



Ilorin: **HISTORY, CULTURE** **AND** **LESSONS OF PEACEFUL** **CO-EXISTENCE**

EDITED BY:
A.G.A.S OLADOSU
Z.I. OSENI
M.A. ADEDIMEJI
A.L. AZEEZ

Published by:
CENTRE FOR ILORIN STUDIES (CILS)
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN
© 2013

ISBN: 978-978-52482-0-3

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior permission in writing from the author or publisher.

Printed by:
UNILORIN PRESS

The Islamic Theory and Practice of Peace and Peaceful co-existence in a Pluralistic Society

Ibrahim Adebayo

Introduction

Pages of the Glorious Qur'an are full of injunctions on peaceful co-existence between the Muslims and among people of other religions. The Qur'an also emphasises sanctity of life and property and it apportions stiff punishment for those found violating this divine injunction. In addition, Islam considers the inevitability of dispute within the community and even the immediate family members, and so, it encourages peaceful settlement of such without resorting to killing, maiming and warfare. Also, the Prophet himself was an embodiment of peace and a messenger of peace. He did not only preach peaceful co-existence between man and his Creator, but also between man and man and other living and non-living creatures in his environment. This presupposes that Islam is actually a religion of peace. However, looking at the Muslim community today, it seems that the theory of peace has not been transformed to practical utility, as Muslims are being accused of fomenting crises; they are involved in bombing, suicide, looting and killing. To add to this, those involved in these acts claim their involvement in such acts in defence of Islam and its teaching. It therefore connotes that Muslims are operating against the theory of their religion or that the Islamic theory of peaceful co-existence is a white elephant task that is better said than done. A cursory look at Islamic history, especially the life of Prophet Muhammad shows that the Muslims had operated in a non-Muslim dominated environment, they had operated as a majority group and they had contested with other civilizations and cultures, yet the Prophet was able to demonstrate Islamic ethical value of peaceful co-existence. This will therefore be considered in this paper for demonstration of the possible implementation of the Islamic theory of peaceful co-existence as showcased by the Prophet and his community.

The Islamic Theory of Peace and Peaceful Co-Existence That Islam is a religion of peace has been stressed by scholars. The term
'Islam' is an Arabic word derived from the word '*salām*' which literally means peace or connotes submission, surrender and obedience. By extension, it implies peace with one's creator, self and other creatures. By maintaining peace with the Creator, it means complete submission and total obedience to His will and through this he achieves peace of body and of mind and this consequently leads to peace in the society at large. Thus, the Qur'an says: "Nay, whoever submits His whole self to Allah and is a doer of good, he will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grief" (Q2:112).

The comprehensive nature of Islam as well as its definition as total submission to Allah is buttressed by the fact that all creatures of Allah are Muslims, as they have no option than to abide and submit to the laid-down law and order of the universe. The Qur'an says: "Do they not seek for other than the religion of Allah, while all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willing or unwilling bowed to His will, and to Him shall they all be brought back (Q3:83). Exegesising this verse of the Qur'an, Al-Mawdudi (1997:2) has this to say:

This powerful, all-pervasive law, which governs all that comprises the universe, from the tiniest specks of dust to the magnificent galaxies in high heavens, is the law of God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe. As the entire creation obeys the law of God, the whole universe, therefore, literally follows the religion of Islam – for Islam signifies nothing but obedience and submission to Allah, the Lord of the universe. The sun, the moon, the earth, and all other heavenly bodies are thus 'Muslim.' So is the case with air, water, and heat, stones, trees and

animal. Everything in the universe is 'Muslim' for it obeys God by submission to His laws.

By implication, since obedience to Allah's law means peace, all creatures of Allah are therefore expected to be treated with courtesy to maintain the peace. They should be honoured and should not be harmed or treated badly. Where there is any deviation by any of the creatures, or where any of the laws of God is violated by him, God Himself has laid down steps to be taken to check such excesses.

Closely related to the above, Islam teaches that mankind was created from a single soul which later developed to family, clan and nation. By implication, all humanity should share together a single kinship and so should see their differences as manmade and inevitable. This is because each nation is identified by its own unique character and identity that are different from those of other communities. As such, such differences should not lead to discrimination and severance of ties and racial discrimination. With this spirit of a single origin, attacking one another therefore amounts to attacking oneself. In another dimension, the Qur'an says:

O ye people! Fear your Lord who created you from a single soul and of its kind created its mate, and from them twain spread many men and women; and fear Allah, in Whose name you appeal to one another, and fear him particularly respecting ties of kinship. Verily Allah watches over you. (Q4:1).

The nature of mankind is made by Allah that it comprises male and female. These two sexes perform different responsibility in the society one complementing that of the other. Remembering that the two sexes emanated from a single source will therefore serve as a tool to maintain peaceful co-existence in the family. Peace will undoubtedly elude a family that sees women inferior to the male counterparts or rather discriminate among the sexes. Many cultures and civilizations had coined such

absurdities about women as the source of impurity and the origin of evil, forgetting that both male and female were of the same origin and that there is no difference between them. Conversely however, the fact that they are from the same origin does not mean that they are identical individuals, and so competing with each other indiscriminately amounts to extremism. A society where women are allowed to leave their primary responsibility and grossly compete in the responsibility meant for men will not live peacefully. This is because no one can do satisfactorily the natural responsibility of another. Take for instance a situation where a family leaves the rearing and nurturing of its children into the hand of a house maid, such children may take after the nanny whose fate had forced her to take that duty.

Islam and Peace in a Multi-religious society

One needs to understand that varieties experienced in the universe are divinely designed, as it is not the will of Allah to make the universe a monolithic society. So, it does not catch God unaware that many religions are professed by people. The following Qur'anic verses confirm this:

And if your Lord had so willed, He could surely have made mankind one *Ummah* [nation or community (following one religion only i.e. Islam)], but they will not cease to disagree, - (Q11:118).

And if Allah had pleased, He would surely have made them a single nation, but He admits whom He pleases to His mercy. And the wrongdoers have no protector nor helper. (Q42:8)

He it is Who created you, then some of you are disbelievers and some of you are believers. And Allah is All-Seer of what you do. (Q64:2)

Had Allah willed, they would not have taken others besides Him in worship. And We have not made you a watcher over them nor are you set over them to dispose of their affairs.(Q6:107).

These passages imply that Islam recognizes the existence of other religions and that each religion and religious community has its own worldview and value systems, sentiment and sensitivities and so one should not abuse their belief.

Revile not you those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings. In the end will they return to their Lord, and We shall then tell them the truth of all that they did (Q6:108).

Contrary to the belief that *jihad* is meant to compel people to accept Islam, the Qur'an explicitly discusses that peace should be maintained with people of other religions. Indeed, it enjoins accommodating the *mushrikun* and even protecting them against aggression. This will afford such *mushrikun* the opportunity to know more about Islam and so convince them to accept the religion. The following passage of the Qur'an confirms this thus:

And if one of the idolaters seek protection from you, grant him protection till he hears the word of Allah, then make him attain his place of safety; this is because they are a people who do not know.(Q9:6).

Explaining this verse, Sayyid Qutb writes:

This religion seeks to provide knowledge to those who lack such knowledge, and to

give protection to whoever appeals for protection, even though they may belong to the enemy camp and who might have fought to suppress the Islamic message. It resorts to the use of force only to destroy physical forces that prevent people from listening to God's word and stop them from knowing what He has revealed. Such forces deprive them of the chance to follow God's guidance and force them into submission to beings other than God. When such physical forces have been destroyed and impediments have been removed, individuals are given protection, despite choosing to remain unbelievers. Islam only informs them of God's word without subjecting them to fear or pressure, and grants them protection and security, the fact that they continue to reject God's message notwithstanding.

From the above, it is understood that the ignorance of non-Muslims about Islam may make them to be hostile to the religion. It therefore becomes the responsibility of the Muslims to make the religion attractive to them through their character, accommodation and generosity. No one can accept a religion whose adherents are hostile to him. This explains why one has not witnessed gross converts to a religion by virtue of the hostility of its adherents to people or their threat to kill them if they do not accept the religion. Rather than forcing a religion the throat of the people, the Qur'an enjoins repelling evil with good in the following passage:

The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then lo! he, between whom and

thee there was enmity (will become) as though he was a bosom friend. (Q41:34)

In the same vein, Islam enjoins a mild way of responding to transgression by people of other faiths.

If you see those who mock our revelations, you shall avoid them until they delve into another subject. If the devil causes you to forget, then, as soon as you remember, do not sit with such evil people. And those who are righteous are not at all accountable for them, but their duty is to admonish them that they may fear Allah. (Q6: 68-69).

In another instance, the Qur'an enjoins that differences in religion should not jeopardize peaceful co-existence among mankind. Rather, each should remain attached to the dictate of his religion. It says:

Say: o you who reject faith! I worship not that which you worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which you are inclined to worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. To you your religion and to me mine (Q109: 1-6).

Islam further facilitates peaceful co-existence among adherents of different religions by encouraging mutual understanding in form of dialogue among them. Such dialogue will provide opportunities for understanding values commonly shared by them, and to a large extent that their prophets derived their message from the same source, and so the conflicts between them would be seen as man-made for personal achievement of those who perpetrate them. In the words of Bidmos (2012: 20-21):

The position of prophets and messengers of Allah on earth is akin to that of the ambassadors of the same country who

meet in different parts of the world; they cannot antagonize one another because they carry the same passport, the same constitution representing the same head of state, and spreading the same message.

A confirmation of the above could be appreciated in the common ethical values shared by Islam and Christianity. Such include love, affection, compassion, benevolence, kindness, humbleness, generosity, caring for parents, the weak, the widows, the handicapped and the less fortunate ones in the society; and obedience to God and the constituted authorities among others. The two religions equally have a uniform number of forbidden items. Take for instance, part of the biblical 'Ten Commandments' are: "You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness and you shall not covet or desire what belongs to others." In the same vein, the forbidden items in the Islamic law as *hadd* and *qisas* are theft, robbery or banditry, adultery, slanders on adultery, intoxication, apostasy and murder. In short, dialogue between the Muslims and the Christians will facilitate better understanding of another religion and this will ensure peaceful co-existence among them. It is on record that the Prophet entertained a theological debate with a prominent Christian delegation from Najran who came to visit him in Madinah. Members of the delegate were not only allowed to stay in the Prophet's mosques, but were also allowed to perform their religious practices inside the mosque (Muhammad Ali, 2012).

The *Maqāsid ash-sharī'ah* and Peaceful co-existence

Looking at the concept of peace from another Islamic perspective, one observes that the *Maqasid ash-shari'ah* is to establish an ethical society where peace and security would reign supreme. Islam thus abhors any act that threatens security of any of the enumerated endowments. Corroborating the above, the Holy Qur'an states:

... whoever kills a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption and mischief in the

earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind, and whoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind. Our messengers came unto them of old with clear proofs (of Allah's Sovereignty), but afterwards lo! Many of them became prodigals in the earth (Qur'an, 5: 32).

It is however disheartening that the introduction of Islamic criminal law (Shari'ah) in some parts of northern state of Nigeria has not made much impact on the peace and security situation in those states. The crime rate in these Shari'ah-practicing states is escalating every day, and this gives the impression that it might be a deliberate attempt to politicize it and so belie the system as not being capable of instilling peaceful co-existence in the land. However, one understands that it is not the implementation of this law that is problematic, but the attitude of some politicians who are not favourably disposed to its implementation and those who have turned religion to their personal properties which they could manipulate the way it suits them. This informs the warning of Kamaruzaman (2010: 95-96) when he writes:

Religions are not personal properties, nor are they seasonal institutions to be engineered and fashioned at the whims and fancies of certain individuals, or groups, to fit into personalized preferences and tastes. The essence of religion is to guide people to a proper life in this world and in the next. If the teachings of particular religion are twisted and re-fashioned just to resolve certain issues at hand, the religion can no longer stand as guide but are being guided by such people. The proper thing

to do is to work along the lines of the religious teachings, to employ the flexibilities within the injunctions to address the issues, but not to change or demand for changes of the injunctions and the teachings of the religion.

If the latter is done, then religion will fail as a religion and will become a mere cult, confined in its teachings and local in its membership. A religion by its very nature being a religion, has teachings that are universal and particular, and it is these universal teachings that make a religion acceptable to people across all Ages and across all divides – racial, national, cultural, geographical, political, linguistic divides. It is these universal values too that appear as common and parallel values across the religions.

To ensure peaceful co-existence in the society, Islam identifies six vital ingredients salient to peace and peaceful co-existence in life. They are security of life, property, progeny, intellect, religion and human dignity. Where any of these issues suffers, no peace can be maintained. As such, Islam considers violation of any of these as criminal offence and attaches to each of them appropriate capital punishment to serve as deterrent to others. Security of life is important to peaceful co-existence in any society. Where souls are terminated indiscriminately, no peace can reign. As such, Islam regards killing of a single soul as killing a whole nation. This is because such can persist and spread in view of retaliation. Also, Islam forbids suicide attack and homicide. Explaining the celestial punishment for killing a soul, the Qur'an says:

And whoever kills a believer

intentionally, his punishment is hell; he shall abide in it, and Allah will send His wrath on him and curse him and prepare for him a painful chastisement (Q4: 93).

A killer is expected to be killed, and remission in case the brother of the slain demands for compensation (Q2:178). Those who mistakenly killed another believer would set free a believing slave and compensation (blood-money) (Q4:92). The blood money for taking life by mistake according to the March 2013 calculation of the Kwara State Sharia Court of Appeal was N37,375,200.00 (Adebayo, 2013).

In addition to security of life enjoined by Islam, the religion also preaches the sanctity of property. Where this is not imposed, hardly can peace reign. Property can be misappropriated in various ways. It can be in form of theft, or through dubious transaction such as gambling and bribery, and *riba*. Islam therefore recommends amputation of the hands of thieves and forbids gambling, bribery, *riba* and usurpation of orphan's property. To ensure that peace is not threatened, it forbids trade in wine and narcotics, embezzlement, and wrong measuring and weighing.

The enmity caused by adultery and fornication knows no bound. Islam therefore encourages marriage and forbids *zina* or adultery. It recommends scourging with a hundred stripes (*Jald*) or stoning to death (*Rajm*) as punishment for fornication or adultery respectively as the case may be. There is no doubt that where adultery persists with impunity, different sexually transmitted diseases prevail and the products of such illegal intercourse suffer stigmatization, abuse and denial of some rights all which can eventually disrupt the societal peace (Adebayo, 2013).

In order to ensure sanctity of intellect, Islam forbids taking of *khamr* or any drug which impairs the faculty of reasoning and decision-making. Many criminal offences committed by people could be attributed to the influence of alcohol.

To ensure harmony between adherents of religions, Islam, though sees itself as the only acceptable religion in the sight of Allah, recognises the existence of other religions and so enjoins good relationship between the

Muslims and non-Muslims particularly the Jews and Christians. It declares the consumption of their food and marriage of their women lawful to the Muslims. It further encourages mutual dialogue among adherents of religions, and enjoins that membership drive be carried out with wisdom and beautiful admonition.

Lastly in this section, Islam identifies some social practices which can cause hatred, and enmity and so threaten the peace of the society. It therefore forbids such practices as slander, mockery, reviling by nicknames, suspicion, spying, backbiting and gossiping. This is explicitly mentioned in the following passage of the Qur'an:

O you who believe! Let not a group scoff at another group; it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let (some) women scoff at other women, it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. How bad it is to insult one's brother after having Faith {i.e. to call your Muslim brother by (unfavourable nicknames)}. And whosoever does not repent, then such are indeed wrong-doers. (Q49:11).

The Qur'an further prohibits defamation of character in form of accusing a virtuous woman of sexual immorality. It prescribes eighty lashes of the cane to anybody found guilty of this offence, as it can cause fracas in the society (Q24: 4-5). The enormity of wagging one's tongue to spreading unfounded information is mentioned in the Qur'an in the following words:

Your tongues moved and your mouths spoke of something of which you had no knowledge. You thought it to be a trivial matter, while in the eyes of God it is blasphemy.

Apart from the fact that Islam frowns at rumour mongering and backbiting (Q104:1), it also recognises the power of unfounded information in causing crisis in the society. As such, the Qur'an enjoins verification and authentication of any piece of information brought to us before taking actions. In a clear language, the Qur'an says:

O ye who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest you harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what you have done (Q49:6).

Peace Processes of the Prophet

The message of Islam came to the Makkans unexpectedly. With the public proclamation of Islam by the Prophet, the Makkans adopted various methods to stop him from his Islamization project. Initially, poets were employed to start ridiculing him and belying his prophethood. Furthermore, they charged him to perform miracles with which to prove his prophethood as did Moses and Jesus. He was asked to turn Mount Safa and Mount Marwah into gold, to resurrect the dead, to cause Angel Jibril to appear and speak to all of them, to cause the Qur'an to fall down from heaven already written and to cause a water fountain to spring whose water would be sweeter than that of zamzam. In spite these intimidations and slighting, the Prophet and his early followers did not decide to set fire in the houses of the poets, and they did not bomb down their property. They rather faced this challenge with patience and perseverance.

The Makkans went further to embark on physical attack on the Muslims. Bilal, an Abyssinian slave, for instance was tortured by his master just because he professed Islam and was not ready to renounce it. Rather than fighting the master for this inhuman treatment, Abu Bakr rescued his Muslim brother, Bilal, by buying him from his master and thereafter set him free. He was said to have bought many of the slaves and clients like these and set them free. In spite of the protection enjoyed by the Prophet from

the Banu Hashim and Banu al-Muttallib, his close relatives did not stop humiliating him. Umm Jamil, Abu Lahab's wife was said to have thrown the refuse from her house onto Muhammad's door. Abu Lahab himself was said to have thrown the entrails of a goat sacrificed to one of the gods at the Prophet. In spite of all these vituperation and vile calumnies against the Prophet and the Muslims, they remained undaunted and the Prophet insisted not to abjure the cause of Islam even if sun and moon were given to him.

Hijrah of the Prophet as a means of maintaining peaceful co-existence

A strategy adopted by the Prophet when the persecution was becoming unbearable to him and his followers was to ask his people to migrate to Abyssinia. In the first instance, eleven men and four women left Makkah for Abyssinia. This was later followed by another batch of about eighty men excluding women and children, all in attempt to save the Muslims from further persecution. The acceptance of Negus of Abyssinia to host the Muslims, his rejection of the request of the Makkans from the king to send out the refugees in his domain back to Makkah confirm the good rapport between the Muslims and the Christian kingdom at that time when the adherents of religions were so dedicated and committed to truth rather than being influenced by ethnicity and racism. The decision of the Prophet to send his followers to the Christian land also confirmed the acknowledgement of religious brotherhood between the two scriptural religions.

With the death of Abu Talib and Khadijah, the Quraysh increased their hostility against Muhammad and the Muslims. This forced the Prophet to sneak out of Makkah and went to Ta'if. There he was stoned out of the city. Later, the Prophet was commanded to migrate to Yathrib where he was warmly received by the Yathribians and there he constituted the *Ummah* comprising the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar*. Adebayo (2010) has aptly captured the implication of the emigration of the Prophet for personal and national security. In order cement the brotherhood of the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* and to ensure social cohesion amongst them, the Prophet went

further to immediately erect a mosque which served as a centre for them to meet at least five times daily.

It needs to be mentioned that, when the Prophet got to Madinah, he met a more complex society than that of Makkah. This is aptly described by Shehu (2009: 69) when he writes:

There came to appear (about) three distinct communities. These were the communities of the believers, the idolaters (*mushrikun*, among the Arabs) and the people of the Book (the Jews in particular). Within the community of the believers there were the hypocrites (*Munafiqun*) who constituted yet, another distinctive entity. The Prophet came to face an enemy that was more polished, more cunning, complex and tricky to deal with.

The Prophet faced this challenge by uniting the groups and coming up with what is popularly called “the constitution of Madinah” which Baderin (2000) describes as a demonstration of “constitutionalism, a positive step forward, a specific identification of the rights and duties of the people, and a basis for peaceful coexistence.” This constitution no doubt, assisted in binding different sections of the community together, and it guided the citizens in their dealings with one another. The consciousness of the citizens of the content of the constitution was manifested in the engagement of Abu Bakr with a Jewish Arab of the Banu Qaynuqa', Finhas, when out of anger, the former reacted that “if it were not for the charter (i.e, the Constitution of Madinah) between us and you, I would have cut off your head” (Baderin, 2000: 61). An excerpt from the constitution as documented by Haykal (1982: 180-183) suffices here:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This is a covenant given by Muhammad to the believers and

Muslims of Quraysh, Yathrib, and those who followed them, joined them, and fought with them. They constitute one *Ummah* (nation) to the exclusion of all men.... Any Jew who follows us is entitled to assistance and the same rights as any one of us, without injustice or partisanship... The Jews of *Banu Awz* are an *Ummah* alongside the believers. The Jews have their religion and the Muslims theirs. Both enjoy the security of their own populace and clients except the unjust and the criminal among them... The Jews shall bear their public expenses and so will the Muslims. Each shall assist the other against any violator of this covenant... The town of Yathrib shall constitute a sanctuary for the parties of this covenant. Their neighbours shall be treated as themselves as long as they perpetuate no crime and commit no harm... The people of this covenant shall come to the assistance of one another against whoever attacks Yathrib...

It needs to be mentioned that in order to consolidate peace with the Jews of Madinah, the Prophet used to visit their chiefs and cultivated the friendship of their nobles by virtue of their being scripturists and monotheists. He maintained friendship with them to the point of fasting with them on the days they fasted. He also prayed facing their own direction – Jerusalem, all in the name of maintaining peaceful co-existence with them (Haykal, 1982: 179). With this gesture demonstrated by the Prophet, the Christian Arabs of Najran did not hesitate to contact him to negotiate their

own place in the emerging society. The Prophet welcomed them, presented them with gifts, granted them autonomous status as their Jewish counterparts, and even directed that they should be escorted back to their place of abode by a Muslim bodyguard and a Muslim statesman. It was only when they deviated and violated the agreement made with them that some of the Jewish tribes were expelled from Madinah in line with the provisions of the agreement made. It needs to be added that this spirit of peaceful co-existence was equally demonstrated by 'Umar bn al-Khattab, the second caliph of Islam in his treatment of the Jews and Christians of Byzantium after the fall of Jerusalem. It was said that the Khalifah signed a treaty prepared by Mu'awiyah, with Sophronius (560-638), Patriarch of the city, on behalf of the Christians thus:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This is the guarantee granted to the inhabitants of Aelia by 'Umar, Servant of God, and commander of the believers. He guarantees for them the safety of their persons, of their goods, of their churches and crosses – whether in good state of repair or otherwise – and generally of their religion. Their churches will not be changed into dwellings, nor destroyed. Neither they nor their other properties will suffer any damage whatever. In matters of religions, no coercion will be exercised against them; nor will any of them be hurt... (Al-Faruqi, 1998: 295-296).

From the above, it could be seen that the Prophet and his companions left no stone unturned in terms of ensuring peaceful co-existence between the Muslims and amongst the Jews and the Christians. No record has shown it that churches and synagogues belonging to them were burnt by the Prophet or the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

Jihad as a peace process

As much as the Prophet and the Muslims left their fatherland for peace to reign and to protect the new religion, the acceptance of the Muslims by the people of Yathrib was offensive to the Quraysh who saw the step as a threat for their survival. They therefore decided to wage war against him. That was the time the Almighty God asked the Muslims to prepare for war against the Quraysh because the threat and injustice would persist should they continue to run away from them. This is captured in the following Qur'anic passage:

Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged because they are wronged; and verily, Allah is Most Powerful for their aid. They were those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right; (for no cause) except that they say, "Our Lord is Allah." Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure. Allah will certainly aid those who aid His cause; for verily Allah is full of strength, Exalted in Might (able to enforce His Will) (Q. 22: 39-40).

From the above Qur'anic verse, it could be seen that the wars fought by the Prophet were wars of defence against the oppression and injustice of the Quraysh to protect the weak and helpless men, women and children. From this Qur'anic passage, Fury (1995:97-98) advances three reasons why Allah permitted the Prophet to fight the Quraysh, namely, to confront the oppression of the oppressors and to check the persistence of the oppression; for the mere fact that the Muslims were unjustly forced out of their homes and were denied access to their belongings; and finally because

the new agreement between the Muslims and the Jews and Christians of Madinah which must be protected and so the Muslims should not allow the Makkans to threaten the peace between the Muslims and the *ahlul-kitāb*. This explains why the further stresses:

And why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? Men, women, and children, whose cry is: "Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors and raise for us from thee one who will protect and raise for us from Thee one who will help (Q. 4: 75).

The recent declaration of state of emergency in Bornu, Adamawa and Yobe states in Nigeria where military men were deployed to restore peace and check the persistent killing of innocent people by the Boko Haram in the areas shows that taking of arms against the oppressors could be an effective way of maintaining peace in the society. However, in spite of the permission to fight injustice, such should be done within the purview of Islam and human dignity. This was indeed demonstrated by the Prophet in his treatment of the prisoners of war. After the battle of Badr, the Prophet instructed that the captives of the war be treated well. Initially, he did not know what to do with them – to kill them or to accept ransom for them. He saw the risk in accepting ransom for them as most of them were strong warriors and might attempt to wage another war against him; and if he were to kill them, that would further incite their people in Quraysh to further acts of violence. The Muslims became divided on this until the Prophet decided to release them on payment of ransom. He even forgave and released one 'Amr ibn Abdullah ibn Umayr al-Jumahi who promised that he would never fight the Prophet again. He however violated his pledge when he fought against the Muslims in the battle of Uhud and so was captured and executed (Haykal, 1982).

The battle of Uhud was fought consequent upon the victory of the

Muslims at Badr. In order to save their face, the Quraysh decided to revenge and so the Muslims had to defend themselves. The closeness of the venue of the battle to Madinah is a clear indication that the Quraysh were the one who ignited the war and so the Muslims had no option than to defend themselves. At the battlefield, the Prophet strategically stationed the archers and instructed them never to leave their place under any circumstance. Yielding to this instruction, the Muslims were gaining upper hand on the Quraysh and they consequently took to their heels. The archers whom the Prophet ordered not to leave the mountainside for any reason at all became fascinated at the way other Muslims were gathering the booty and so left their place to have their own portion of the booty. The Makkan cavalry used the opportunity to seize the mountainside and attacked the Muslims to the extent that the Prophet himself sustained injury that the Makkans believed they had succeeded in killing him. About seventy Muslims were said to have lost their lives at the battle. The Quraysh were so heartless to the extent that Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan was said to have mutilated the body of the dead Muslims at the war and she cut the body of Hamzah the uncle of the Prophet open and pulled out his liver and began to chew it. This episode touched the Prophet that he vowed to avenge these evil deeds. To this Allah revealed:

If you want retaliation, let it be equal to that which you faced. But if you exercise patience it will be better for you. Exercise patience and let it be only for the cause of God. Do not be grieved about them nor disappointed at their evil plans. God is certainly with the pious and the righteous ones. (Q16: 126-128).

Another instance of peace building strategy of the Muslims could be appreciated in the battle of Khandaq where the Prophet on the advice of Salman al-Farisi adopted self-fortification within the wall of Yathrib in form of digging of a dry moat around the city and the fortification of the buildings within. The Muslims went into action and started digging the moat in six days. The Prophet himself actively participated in the digging, all in his bid to

protect the community. When the Quraysh eventually came, they found it difficult to enter in to the town and so accused the Muslims of cowardice. Yet, they insisted to attack the Muslims and so decided to stay there as they were determined to avenge themselves for the previous defeats. They however were dispatched by a strong wind which blew away their tents. In this way, the Muslims won the war without a single shot and by only taking preventive measure of protecting themselves.

Treaty of Hdaybiyyah and the conquest of Makkah

As Muslims were banished from their hometown and from performing their religious rites of pilgrimage to the ancient house, the Holy Ka'bah which was a common ancestral legacy of the Arabs, they felt that the Quraysh had done a great injustice to them. In 628CE therefore, the Prophet set out for Makkah at the head of 1,500 followers to perform the Umrah in one of the sacred months during which raiding or fighting was forbidden. The Quraysh were not convinced of this, and so armed themselves and went to waylay the Muslims. When the Muslims learnt of this, they turned to another direction towards Makkah through Hdaybiyyah. The Quraysh then sent one Suhayl ibn Amr to reconcile Muhammad and ask him to return back to Madinah and would only be allowed to enter Makkah the following year. The negotiation lasted a long time and the term of the treaty was contrary to the wish of the Muslims to the extent that Umar lost patience and said to Abu Bakr: "O Abu Bakr! Isn't Muhammad the prophet of God and aren't we Muslims? Why then should we give in to the unbelievers in a matter vital to our faith?"

After concluding the negotiations, Prophet Muhammad called 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and said to him: "write in the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate." Suhayl quickly interrupted: "stop; I do not know either the Merciful or the Compassionate. Write in your name O God." The Prophet instructed Ali to write accordingly and continued: "write, following is the text of a pact reached by Muhammad, the Prophet of God and Suhayl ibn 'Amr." Suhayl again interrupted: "stop it. If I accepted you as a Prophet of God, I wouldn't have been hostile to you. You should write only your name and the name of your father." Still mindful of the importance of peace, the Prophet asked 'Ali to write Muhammad ibn Abdullah. To further demonstrate the level of tolerance of the Prophet, it is pertinent to itemize

some of the terms of the treaty. They include:

1. That any person from Quraysh emigrating to Muhammad's camp without permission from his guardian would have to be returned to Makkah, whereas any Muslim emigrating from Muhammad's camp to Makkah would not have to be returned.
2. The two camps were to abstain from evil and there was to be no raiding or spoliation for the next ten years.
3. Any tribe or group was free to enter into covenant with any of the camp.
4. The Muslims should go back to Madinah and should not enter Makkah that year, but they are free to come the following year.
5. That by the following year when the Muslims came for pilgrimage, the Quraysh would go out of the town and the Muslims would be allowed to remain in Makkah only for three days.

The Muslims were disappointed with the conclusion of the treat of Hdaybiyyah, and they had to slaughter their animals at Hdaybiyyah and went back to Madinah disappointedly. They thus sacrificed their rights only to ensure peaceful co-existence between the Muslims and the Quraysh. However, the treaty consequently became a blessing for the Muslims as it eventually led to the conquest of Makkah by the Muslims when the Makkans breeched the ten years' truce made between them and the Muslims. The Prophet thus marched to Makkah with a force of 10,000 men, spent between fifteen to twenty days there. The Ka'bah and the private houses were cleansed of idols. The idols were destroyed and the Makkans accepted Islam voluntarily.

Farewell Pilgrimage of the Prophet and his message of peace

In the year 632 CE, the Prophet and the Muslims went to perform pilgrimage. After the pilgrimage, the Prophet preached a sermon which was regarded as the farewell message. A cursory look at the content of the sermon demonstrated the seriousness of the Prophet on his peace mission. For instance, he emphasized sanctity of lives and property, consciousness of Allah and the Last Day and that all bloodshed in the pagan period should be left unavenged. He also forbade usury or interest and that trust should be returned to its rightful owner. To maintain peace in the family set-up, the Prophet further mentioned the rights of the wife upon the husband and vice-versa. He urged the wife not to fraternize with anyone whom the

husband did not approve and never to commit adultery. He enjoined husbands to feed and clothe their wives in kindness and to treat them well because they are partners and committed helpers.

Furthermore, the Prophet in his farewell message, enjoined kindness and good treatment of the slaves, orphans, poor and the needy. He commanded obedience to constituted authority and to hold tenaciously to the Qur'an the Sunnah. Finally, he warned the Muslims against injustice and that every Muslim is a brother to another Muslim and so, nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belonged to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. He concluded by saying that all human races are equal before Allah and that there is no superiority of the Arabs over non-Arabs and vice-versa.

Lessons from the Islamic Perspective of peace and peaceful co-existence

One major ingredient of peace in Islam is *taqwa* or consciousness of Allah. Indeed, all the pillars of Islam are geared toward attainment of *taqwa* with its resultant effect of facilitating peace with Allah and other creatures of Allah. As noted earlier, maintaining peace with Allah implies obedience to His command. In essence, disobedience to Allah's command is a major threat to peaceful co-existence. Prior to Adam's disobedience to Allah's injunction, he was in absolute peace with his Lord, his wife and his environment. As such, an environment which condones disobedience to Allah's command, bids farewell to peace and welcomes violence, rancor, disharmony and hullabaloo.

Another major lesson that can be derived from the Islamic viewpoint on peace is endurance. Islam teaches patient and endurance in dealing with one another. It understands that in a multi-religious and multi-cultural society, there is tendency for differences which may lead to crisis. Unless one exercise patience, such can lead to crisis which might not be checked for years. As such, impatience is seen as the handiwork of Satan. The Prophet was patient in dealing with his opponents and so eventually became victorious over his enemies who insisted to uproot his new religion.

Lastly, Islam emphasizes justice in all its ramification. It is a fact that where justice is denied, peace is threatened. The world knows no peace

today because it condones injustice. In the words of Kamaruzaman (2010: 143), "there can be no peace without justice, and there can be no justice if due rights are not given appropriately to one and all, human and non-human alike. Rights, justice, harmony and peace are therefore all intertwined; one cannot exist without the other." Justice is enjoined in all human actions and in every sphere of his life. Adebayo (2010) has dealt extensively on the concept of 'adl and its relations to Islamic financial service delivery. He also observed that the incessant ethno-religious crises witnessed in Nigeria in particular and the world in general was as a result of gross injustice that has enveloped every stratum of the universe. The September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York was said to have been masterminded by Al-Qaeda to check the "economic exploitation of the Arab world by the US and to adopt a fair Middle East policy that must recognize the right of Palestinians to a proper homeland and decent living, not one determined by Zionists" (Oseghale, 2006).

Conclusion

From all indications, Islam has zero tolerance for terrorism and does not condone any act that can disrupt social peace and harmony. The religion has not only preached peaceful co-existence, the Prophet had also given practical demonstration of this in his dealings with the Muslims and adherents of other religions in his domain. If any Muslim therefore involves himself in any act that truncates peaceful co-existence in the society, he should be held responsible for such an action and not his religion, as many other factors can hide under religion to perpetrate such. After all, no one should blame a medical doctor or doubt his competency or the effectiveness of his prescription if the patient refuses to apply the drug as prescribed or decides only to read through the prescription but decides not to take the drug.

It is disheartening to observe that most of the crises in the world emanate from the Muslim countries and in Nigeria most of the religious crises are from the Northern part of Nigeria. While we observe that this could be an attempt to destabilize the Muslim countries; that of Nigeria

might be as result of poverty which beclouds the Northern part of the country. This is manifested in the teeming unemployed youths and alarming rate of beggars which come from the area, all which make the idle hands to be the devil workshop.

However, for people to appreciate the theory and practice of Islam on peace and peaceful co-existence, we propose that Muslims should be educated more on the Islamic stand on peace. Those who have been wrongly indoctrinated about the concept of *jihad* need to be re-orientated for them to have a true picture of what *jihad* is. Indeed such people need to be enlightened on the Islamic stand on sanctity of life and property as well as the strong punishment awaiting suicide bombers in the hereafter.

Finally, one has to mention that while Islam enjoins peaceful co-existence amongst adherents of different religions, this is not to be taken for granted to trample upon the Muslims or deny them their rights, as this can amount to injustice which the Muslims will not tolerate. The task of ensuring peaceful co-existence therefore lies on all the citizens living in a community regardless of the religion they profess.

References

- Adebayo, R.I. (2013) "A Glimpse of the Islamic Concept of Security: A Lesson for Nigeria." A paper presented at the 2013 Biennial International Religious Studies Conference organised by the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, between 14th and 17th April, 2013.
- Adebayo, R.I. (2010), "'Adl as the Bedrock of Islamic Financial Services Delivery." *Journal of Islamic Economics Banking and Finance*, vol. 6 No. 2. (Islamic Bank Training and Research Academy ((IBTRA), Dhaka, Bangladesh).
- Adebayo, R.I. (2010), "Ethno-Religious Crises and the Challenges of Sustainable Development in Nigeria." *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, vol. 12, No. 4. (Pennsylvania: Clarion University of Pennsylvania, Clarion, USA).
- Adebayo, R.I. (2010) "The Implications of the *Hijratur-Rasul* for Personal and National Security;" *The FAIS Journal of the Humanities*, vol. 4, No. 2, (Bayero University, Kano).
- Ali, M.M. (1973), *The Religion of Islam*, (Lahore: The Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam).
- Ali, S.A. (1979), *A Short History of the Saracens*; (Churiwalan: Kutub Khana Ishayat-ul-Islam).
- Ahmad, Huda Rizqillah (1992), *As-Sīrat an-Nabawiyyat fi Dhau al-Masādir al-Asliyyah*, (Riyadh: Makaz al-Mulk Faysal lil-buhuth wad-dirasat al-Islamiyyah).
- Baderin, M.A. "The Evolution of Islamic Law of Nations and the Modern International Order: Universal Peace through Mutuality and Cooperation." *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, vol. 17, No. 2.
- Badmos, M.A. (2012), Religious harmony in a Multi-faith Society: An Islamic Perspective. (Second Departmental Public Lecture of the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Ilorin).
- Faruqi, R.I. (1998), *Islam and other Faiths*, Ataullah Siddiqui (ed.) (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation).

- Fury, Sulayman Salman al-Mansur, (1995), *Rahmatan lil-'alaminah*, (Riyadh: Dar as-Salam).
- Haykal, M.H. (1976) *The Life of Muhammad* (Tr. By I.R. Al-Faruqi); (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau).
- Kamaruzaman, K.O. (2010), *Religion and Pluralistic Co-existence: The Muhibah Perspective (A Collection of Seminar Papers)*, (Malaysia: IIUM Press).
- Mahdi Risq-Allah Ahmad, (1992), *As-Sirat An-Nabawiyah fi Dhaui al-Masadir al-Asliyah*; (Riyadh: Markaz al-Mulk Faysal lil-buhuth wad-dirasat al-Islamiyyah).
- Maududi, S.A.A., (1997), *Towards Understanding Islam*, (Riyadh: International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations).
- Muhammad Ali, (2012), "Pluralism in Islam", *Hamdard Islamicus*, vol. XXXV, No. 2.
- Oseghale, E. (2006), "Violation of Muslims' Rights: Bedrock of Conflicts, Wars and Terrorism" in *Al-Hameed Islamic Magazine*, vol. 4, No. 2. May.
- Rahim, A. (1983), *Islamic History*; (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau).
- Sayyid Qutb, (undated) *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, (soft copy).
- Shehu Salisu (2009), *Planning, Strategy and Conduct of Combat in Islam*, (Kaduna: Rawluk Communications Ltd).
- Shehu Salisu (2001), *The Qur'an & World Peace*; (Lagos, Al-Mustaghfirun Foundation).