

Dynamics of PEACE PROCESSES

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CENTRE FOR PEACE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

Produced and printed in Nigeria at The Archers Press by

JOHN ARCHERS (Publishers) Ltd.
GPO Box 339, Dugbe, Ibadan

☎08058336156, 08034476916
e-mail:johnarchers@yahoo.co.uk

Published by
Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies
University of Ilorin, Ilorin

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First Published 2010

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ISBN 978-978-900-794-7

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Strategising Peace Through Islamic Ethical Values

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INTRODUCTION

IT seems the universe was peaceful prior to the creation of human beings. The angels, though holy and pure, were without passion or emotion, hence the decision of Allah to create a vicegerent who would be endowed with passion or emotion. The remonstrance of the angels to the proposal of Allah was the demonstration of their imperfection of knowledge, as the purpose of human creation was not to do mischief or shed blood on earth. However, that Allah did not actually debunk the assumption of the angels implied that instances of mischief and bloodshed could not actually be averted in the face of passion and emotion with which man was endowed. This notwithstanding, that Allah taught man the inner nature and qualities of all things including feelings implies that man should be able to love and understand love, and thus plan and initiate to qualify him as the vicegerent of Allah on earth.

In spite of the creation of mankind by Allah and the initial remonstrance of the angels to this, the peaceful rapport between the angels and their Creator still remained robust, as they all complied to Allah's directive to bow down to Adam. Iblis who refused and was haughty became accursed and so could no longer be in peace with

Allah. The peace between Adam, his wife and Allah also remained cordial until they violated Allah's instruction and so were dragged out of the state of felicity in which they had been; and so Allah said: "Get you down, all with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be dwelling place for you and an enjoyment for a time" (Qur'an 2:36). When later Adam and Eve realised their mistake, Allah turned towards them, accepted their repentance and promised them His guidance and that whosoever follows this guidance, "there shall be no fear on them, nor shall they grieve" (Qur'an 2:38).

In view of the inevitability of misunderstanding in the society, the Qur'an gives some approaches to conflict resolution which include reconciliation (*sulh* or *maslaha*), mediation (*wasta*), arbitration (*tahkim*), and dialogue, all of which are effective weapons in facilitating the process of communication and in restoring a state of harmony or social equilibrium. Another means of conflict resolution, in Islam is the use of will power to achieve peace as well as the internalisation of Islam to promote inner freedom and spiritual elevation of the individual. The Qur'an sees resolution of conflicts as a collective responsibility when it reads:

If two parties among the believers fall into a fight, make ye peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of Allah. But if it complies, then make peace between them with justice and be fair; for Allah loves those who are fair (and just). The believers are but a single brotherhood. So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive mercy (Q49:9-10).

These measures are put in place in view of the multiplicity of human temperament which makes them susceptible to conflict. The Prophet had rightly categorised human beings into four based on their temperament, namely: easily get annoyed and difficult to get pleased; easily get annoyed and easily get pleased; difficult to get annoyed and difficult to get pleased and difficult to get annoyed and easily get pleased. Although, the Prophet opted for the last category, it cannot be denied that the rest categories of mankind constitute every human society, hence conflicts become inevitable.

The bottom-line of what we are saying is that the nature of human beings makes them susceptible to dispute and misunderstanding, but with knowledge with which they are endowed, they should be able to learn how to live peacefully and settle their differences amicably. A means of acquiring knowledge of peaceful living and divine guidance is through Allah's divine scripture which is an embodiment of virtues and guardian against vice. Through it the Prophet was able to sanitise the pre-Islam Arabs from their barbaric practices of exploitation, immorality, and all sorts of iniquity. What is amazing therefore is the rate of disparity between the theory of the divine book and the practice of the people, especially when it comes to conflicts and their resolution in the society. It is on the basis of this that this paper shall consider the reasons for the disparity and discuss some ethical values which if imbibed will facilitate effective peace resolution in the community.

FACTORS HAMPERING APPLICATION OF RELIGION FOR PEACE RESOLUTION

The viewing of Islam through the lens of terrorism and extremism by the Western scholars and media is largely borne out of the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Islamic theory and culture. While Islamic theory is based on the main sources of Islam, Islamic culture features the integration of Islamic theory with cultural and traditional practices which host the religion. The accommodation of traditional practices of the hosting environment is considered by Abdalla (2007) as a threat to Islamic egalitarianism and democratic drive, but which to us is a common phenomenon to all religions of the world. The problem of accommodation is complicated by the attempts to interpret the sources of Islam within the context of traditional practices. Such are Muslims who make reference to the Qur'an to justify the superiority of men over women while closing their eyes to several verses which emphasise the equality of genders in terms of creation, action and accountability. The strand of Islamic culture, therefore, has been highly responsible for religious tension which has grossly led to loss of lives and destruction of property. Unfortunately, the tension does not limit itself to inter-religious rancour; rather, some intra-religious crises have also been recorded in the Islamic history of many countries. The *Yan Izalah* versus Sufi groups in Northern Nigeria, as well as *Imamship* tussle among some south-western Muslim communities, are good examples of this.

Ethnic affiliation is another serious factor hampering the effective utilisation of religion for the purpose it was meant to achieve in society. For instance, it may be a nightmare for a number of Christian groups to apply for a parcel of land to build churches in predominantly northern Muslim cities, not because of religious reasons but for ethnic reason. In the same vein, a Hausa Muslim may find it difficult to secure a job with a government department in a predominantly eastern Christian city not because he is a Muslim or that he is Hausa, but because he is a non-indigene. With this analysis, Ali Ahmad (2005) sees discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or religion as a common phenomenon in Nigeria despite the fact that the country's constitutional provisions frown at it and embrace unity in diversity. He concludes:

Thus, irrespective of constitutional guarantees against discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or religion, it is part of the political culture that such discriminations go unabated and are even perpetually promoted by all states in the country and justified on the ground of protecting and preserving limited resources of the state to the locals. Such discrimination has become the norm, and tends to attracting little attention from human rights activists.

Furthermore, quoting of scriptural verses out of context constitutes a major stumbling block to using religion for peace resolution. For instance, reference is always made to a verse that seems to have prevented friendship of Muslims with Jews and Christians (Qur'an 5:51-52). The over-generalisation of this verse may make one to create unnecessary hatred for these people, whereas the verse is only informing that

seeking guardians of authority from them might not be realisable because they too have their own interests to protect. This in no way does not imply that one should be hostile to them or that one should not befriend them. The position of Islam on the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims is that Allah only forbids friendship with those who are hostile to Islam and Muslims. The Qur'an clearly spells out this in the following:

Allah does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you on account of your religion nor drive you out of your homes to treat them with goodness and to be just to them; truly, Allah loves those who are just. Indeed, Allah forbids you (only) with regard to those who fight you on account of religion and drive you out of your homes, and assist (others) in driving you out, that you turn to them (in friendship); and whoever turns to them (in friendship), they are wrongdoers (Qur'an 60:8-9).

So, to generalise that Muslims should not take Christians as friends may not only be misleading but contradictory to "the injunctions of the Qur'an which enjoin affection and kindness to the good and peace-loving people of every religion, as well as the verses which permit marriage to the women of the people of the Book" (Qaradawi, 1989). In fact, the Qur'an further confirms that there are some among them who though are Christians, but nearest to them (the Muslims) in affection . . ." (Qur'an 5:81-82). Conversely, there are some who claim to be Muslims but are farther to Islam than non-Muslims. Not only this, the Qur'an describes that the traces of earnestness and humility in the faces of Muslims just like that of the God-fearing among the Jews and Christians (Qur'an 48:29). If the above is properly grasped, one is optimistic to say that the Qur'an is an embodiment of virtuous messages that can assist to fashion out peaceful co-existence among adherents of different religions. It is pertinent to consider some of these ethical virtues.

Ethical Virtues Related to Peace Resolution

Sanctity of Life

Most ethnic, political and religious crises have claimed many lives. These crises thus paved way for merciless killing of human beings just like the *jahiliyyah* period. A good case of ethnic crises similar to what obtained in pre-Islamic Arab land is cited by Albert (2005), where a scuffle between an Igbo trader, one Arthur Nwankwo and a Fulani security guard, Mallam Abubakar Abdu, both operating at the Sabongari market in Kano, led to community fracas as both were supported by their kinsmen, and more than thirty people were killed as a result of the incident. Consequent upon the 2006 mayhem in Maiduguri where several Igbo were killed, the Hausa communities in Enugu, Abia, Anambra and Delta states, had their own share of Igbo retaliation where many Hausa Muslims were killed and mosques destroyed and burnt. In the Kafanchan riot of March 1987, in addition to some mosques and churches that were burnt, about twenty-five people were killed and several others hospitalised (Lateju and Adebayo,

2006). In the same vein, Imam (2004) records the enormous casualty of the Maitatsine uprising of Bullum-Kuttu of 26-29 October 1982, the Jimeta Maitatsine crisis of February 26 - March 5 1984 and the Gombe Maitatsine disturbance of 26-28 April 1985. According to him, not less than 400 lives were lost in the Bullum-Kuttu uprising; 1,004 lives were lost and 5,913 families displaced in the Jimeta crisis; and over 100 lives were lost in the Gombe disturbance. All these crises led to destruction of lives and looting of properties worth millions of Naira. The big questions then are, what would a religion achieve in the face of bloody crises? If a religion should enjoin shedding the blood of mankind, what precisely will be the fate of such a religion among adherents of other religions? Will the Creator of the assassinated people be happy with the assassins? If shedding blood of people of other religions is sanctioned, why then are stipulated penalties for those who perpetrated the sinful act?

The Qur'an in many of its verses traces the genesis of mankind to a single soul. Though the world might be segmented into divisions based on colour, race, religion, humanity as a whole is seen as a single entity which emanated from a single soul (Q4:1; 49:13). The variations in language, colour, and ethnic group are only meant for recognition and not for discrimination. Upon all, no nation should self-praise itself, elevate itself above others, as there is no superiority of one nation over the other. The most honoured among mankind are the most righteous who can only be determined by God (Q.49:13). For peace to reign, therefore, mankind should see itself as one entity and so share its posterity and adversity together. Once this is understood, all forms of discrimination will be jettisoned, while individuals will deal justly and equitably with one another in the society.

The disparity in colour, language, and nationality is not a licence to non-recognition of the sanctity and sacredness of life. The Qur'an declares that "if anyone kills a person for any reason other than for (the killing of) a person or for sowing corruption in the land, it will be as if he had killed the whole of mankind" (Q5:35). The penalty for slain of a believer in Allah is mentioned in the Qur'an thus: "And for the one who kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is hell to abide therein, and the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him, and a great punishment is prepared for him." From this, one can infer that the Qur'anic injunction on sanctity of life is a form of peace resolution which should be explored during any crises and under no circumstance should such a dispute degenerate into shedding blood before resolution.

Islamic Brotherhood

The injunction that the five daily prayers be said congregationally is intended to promote peaceful co-existence among Muslims. In the mosque, individuals stand side by side with no discrimination whatsoever. This same service is organised at a wider forum every Friday at *Jum 'at* service. The annual *idil Fitr* and *idil Kabir* also serve the same purpose. Here, everybody performs the same duty, exchange pleasantries irrespective of colour, nationality or race. In the same vein, the annual pilgrimage to Makkah and

Madinah indicates a virile Islamic commonwealth of nations where all nations, races, and colours converge to perform the same rites, put on the same uniform, utter the same words, at the same time and in the same place. No other forum brings mankind together as does *Hajj*. The issue of *berebe* or *saw* does not emerge at all, and this is a practical demonstration of equality and unity of mankind which is an ingredient of peace. Apart from this, *hajj* serves as a reminder for one to understand that just as one leaves his family, friends and country for Makkah, so also will he be separated inevitably one day from them and so he will find himself amongst people he never met in life. Also, he has to maintain peace with people he comes in contact with, because he does not know where he will find himself next. In short, *hajj* provides opportunities for mutual co-operation, exchange of ideas and thoughts, advice, news and experience. For this to be achieved, the Qur'an enjoins that there should be no dispute (*jidat*) during *hajj* (Q.2:197); hence, all forms of argument, anger and disputes are suppressed. Once these are extended beyond *hajj* period, one is optimistic that peace will be sustained in the world. The institution of *hajj* breaks all forms of discrimination and enhances mutual cooperation, respect, love, assistance and brotherhood. All marks of discrimination and distinction between colours and races are removed. A vivid description of this was made by a German diplomat who says:

Let me describe in a few words the most striking and unforgettable sight that will present itself to your eye upon reaching the sacred territory. You will see a multitude of men, women and also children close perhaps to 2 million, from every corner of the world, black and brown of complexion, yellow and white Arab and Iranians, Turks and Malays, Chinese and African black and while Americans, blond and blue-eyed Europeans - in short to quote one of our great Germanic poets Friedrich Schillers: Who knows the nations, who the names of all who were together came?

The contemporary spirit of nationalism, ethnicism and tribalism is a serious threat to world peace. This is manifested in numerous wars in Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Liberia and Nigeria, to mention but a few. The Iran-Iraq war which lasted for more than eight years was no doubt a serious dent on the image of Islamic brotherhood, while the attack of Kuwait by Iraq was a clear manifestation of Iraqi's attempt to step on the toes of peace which her religion preaches, all in the name of personal aggrandisement and ethnicity.

The Qur'an as a primary source of Islam promotes the sense and spirit of brotherhood which transcends any nationalistic tendencies. It gives the impression that the spirit of nationalism and ethnicism was of the pre-Islamic period which Islam came to dismantle. It enjoins the spirit of unity and brotherhood when it says:

And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah and be not divided among yourselves, and remember Allah's favour on you, for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren (in Islamic faith), and you were on the brink of a pit of fire and He saved you from it (Qur'an 3:103).

If the spirit of Islamic brotherhood is strictly adhered to, intra-religious conflict would be a thing of the past. Ethnic conflicts would also be reduced as Muslims of a nation would not have the feeling of fighting Muslims of another nation. However, the Qur'an does not rule out the fact that there can arise a situation of misunderstanding, dispute and differences among the Muslims, hence it enjoins amicable resolution and reconciliation in the following words:

The believers are nothing else than brothers; so make reconciliation between your brothers and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy (Qur'an 49:10).

Stressing further the imperative of settling rift amicably and the danger inherent in conflict and hostility, the Prophet said:

Shall I not inform you of something more excellent in degree than fasting, charity and *salat*. On receiving the reply, 'Certainly', he said, "It is putting things right between people, for to incite people to dispute is like a razor. And I do not mean that it shaves off the hair but that it shears the religion.

The spirit of Islamic brotherhood and unity is further stressed in its frowning at physical fight or taking up arms against one another. In his statement, the Prophet says:

When two Muslims draw swords against each other, each one of the two would be an in-mate of hell-fire. Someone said: "This is the murderer, what is the case of the murdered?" The Prophet replied: "The latter had intended to kill his partner."

Going by this prophetic tradition, Muslims are forbidden from murdering another Muslim even pointing a weapon. Therefore, should Muslims in various warring towns or countries realise this, they would not have participated in any religious or ethnic crises. Muslims in Ile-Ife would realise that he would be taking up arms against their Muslim brethren in Modakeke; while Muslims from Erin-ile would understand the enormity of their participation in communal conflict against Offa.

The understanding of this principle was demonstrated by the Muslim Hutu and Tutsi populations of Burundi and Rwanda who did not participate in the wars of the two countries. Rather, they engaged in stopping the violence and in peacemaking. This was the finding of Abdalla (2007) in his Ph. D dissertation with the Institute of Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) at George Mason University. An excerpt of the finding is apposite here. He writes:

While briefly in Rwanda, and for a few weeks in Burundi, I encountered a sizeable population of Muslims, who lived among a majority of Christians. I was curious about the connection of those people's ethnic and religious identities. I thought for a while that, perhaps, Muslims were made of ethnic groups other than Hutus and Tutsis. I was quickly corrected; Muslims too were mainly either Hutus or Tutsis. This raised the question of how they handled themselves during the ethnic war. The response I received from Muslims in Rwanda and Burundi was that because they

were Muslims they should not, and could not fight each other, or fight others, because of ethnic differences; Islam, they said, prohibited that . . . In order to validate this story I asked professionals working with the United Nations and other western NGOs if they knew about that "phenomenon". Everyone I enquired from responded positively that it was true that the Muslim population refrained from participation in the war and that the Muslim sections of Kigali and Bujumbura were safe havens during the war.

The above shows a clear demonstration of the role of Islam in conflict resolution and peace building and how Muslims should comport themselves and hold fast to the rope of Allah, demonstrating their brotherhood in the face of adversity, chaos and crises.

Justice

Peaceful co-existence between the privileged and less privileged, rich and poor, ruler and the ruled, Muslims and non-Muslims, could only be ensured in an atmosphere of justice. Where justice is denied and the less privileged are unduly oppressed; resistance, violence, riot and terrorism quickly follow. The crisis in the Niger-Delta is borne out of the fact that the region has not received a just distribution of the country's wealth. The destruction of pipelines, kidnap and other forms of violence in the Niger-Delta are consequences of the feeling of injustice and deprivation they suffer despite their endowment with natural resources and the source of Nigeria's 'goose', they are still wallowing in abject poverty. Also, the relegation of justice is manifested in the political situation of the country. Various forms of manipulations and malpractices are the major characteristics of the political scene; and these are reasons why the political realm is noted to be a dirty game hosting hooliganism, thuggery and all forms of vice.

In the international scene, everybody is aware of the gross injustice done to the Palestinians by the Israelis. One doubts the moral justification of the Israelis to have gotten more than half of the Palestinian land in the first instance. The same question could be asked of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; the U.S invasion of Vietnam and Panama; and the then U.S.S.R invasion of Afghanistan. The brigandage against Argentina by Britain over the Falkland Islands could also be added to the long list of cases of injustice of the so-called superpowers on developing countries. The 'setting of fire on the house in the name of searching for a rat approach' of the U.S. against Afghanistan while searching for Bin Laden who was suspected to be the brain behind the September 11 episode, is another picture of oppressive hand of the superpower over the less privileged countries of the world.

It needs to be mentioned that consequent upon World War II, the United Nations was put in place following the London Declaration of January 1941 which was followed by the Atlanta Charter of 1942 and Moscow Conference of 1943 respectively. The organisation was formally established in October 24 1945 after series of conferences with Britain, former U.S.S.R., the U.S. and China as the brain behind it. Prior to this, the League of Nations which was on ground was considered as a toothless dog

which could only bark but could not bite. Hence the U.N. was saddled with the responsibility of maintaining global peace, fostering global unity and suppressing all acts of aggression through peaceful means (Dave-Vale, 1995). However, some steps had been taken by the U.N to accomplish the tasks assigned to it. One prominent achievement of the U.N was its resolution to collectively bombard Iraq for having invaded Kuwait, while Libya was sanctioned for bombing a U.S. aeroplane by two of her citizens. However, one expects that this kind of justice could better have been done to the U.S. for bombing Iranian Airbus in 1989, killing over 290 people; and the U.S.S.R. for bombing the Korean Airbus killing over 300 people. The recent silence of the U.N. on Palestine/Arab-Israel conflict equally confirms the injustice and one-sidedness of the U.N over the rest nations. This attitude of the U.N informs the conclusion of Salisu (2001: 11-12) that:

... the structure of the UNO is characterised by arrogance, selfishness and injustice. A situation whereby some few nations arrogate to themselves the right for permanent and powerful seats in the highest and supreme ruling body of the organisation is really a great obstacle to fairplay, justice and peace. The decisions and resolutions of the UNO are significantly characterised by injustice, selfishness, tyranny, and so on. The UNO has demonstrated double standards in most of its resolutions. Its resolutions are usually subservient to the interests of the nations which have veto powers . . . There is little wonder, therefore, that even when the UN has existed for four decades trouble is still the order of the day in the world.

The injustice of the UN could therefore be felt in its taking sides with the stronger nation in a conflict that involves stronger and weaker nation, and its silence in a conflict where its favourite is gaining upper hand over a nation it considers its foe.

Rejection of injustice and oppression by victims is a major duty of every religion. In the Qur'an, permission is given to the oppressed to resist unjustified oppression. The Qur'an 22:39-40 reads:

To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged; and verily, Allah is Most Powerful for their aid. (They are) 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 ...

Justice is a broad concept in Islam. It involves one's rise to claim the reverse of physical maltreatment, injuries and such social deprivation as denial of right or entitlement, deprivation of right share, marginalisation of a people and domination in public context. It is also part of justice to reconcile conflicting parties and to enforce peace among them. The Qur'an 49:9 says:

If two parties among the believers fall into mutual fighting, make peace between them. Then if one of them transgresses against the other, fight (he one who has transgressed until he returns to the commands of Allah. Then, if he returns, make

peace between them with justice and be fair; for Allah loves those who are fair and just.

To confirm that justice should be maintained in all its ramifications and without any influence, the Qur'an says:

O you who believe, stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God even as against yourselves, or your parents or your kin, and whether it be against rich or poor, for God can best protect both for not the lusts (of your hearts), least you swerve and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily, God is well acquainted with all that you do (4:135).

The Qur'an 5:9 further says:

O you who believe, stand out firmly for God as witnesses to fair dealing and let not the hatred of other to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just; and fear God, for God is well acquainted with all that you do.

The Prophet himself was instructed to dispense justice and equity without fear or favour (Q.5:8; 4:135) and this he demonstrated to the core during his lifetime. His reaction to the intercession of one of his respectable companions, Uthman ibn Zai'd, in respect of a woman from the ethnic group of Makhzumi who was found guilty of theft confirms this. He was vehement in emphasising the repercussion of injustice and his decision to stand firm on justice, saying:

Verily what destroyed those who came before you was that when the noble among them stole, they granted them pardon; but when the weak stole, they amputated him. I swear by Him in whose hand is my soul, if it were to be Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad that steals, I would cut her hand (Al-Sayyid Sabiq, 1981 -A3).

However, as much as Islam gives room for fighting injustice and pursuit of one's rights, it regulates such by giving preference to forgiveness over retribution and abhors excess when attempting to pursue rights or correct injustice through unnecessary conflict. The following verses of the Qur'an confirm this:

The recompense of evil is an evil like thereof; but whoever forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is with Allah. Verily, He likes not the oppressors. And indeed whoever takes revenge after he has suffered wrong, for such there is no way of blame against them. The way of blame is only against those who oppress men and rebel in the earth without justification; for such there will be a painful torment. And verily, whosoever shows patience and forgives, that would truly be from the things recommended by Allah (Q. 42:40-43).

Religious Tolerance

From all indications, religion as well as faith should be a matter of personal conviction. The fact that religion is one in the sight of God is confirmed by the preaching of virtues and frowning at vices in the various religions. The differences in religions are

man-made for their deliberate recognition and preference given to one prophet or the other and such other factors as worldly motives, ancestral customs and social conventions. Despite these differences, the life, honour and property of adherents of other religions must be protected in Islam. Without mincing words, the Qur'an stresses the incompatibility of religion with compulsion when it says: "Let there be no compulsion in religion; truth stands out clear from error" (Qur'an 2:256). Speaking in the same vein, the Qur'an attributes differences in religion to the wish of Allah and so forcing a religion down the throat of another is discouraged. "If it had been your Lord's will, they would all have believed, all who are on earth. Will you then compel mankind against their will to believe?" While commenting on this, Yusuf Ali (1413AH) says:

. . . Men of faith must not be impatient or angry if they have to contend against unfaith and most important of all, they must guard against the temptation of forcing faith, i.e. imposing it on others by physical compulsion. Forced faith is no faith.

As if the above is not enough, Islam defines the right attitude to those who reject the faith we profess when the Qur'an says: "To you be your religion and to me mine" (Qur'an 109:6).

Condemnation and provocation of people of other faith is considered a wrong step which can lead to unhealthy interaction especially when there is negative reaction from the condemned party. Islam thus warns against reviling and condemning what others worship, as conversely they too may ignorantly revile Allah. This is attested to by a Qur'anic verse that says:

Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus we have made alluring to each people its own doings. In the end will they return to their Lord and He shall then tell them the truth of all that they did (Qur'an 6:108).

It is sad to note that despite all injunctions on harmonious co-existence and interaction between people of different faith, the spirit of hunting for membership and particular hatred for a religion constitute unpleasant jars in the neck of this peaceful co-existence. Many religious preachers lack requisite qualifications for effective preaching and so their preaching is sometimes dogmatic, self-regarding, offensive and provocative, whereas Allah enjoins preaching with wisdom and beautiful preaching (Qur'an 16:125). One wonders about the 'holding a stick and inviting the goat to come and eat' approach of some preachers. No preaching could best be presented on peace than its practical demonstration in deed and practice. It will also be wiser for a preacher to forgive someone who came to slap him than to slap back; and through this, he could eventually win his opponent to his side by his good behaviour.

In recognition of the sanctity of other people's religion, the Prophet proposed a *Mubahala* between him and the people of the Book. This was in form of solemn meeting between him and the people of the Book in which both sides came together to

discuss their differences. The Qur'an even enjoins this when it says;

Say: O people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allah. If then they turn back, say you "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's will) (Qur'an 3:64).

One cannot exhaust the Quranic injunctions on the right of others to their religion. This is a strong weapon to ensuring peaceful co-existence among adherents of different religions. Where a religion tends to disrespect the personalities of other religions or rather decides to step on the toes of others by any means without any justification, misunderstanding, violence and chaos are always the end-result.

MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP

One wonders the type of sour relationship among the adherents of the two religions, most especially when the Qur'an emphasises peaceful living with non-Muslims. The Qur'an instructs that Muslims should avoid dispute with the people of the Book and where there is aggression from them, Muslims should demonstrate their urbanity, sincerity and kindness bearing in mind that both scriptures contain the teaching of the unity of God. The Qur'an says:

And dispute ye not with the people of the Book, except in the best way, unless it be with those of them who do wrong. But say: "We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our God and your God is one; and it is to Him we submit (in Islam) (Qur'an 29:46).

In order to foster social interactions between Muslims and Christians, the Qur'an legalises the consumption of Christian food for the Muslims and vice versa. If Islam should permit inter-marriage with the people of the Book, its level of encouraging social intercourse between adherents of Islam and Christianity should be highly acknowledged. Not only this, non-Muslims are adequately protected in the Islamic state. Non-Muslim residents of an Islamic State are called *ahl-al-Dhimmah* or *Dhimmi*s. Such people enjoy the same rights as Muslims in the state. They have freedom to practise their own faith as well. The Prophet also warned Muslims against high-handedness towards non-Muslim citizens in an Islamic state. He was reported to have said:

On the Day of Resurrection, I shall dispute with anyone who oppresses a person from among the people of the covenant, or infringes on his right, or puts a responsibility on him, which is beyond his strength, or takes something from him against his will.

The hand of protection is not restricted to the non-Muslims living in an Islamic state alone; rather, the Qur'an stipulates that their places of worship should equally be

protected. Interestingly, this task of protecting the places of worship of the people of the Book was proclaimed alongside the time when the duty of *jihad* was ordained. It is, therefore, a crime against the Qur'an for any Muslim to have decided to bum churches whenever there is any religious crisis.

From the above, it can be seen that justice and kindness are enjoined by Muslims to non-Muslims in their domains. In addition, they should receive adequate security of their lives and properties against internal and external invasion. If these arrangements are on ground on the peaceful co-existence of Muslims and non-Muslims in a community, then one expects a conflict-free community of Muslims and Christians. Where there are rancour, destruction of life and property, then the problem should not be searched for in religion but in the adherents of the religion.

Strategy for Peace Resolution

From what has been discussed so far, it is evident that the major threats to peace resolution include ignorance, injustice, greed, indiscipline, corruption and exploitation of weaker nations by the super-powers. It is disheartening to observe that in spite of the proportionately high rate of the resources being expended on defence, internal strifes, religious and ethnic chauvinism constitute the major percentage of mortality both in the developing and underdeveloped states. The reason for this could not be searched for in the scripture of Islam, but some other factors underneath using religion to achieve selfish end. To this end, one strongly upholds the fact that the heterogeneous nature of the world calls for non-recognition of a particular religion as state religion and so to expect instrument of the nation to be modelled along particular religious lines and observance is like nursing an illusion. The ethical values inherent in the Qur'an could no doubt be an effective weapon for peace resolution when these teachings are given proper attention by preachers and teachers of religions. The perceived injustices and imbalances in political, economic participation levels by adherents of all faiths should also be addressed. Proper integration of religious teachings on peace and security into the mainstream of the nation's education curriculum will also help in taking the scriptural teachings to the grassroots. This can be done through a complete overhauling of the Western school curriculum which is phasing out religion from its system as well as the *almanjiri* school system whose products could not be integrated into the socio-political spheres of the society. A faulty education system no doubt produces faulty products, hence the assertion of Muhammad 'Abduh (cited by Amin Osman, 1965) who opines that:

Those who really desire good for the country should turn their attention essentially to education. For it is by reforming education that one most easily realise all other reforms.

The methodology of calling to the way of God as entrenched in the various religious books needs to be strictly adhered to. The Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) should rise to the task of embarking on training the trainer courses for preachers, by

organising seminars, conferences and workshops. This will help in the promotion of mutual interaction and respect for other people's point of view.

The press should stop disseminating wrong and deceitful information about the religion they know little or nothing about, as this could lead to negative response which may be dangerous to the nation.

Governments should accord religion its right positions in the affairs of thing rather than making it a cosmetic affair. The welfare and security of the citizens should be of paramount importance to the government, and so, the constitution should be amended to ensure severe punishment for any body or organisation that ignites crises in the country.

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