology.¹⁶

Qutb also posits that society must be defined according to the principles of Qur'an for it to be egalitarian. This is because man cannot make laws that will bring about justice and equality and any society where Qur'an is not the guiding principle is qualified to be called a *Jahiliyyah* society. Leaman writes:

'Societies that are not so ordered violate the harmony of the universe and in the later parts are increasingly described as *jahili* (ignorance). In the final parts he insists that all contemporary societies, including those that claim to be Muslim, are in a state of *jahiliyya*. The response of true Muslims, sooner or later, must be *jihad*, as it was for Muhammad, and *jihad* is here understood as a kind of revolutionary struggle. The contrast between this and the

modernist idea of jihad as defensive illustrates the difference in Qutb's view between illegitimate interpretation of the Qur'an and its legitimate application. These are the ideas that led to his arrest and martyrdom and the ideas that have drawn attention to Qutb's writings. Still, while *Fi zilal* provides inspiration for the radical and extremist wings of Islamism, not all who read it attend to its most radical teachings. Attractively written and broad in its coverage, it can provide something for almost everyone'.¹⁷

Qutb wrote his *Tafsir* to demonstrate how Qur'an can be used to tackle various challenges faced by the Muslims across the world. It show the practical ways of ridding the Muslim societies of the influence of colonial imperialism, westernization of Muslim land, western education, culture and neo-colonization, politics and democracy, and nationalism among others.

FULFILLMENT OF PROMISES IN SAYYIDQUTB'S *TAFSIR*

Literarily, fulfillment is the opposite of deception. While in the technical sense, it is a lofty noble character. Thus, Fulfillment of promise is a pleasant habit of the men of high sense of honour. It also serves as a link that binds the men of lofty human disposition.¹⁸ It is obligatory that a Muslim should fulfill the promise made to others. The indication on this is contained in *Suratul-'Isra'*. Allah reveals:

وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا

"...Be true to all your promises, for you will be called to account for all that you promise." (Q17:34)¹⁹

SayyidQutb, while explaining the above verse pointed out prominent issue salient to this discussion, matters which an individual needs to implement in person, as an individual, are phrased in the singular form. By contrast, the instructions that are addressed to the Muslim community are given in the plural.²⁰ Thus, we see that orders to be

kind to parents, to be charitable to relatives, the needy and stranded travelers among others are all given in the singular form. This is due to the fact that responsibility in these areas is shouldered by an individual.²¹ Conversely, the plural form is used to express the instructions prohibiting the killing of children, adultery, homicide, and those concerning the protection of an orphan's property. Others are honouring promises and pledges, giving fair weights and measures among others. Plural expression is used because each of these concerned the community as a whole.²² Furthermore, *SayyidQutb* stresses out the importance Islam attached to fulfillment of promises and pledges and to be sincere to one's trust because this is the essence of honesty and integrity, both personal and social. In fact, fulfillment of promises and honouring trust is mentioned in various ways and forms in the Qur'an and ḥadīth, both with regard to pledges given to people or to God, by the individual, community or state, ruler or ruled. In practice, Islam has set an example for such fulfillment which humanity has never seen except under the Islamic rule.²³

On this ground, among other numerous verses in the Qur'an is where Allah says:

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

"Fulfill your covenant with God whenever you make a pledge. Do not break your oaths after you have confirmed them, and have made God your surety. God certainly knows all that you do." (Q16:91)²⁴

While subjecting this verse to exposition, *Qutb* identifies different forms covenants which includes the pledge Muslims give to the Prophet (S.A.W) when they accept the Islamic faith, as well as every pledge or promise that involves something permissible or encouraged. He recap, the fulfillment of promises and pledges ensures that trust is maintained in human transactions. Without such trust, human society and humanity generally, cannot have a solid foundation.²⁵ Furthermore, he upholds that the verse makes sure that those who

make a pledge or a covenant are ashamed to break their oaths after having confirmed them, making God the surety for their fulfillment, and appealing to Him as their witness.²⁶

On this verse, *SayyidQutb* reiterates the consequence of non-fulfilling promises while saying Islam takes a very strict view on the question of fulfilling covenants, allowing no breach or violation under any circumstances. This is important because it constitutes the basis of trust in any community. Without strict fulfillment of covenants, the whole structure of the community collapses.²⁷ The treatment of this point in the *Sūrah* does not stop at merely stating an order to fulfill all covenants and pledges and a prohibition of their violation. It goes further than that, showing the violation of covenants in a very bad light. It also dismisses every excuse people make to justify their going back on covenants.²⁸ Against this background, Allah declares: "

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّتِي نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ أَنْكَاثًا تَتَّخِذُونَ أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ أَنْتُمْ كُونَ أُمَّةً هَيَّأَتْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِنَّمَا يَبْلُوكُمُ اللَّهُ بِهِ وَلِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

'Be not like her who untwists the yarn which she has firmly spun, using your oaths as a means to deceive one another, simply because a particular group may be more powerful than another. By this, God puts you to the test. On the Day of Resurrection He will make clear to you all that on which you now differ'.²⁹ (Q16:92)

On this verse, *Qutb* labels whoever goes back on pledges as stupid. He also likens such to an imbecile woman who has no resolve. She spins her yarn and then breaks it leaving it in loose thread. Every little detail given in the example suggests shame and ignominy.³⁰ All sort of repulsive impressions were employed by *SayyidQutb* in giving a picture of going on promise. He said no honorable person would compromise himself to look so idiotic as the woman who spends her life doing what is of no use and no value whatsoever.³¹

However, fulfilling an oath has been considered as one of the signs of the faithful and the wise and as one of the salient human virtue and Islam has consistently emphasized it.³² For instance, Allah says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَمُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

"Those who pledge their allegiance to you are actually pledging their allegiance to God: God's hand is over their hands. He who breaks his pledge does so to his own detriment. But to the one who fulfill his pledge to Him, God will grant a rich reward."³³ (Q48:10)

SayyidQutb, in his expository effort on this verse, opines that when any of them put his hand in the prophet's hand to give his pledge, he realizes God was there present, accepting the pledge, and that His hand also embraced their hand. He added, this image put an end to the thought any one might have to retract the pledge.³⁴ Given reason for that, *Qutb* said whatever pledge made between God and His servant, is richly profitable to the servant. It is he (the servant) who profit by God's favours while God is not in need of any one. Thus, when anybody breaks his with God, he is loser. In addition, he exposes himself to God's anger and punishment, this is because, God loves those who are through with their promises and hates those that break it.³⁵

In the same vein, Allah says:

"O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not? Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that ye say that which ye do not."³⁶

Positions of many Islamic exegetes like Ibn 'Abbas, al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, Qatadah and al-Dahhaq were given on these verses by *SayyidQutb* in his attempt to subject these verses to exposition. Thus, he posited that the verses should be taken according to their general import without forgetting the immediate events for which they were revealed. The

reason that, the Qur'anic texts always take dimensions that go beyond individual event which they addressed.³⁷ Besides, he said, the *Surah* starts then with a reproach for behavior in one or more actual events. It denounces this action and lacks of morality in a doubly powerful way. He submitted, what is view by God as most loathsome must certainly be hateful and repugnant. Also this statement is sufficient to make believers view this in a vilest term, as they are addressed by God as the people who accepted His religion and people who believed in Him.³⁸

NIGERIA POLITICIANS AND FULFILLMENT OF PROMISES

Nigeria is one of the countries that were colonized by British imperialist. It got her independent in 1960, though with different memories of the impacts of its colonial master. One of the areas where the legacy still lives on, even after the independent, is the aspect of political system. In the area of politics, there is no gainsaying that Nigerians are in the fore front.³⁹ However, political parties make specific pledges in their party manifesto and they try to fulfill as many pledges as possible once elected in power.⁴⁰ Alas, in Nigeria, party manifestos are empty and meaningless. With the election around the corner, electorates will be bugged with different kind of manifestos from different political parties, making promises which one knowingly cannot keep, during the electioneering period, Nigerian politicians will promise us heaven and earth. They will tell us they will make the dollar equivalent with the naira, they will say they are going to install air conditioning systems on all the streets in the country, they will also promise that Nigeria will generate 10,000MW, and will promise they will turn Nigeria into paradise.⁴¹

Furthermore, They even sometimes make promises which one does not intend to keep. This is to gain sympathy vote. Many Nigerians were promised they would drive on good roads to their homes, drink portable water, and live in clean environment as their children would get qualitative education at public schools. Others promised sound healthcare services at Government health institutions. The rest are promised of prompt payment of gratuities and pensions on retirement

from Civil Service. Yes; Nigerians were promised steady public power supply even as they would only pay for electricity they actually consumed at the end of the month and not estimated and fictitious bills dished out to them by the electricity distribution companies.⁴²

Conversely, with their assumption to the position of power, their eye-brow will be raised. Today, less than thirty percent of those promises politicians made in the past have been kept. Today, many Nigerians do not have access roads to their towns. Many roads in the town are bad and dilapidated. The country has remained a filthy one with all the known communicable diseases present just as public health and educational institutions are now where the poor and their children attend while the politicians send their children abroad for their educational and health needs. Throughout the country, more than 80% of Nigerians still pay for electricity that is not supplied to them on monthly basis, just as nearly 70% of the roads (federal, state or local) have remained deplorable and impassable nationwide.⁴²

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FAILURE TO FULFILL PROMISES IN ISLAM

SayyidQutb likened failure to fulfill and promise to disbelief stating that every man has the contract of believing and submitting to the will of Allah. So, those who failed in this capacity have not fulfilled their promise to Him, thereby rendering them disbelievers. The consequence of which ends the culprit in the hellfire.⁴³ Even, there are instances where government put institutions in place to take punitive measures against the act of betrayers. In other words, breaking promise is taken as an act of criminality which is punishable. Non-fulfillment of promise will also engender mistrust, disrespect, wrong doing, hypocrisy, deceit, and suspicious among others in the society.⁴⁴ The society is at the receiving ends of the effects of non-fulfillment of promises made, especially by the politician during the electioneering campaigns. Failed promises have accounted for various untold hardship and under development across Nigeria.

IMPACT OF THE FULFILLMENT OF PROMISES ON THE MASSES SOCIO-WELFARE AND SECURITY

There are various positive implications of keeping and fulfilling promises on the well-being of the society. This is because it is a manifestation of truthfulness and sincerity on the part of individuals in the society, which are catalyst to peace and development. It equally enhances egalitarianism courtesy of mutual love and assistance.⁴⁵ Social justice is also achieved because each will play the expected role to move the society forward and enhance rapid growth and development. It would be recalled that all the political upheavals and security challenges that the country is going through are results of failed promises on the part of political class. People have lost hope. So, to redirect the affairs of the country for a better performance starts from commitment of the leaders to live up to their promises.⁴⁶

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Political leaders in Nigeria should be sincere with promises they made with the people to better their lot when they get to political office, rather than exploiting them for their selfish interests. Every time you give your word, you are putting your honor on the line. You're implying that others can place their trust in you because you value integrity and would never let them down. It goes without saying that if you don't live up to your word, you may end up tarnishing your credibility, damaging your relationships, and defaming your reputation. Most importantly, you'll be letting yourself down.

But when you operate with complete integrity, what you say will be taken at face value, your intentions will be assumed honorable, and your handshake will be as good as a contract. Most importantly, you can take great pride in the standards that you have set for yourself and sleep well at night knowing that your conscience is clear. As for others . . . just when they think they're fooling the world, they'll realize that they're only fooling themselves. A promise is a promise after all.

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