

The Primacy of Peace in The Teachings of Islam

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Abstract

Islam is vouchsafe to man in order to attain peace from within himself so as to fulfil the purpose of his existence. Its primary objective is to ensure that peace reign supreme between him and his Lord, between him and his fellow men and also the environment in which he lives. Therefore, this paper attempts to unravel the primacy of peace to Islam even though the meaning of the religion is peace as one of the attributes of Allah-As-salaam-is equally Peace. The paper also examines circumstances and or conditions under which war is allowed in the religion. Finally, the paper provides suggestions of ways and means by which peace could be guaranteed, maintained and sustained between and among people of different religious or ideological backgrounds in a world that is predominated by multi-culturalism.

Keywords: Islam, peace and war, dialogue, shari'ah.

Introduction

The primacy of peace to Islam could not be over emphasized. Islam is a means, albeit, an ideology or a way of life vouchsafe to man by his creator by means of which he could attain peace between himself and his Lord, between himself and fellow human beings and between himself and his environment. Above all, the only means by which, he could attain peace from within himself. It is an embodiment of all the teachings of all the Prophets sent by Allah. Allah says:

The Messenger (Muhammad) believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believes in Allah, His angels, His books, and His Messengers. 'We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His Messengers.' And they say: We hear and we obey: (We seek) Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the end of all journeys (Q2:285).

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And those who believe and seek contentment of their soul via remembrance of Allah behold! It is only with the remembrance of Allah that souls could attain tranquillity (Q13:28).

Islam is a comprehensive way of life which corresponds to the nature (*fitra*) of man and all other creatures, be they animate or inanimate, seen or unseen, material as well as immaterial (Khalifah, 1980:11). Hence, Muslim scholars have come up with the idea that Islam is of two forms: *al-Islam taklifiyy wal-Islam kauniyy*.

Islam *Kauniyy* refers to Islam or submission by nature of things including man and every other creature. In which case, no man or any other thing could act in contrary to this nature. For example, no man could avoid sleeping, eating and drinking and if he does eat he has to excrete. Following this natural course assigned by God is in a way, obedience/submission to God which he just has to observe whether he likes it or not; for in this lies his health and peace of mind and body. *Al-Islam taklifiyy* on the other hand, refers to voluntary submission of a man to the will of God which is borne out of conviction. Hence, as observed by Adeyemo and Mobolaji (2010:14), the way of life ordained for and vouchsafe to man by Allah-his Lord-is in harmony with his nature (*fitra*), and thus guarantees a justly balanced society as Allah mentioned in the Qur'an: 'Thus, have We made of you an *Ummah* (a community) justly balanced (Q2:143).....' This signifies the fact that peace can only be guaranteed in a situation whereby members of a society consciously and concertedly live in harmony with their *fitra* observing the rights of Allah, their fellow men and those of other things in their environment.

Other creatures besides men and Jinns are naturally submissive to the will of Allah. That is to say that, they are Muslims as they lack freedom of will but do as they have been naturally modelled by God. Since man and Jinn are given freedom of will to do or not do the will of God, they could therefore act according to their volition and whims and caprices. This therefore means, that they are responsible creatures by dint of the freedom endowed them. As a result of this freedom and the fact that there is no compulsion in the religion of Islam (Q2:256), man could thus fall a victim of following the insinuations of Satan-his avowed enemy-so that, by and large, the much desired and much cherished peace by man may elude him.

We have in the succeeding paragraphs examined the primacy of peace and not war to Islam and come to the conclusion that Islam is for peace and not war, for the object of the religion could only be realized in an atmosphere of peace. The tenets and or teachings of the religion does not only show this but equally observable in its long history as could be seen later. However, since it cherishes peace, more so, as it could only be practised and practised well in an atmosphere of peace; permission is given to its adherents to defend themselves against injustice, oppression and aggression, tumult and subjugation. They should not, as taught by Islam, submit themselves to frustration nor should

they allow themselves to be enslaved by anybody other than Allah-their Lord and Sustainer. This account for why we have jihad institutionalized in Islam in order to protect lives, properties and religious liberty or freedom with laws and conditions governing it (Mawdudi, 1980:1-40).

Clarification of Relevant Terms

For proper grasp of the issue at stake, it is deemed prudent to give literary as well as technical or working definitions to the following terms: Islam, peace and primary position, Muslim, Dialogue, Shari'ah, Maqasid Shari'ah and war.

Islam is a derivative of an Arabic verbal noun (*Aslama*) meaning to surrender, to concur, to submit, to obey etc. It is equally a derivative of one of the attributes of Allah-*As- Salaam* (Q59:23) meaning, the Lord of Peace. Islam is therefore, defined as a religion of peace and total submission to the will of Allah. It is an ideology and a comprehensive way of life which covers the whole gamut of human life in all its ramifications as it does not divide life into watertight compartments of spiritual and temporal or, in other words, religion and secular (Adeyemo in Fakoya 2006, vol. 7(1): 24-31). According to Muddathir (2005: xv) "Islam is an Arabic word that literally, if basically, means submission or surrender (i.e. of oneself to God, Allah), but being derived from the root "s l m," it is also closely related to cognate terms that signifies peace, integrity, and wholesomeness, all of which are of central importance in the teachings of the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad". Hence, an adherent of Islam is called Muslim, that is, one who surrenders or submits himself wholeheartedly as well as whatever he has to the will of Allah, without leaving anything behind to be given to Caesar. For Caesar and whatever he had, according to the teachings of Islam, belong to Allah to Whom he had eventually returned (Adeyemo, 2006: 36). This same term, observed Abdalati (nd: 141-152), means peaceful. By this meaning, a Muslim is not only peaceful to and with himself but equally with and to his Lord and his fellowmen if only they could reciprocate his gesture.

Observes Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Steven, nd: 9):

Islam means submission. It is submission to the will of God. The origin of this religion is from God.This has always been the religion of the Prophets, those who were sent to guide mankind to happiness, fulfilment and ultimate bliss. 'This word, 'Islam', carries the inherent meaning of peace. The root word of 'Islam' is 'Salam' which means 'Peace'. When a Muslim meets another Muslim, he says: assalamu 'alaikum which means Peace be onto you."

Martins (1991:57) asserts that modern media and many Westerners who attempt to characterise Islam and the Arabs have concluded that there is a consciously 'discernible ethos of violence in Islamic society'. This association of Islam with holy war, and of Muslims with the propagation

of violence, observed Yazbeck (1991:256), seems to be endemic to Western awareness of Muslim faith. This is deeply disturbing to Muslims as he says.

Islam is however to Muslims, a way of life, a *deen* and an ideology vouchsafe to man by Allah; the Lord of the worlds. To them, it is the only means by which man can fulfil the purpose for which he has been created (Q51:56) and achieve his much desired peace and salvation both mundane and celestial, as it ensures the necessary moderation (Q2:143) that is aimed at achieving success in both worlds. Hence, it (Islam) frowns at materialism (Q2:143) and disapproves unbridled asceticism. The Qur'an speaks: *Thus we have made you a (middle) justly balanced community...* (Q2:143)

Islam teaches that life is not an end in itself but a means to an end, indeed, cultivation for the hereafter. This is why Muslims are required to be conscious of not only avoiding sins against God but equally crime against humanity for this is the practical demonstration of their faith as it equally determine their final abode. It goes therefore to say that in a society where crimes or sins are avoided at least to the barest minimum shall definitely be a peaceful one. This is an end result of the dictum: *'as if though you are seeing Him, for even if you cannot see Him, He sees you* (Muslim, nd: Vol. 1, No. 102: 28)

No line of demarcation has been drawn by Islam between spiritual and temporal life as such watertight compartment is bound to have its accompanying woes (Adeyemo, 2006: 28). Hence spiritual as well as temporal activities of man, nay a Muslim including his interaction with his fellow human beings (otherwise called *Muamallaat*) are considered to be *Ibadah* (worship or service) as long as they are borne out good intention and are considered right by Islam, whether they affect a fellow Muslim or a non-Muslim is immaterial. It (Islam) therefore, considers the two to be interwoven or rather as a compact whole, one strengthen the other. **Peace** refers to/means the condition or period when there is no war between nations, tribes and cities. Peace is however said not to be the absence of conflict but the presence of justice, meaning that justice is a requisite, I mean a *sin qua non* for peace. Such justice must be transparent and prompt for justice delayed is justice denied. No wonder, Islam attach a great importance to justice and establish a robust principle of the same. The Qur'an speaks:

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from Justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear Allah; for Allah is well acquainted with all that you do (Q5:8).

Peace as the primary position of Islam as used in this work means main/ chief or prime object or aim of Islam. However, since freedom is not given freely by the oppressor to the oppressed, and since Islam frowns at oppression, injustice and hostility or aggression, Islam allows as a last resort, war against the aggressor if all diplomatic means fails to yield result (Q49:9). Peace is the natural state in which God created man as well as other things,

that is, the state of *fitra* (Islam or submission to the will of Allah). He put man in the Garden of Eden (the abode of peace) until he wronged his soul and was ordered in consequence of that to move down to the surface of the earth (Q2:30-38). Peace is cherished by everybody regardless of whatever ideology or religion he/she professes. Literally, *Salam* which means Peace has nine (9) meanings or interpretations in Arabic. However, in the Qur'an, seven (7) of such meanings and its derivatives are deductible for application in life and thought. So, words like *sakinah* (tranquillity/calmness), *Amnun* (security), *salim* (soundness, perfection, freedom from defects), *sallam* (salvation, preservation, deliverance) which is free from all raucous elements are said to be part of the meanings and implications of Peace in the life of an individual and society.

Running a commentary on: *They will not there hear any vain discourse, but only salutation of peace: and they will have therein their sustenance, morning and evening* (Q19: 62), the editors assert that: Salam, translated "peace", has a much wide[r] signification. It includes (1) a sense of security and permanence, which is unknown in this life; (2) soundness, freedom from defects, perfection as in the word *Salim* (3) preservation, salvation, deliverance, as in the word *Sallam*, (4) salutation [of peace], accord with those around us; (5) resignation, in the sense that we are satisfied and not discontented; besides (6) the ordinary meaning of Peace, i.e., freedom from any jarring element. All these shades of meaning are implied in the word Islam (The Presidency of Islamic Researches, IFTA, Call and Guidance, 1413: footnote No. 2512: 869).

War is defined as armed fighting/struggle between nations, tribe, races and sometimes communities which may be motivated by political, economic, social and religious/ideological reasons. This always leads to human or sociological disasters. War may occur between communities, nations, regions, continents, etc. Experience had even shown that it could engulf the whole world. This could however be averted by dialogue.

Dialogue is a formal discussion between two groups or countries, especially when they are trying to solve a problem, end a dispute, etc. This could be employed to avoid a breakdown of communication which may result into war hence its relevance to our discussion.

Conceptual Background

To Islam, life is all about service: service to Allah and humanity via Him for whatever purpose a man serves is what makes or mar his life. It is service that indeed gives our lives meaning (Adeyemo, 2006: 40). Be that as it may, all the services to be rendered by a Muslim both to Allah and humanity are geared towards peace, solidarity and universal brotherhood for the unity of the creator, as taught by Islam, signifies the unity of His creations. This is the metaphysical foundation of peace and peaceful co-existence in Islam (the

Islamic humanism) as we are going to see clearly later in the succeeding paragraphs. Although, *Salat* (prayer) is worship par excellence, yet it has a lot of sociological significance both in the life of an individual Muslim and the community. It teaches patience, obedience, constancy, commitment, humility, and even solidarity and sense of affection as it is said in congregation five times daily and led by an Imam with members of congregation standing shoulder to shoulder and toe to toe. In fact, no place is reserved for anybody no matter how highly placed, except for the Imam who has a designated place-the *minbar* (Adeniyi, 2006: 1-40). *Salat* is said by all faithful regardless of their time and clime facing *Qiblah*-the abode of peace. The *Qiblah* is the direction of *Ka'bah* in Makkah whoever enters it as indicated in the Qur'an is secured from all evil. Prayer is concluded with the salutation of peace.

Zakat is collected from the rich Muslims and disbursed to the indigent members of the society, the poor and the destitute, as well as the way farers. It is equally used to provide social amenities for the public utility as well as maintenance of law and order (al-Qardawi, 2008: 1-12). While it provides an opportunity for the rich ones to serve Allah and humanity via their wealth, it equally provides an avenue for the poor members of the society to satisfy their needs legitimately without having to beg or resort to fraudulent means. For those one gives freely in the day would not be forced to come and burgle ones house in the dead night. Peace is thus guaranteed by so doing. It is indeed a kind of social security system or insurance if it may be so referred.

Fasting, which is abstinence from eating and drinking as well as sexual intercourse; and such other things capable of vitiating the fast like vain talk, lustful look at the opposite sex, fighting etc from early dawn till early dusk has a lot of social benefits. People are less restive while fasting, hence low crime is committed if any at all. One who fast does not only become strong in faith but equally inclined towards charitable services. He thus gives freely to the poor even when not asked. Ramadan is thus a month of spiritual, physical and social training which occur and recur every year for the purpose of physical, spiritual, social and moral renewal of the Muslims and their Communities. All these go a long way to forge solidarity, mutual love and reciprocative concern and by and large facilitate peaceful co-existence.

Hajj, which is the last pillar of Islam, is of course, the largest annual assemblage of men on the surface of the earth whereby all men of all colour, race and walks of life meet annually doing the same thing at the same time and place, wearing two sheets of white cloth regardless of their social status, age, colour and race. Fasting and Hajj therefore, constitute a practical demonstration of equality of men before God. Here, the universal brotherhood of humanity is exhibited, the kind of which none has ever existed before it. The remark made by Malik Sabah-(Malcolm X) when he performed it (hajj) is quite instructive in this connection. He says:

There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all colours, from blue eyed blondes to black skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experience in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and the non-white. America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. [...] I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practised by all colours together, irrespective of their colour. You may be shocked by these words coming from me. But on this pilgrimage, what I have seen, and experienced, has forced me to re-arrange much of thought-patterns previously held, and to toss aside some of my previous conclusions (Alex, 1963: 67).

In addition to the foregoing, out of so many sins a man can commit, it is only one of them that affects God and that is Shirk (association) of partner(s) with Allah (Q4:48; 116). All the rest affect other creatures-man and others. There is need therefore, for Muslims to maintain peace between themselves and those of other creatures of God most especially their fellow human beings so as not to incur the wrath of their Lord.

Islam is not only interested in the service rendered by a man but equally of the motive behind it (An-Nawawi, 2000: Hadith No. 1: 11. also see Muslim, Kitab al-Iman Vol. 1: 37-38). Hence, it teaches that actions are going to be judged in accordance with the intention for taking them. This is why *al-Ihsan* (An-Nawawi, 2000: Hadith No. 1: 11)-correct or right intention to serve Allah and humanity via Him takes a centre stage in apportioning rewards and or punishment for our actions or our failure to take any where we suppose to have done so. Thus, *al-Ihsan*-worshipping or serving Allah and humanity as if though we are seeing Him, for if we could not see Him, He sees us-is the watchword for Muslim at all time. They are assisted thereby to remain within the ambit of the law and observe the limit set by Allah. Observance of the law set by Allah guarantees peace not only to Muslims but equally to the non-Muslims who live under Islamic state and beyond, for Allah who promulgates the law is the Lord (of the worlds) of all creations regardless of their creed or ideology, colour and race, as well as their time and clime (Q49:13). Everybody is therefore, a brother to a Muslim either in faith or in humanity.

Respect for human life, observed Khalifah (1980:179), is one of the fundamentals of Islam and war is permitted only for the rightful protection of human life and its intrinsic values. That is to say, war is permitted in Islam only as long as they are meant to right wrongs and check injustices and oppression. Allah says:

“And therefore we enjoined it on the Israelites that whoever slays a person unless it be for manslaughter or mischief in the land, it is as if though, he has slew all mankind, and whoever keeps him alive; it is as though he kept

alive all mankind". Permission is granted to those who fight because they have been wronged, and God is indeed able to give them victory; those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: "Our Lord is God"-for had it not been for God's repelling some men by means of others, monasteries, churches synagogues and mosques, in which the name of God is much mentioned, would certainly have been destroyed. Verily, God helps those that help Him-lo! God is strong, Almighty-those who, if they are given power in the land, establish regular worship and pay the poor-due and enjoin what is good and forbid iniquity (Q5:32).

Hence Abda'Ati (nd: 143-146) posits that, "If the sword converted people to Islam, as many scholars have claimed, who converted the people who wielded the sword?" For Muhammad (SAW) was in Makkah for the first thirteen years of his mission harried and harassed, oppressed and suppressed and endured all untold torture and persecutions until when comes a time when they were left with only two options:- either to fight for their religion's liberty or to perish. Is there any blame on them for defending themselves and their faith? A thorough and unbiased study of the historical development of Islam depict a glowing picture of how the Prophet and his companions had sue for peace even at a time those of their detractors, if they were to be in their place could have engaged in horrendous war and sometimes holocaust and genocides. He had many a time to sign agreement with his oppositions. The Treaty of *Hudaybiyyah* (Nadwi, 1980: 261) as well as the Constitution of Medina/Medina Charter (Nadwi, 1980: 261) is of eternal significance in the annals of Islam.

When the Prophet was returning from Taif, having been battered and narrowly escaped being lynched, an angel approached him and asked whether he would love that the Taifites be sandwiched between the mountains that surrounded the city. To this he responded by saying:

I am sent as blessing to the whole world. If they are not Muslims today, their children would be tomorrow (Nadwi, 1980: 297).

It was equally reported that the great caliph 'Umar had a Christian maid who he used to persuade all the time to accept Islam after having shown the beauty and truth of it to him. The maid will always say, 'No, I do not accept'. On his refusal, 'Umar would reply; 'please yourself, there is no compulsion in Islam (Q2:256)'. Would a man like 'Umar wage war on people and nations, right left and centre, in order to convert them to Islam at the point of bayonet, when he felt helpless against his own slave (Abdalati, nd: 156)?

Maqasid Shari'ah and The Primacy of Peace in The Teachings of Islam

Shari'ah is an Arabic word that literally means a pathway to a watering place. It technically refers to the law, that is, the way or path (of life) ordained by Allah for His obedient servants, whose faith is assured in Him in order for them to live an organised life tailored towards peaceful co-existence and

attainment of Eternal bliss. It is, as observed Adeyemo and Mobolaji (2010: 15), a magna corpus, that is, a body of Islamic rule meant to guide Muslims in all ramifications so that they could thereby attain peace here and Eternal bliss in the hereafter. Allah says: *We have given to you a law (a way of life), so follow it and do not follow the fancies of those who know not* (Q45:18).

Maqasid Shari'ah means the higher objectives of Shari'ah-the Islamic Law. This is an attempt by scholars to explicate the intent or the objectives of Shari'ah in order to facilitate the proper understanding of it. So, in order to ensure that peace reign supreme between and among us, Allah gives us Shari'ah-that is-a way of life by means of which peace may be guaranteed and sustained. The higher objectives of the law as espoused by scholars are hereunder given as they shed more light on the peaceful intent of Islam.

Asserts Al-Ghazali, (1937: Vol. 1: 139-140 of As-Shatibi (D790/1388), nd, vol.1: 38 & vol. 3: 46-7):

The very objective of the Shari'ah is to promote the welfare of people, which lies in safeguarding their faith (hifz-ud-din), their lives (hifz al-nafs), their intellect (hifz-ul-'aql), their posterity (hifz al-nasl) and their wealth (hifz al-mal). Whatever ensures the safeguarding of these five serves public interest and it is desirable and whatever obstructs their realization is evil and its removal is commendable and desirable.

Observes Imam As-Shatibi (1988: Vol. 1: 43):

The primary goal of Shari'ah is to free man from the grip of his own whims, caprices and fancies, so that he may be true servant of Allah by choice, just as he is one without it.

A broader and comprehensive approach was taken by Ibn Ashur, (2006: 67) who says:

The all-purpose principle (Maqasid 'Amm) of Islamic legislation is to preserve the social order or the community and insure its healthy progress by promoting the well-being and righteousness (salah) of...the human specie. The well-being and virtue of human beings consists of the soundness of their intellects and the righteousness of their deeds, as well as goodness of the things of the world where they live that are put at their disposal.

Finally, the higher objectives of Shari'ah as observed Ibn Al-Qayyim (2004: 828) is that:

Shari'ah is based on wisdom and achieving people's welfare in this life and afterlife. Shari'ah is all about justice, mercy, wisdom, and good. Thus, any ruling that replaces justice with injustice, mercy with its opposite, common good with mischief, or wisdom with nonsense, is a ruling that does not belong to the Shari'ah even if it is claimed to be so according to some interpretations. From the foregoing meanings and explanations given by scholars about the higher objectives of Shari'ah-the Islamic law, it becomes clear, that peace in actual sense is the aim of Islam.

The Metaphysical Foundation of Primacy of Peace in The Teachings of Islam

Going by the teaching of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, one realises that to live in peace with ones fellow human beings and even the environment and all it contains is the major concern of Islam. Hence, Allah and His Apostle have laid down the basic foundation for peace as well as ways and means by which it could be sustained. This is what we termed as *'the metaphysical foundation of peace in the teachings of Islam*. This is further corroborated by the fact that peace is the natural state of things while war is socio-politically motivated. The following verses of the Glorious Qur'an and *ahadith* are relevant in this connection:

We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours above a great part of Our creation (Q17:70).

He also says: *We sent you not, except as a mercy for all creatures (Q21:107).*

The punishment for those who wage war against God and His Apostle, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is: execution, or crucifixion, or cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land: that is their disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the hereafter (Q5:33). And seek not occasions for mischief in the land: for God loves not those who do mischief (Q28:77). When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle. But God loves not mischief. When it is said to him 'Fear God', he is led by arrogance to (more) crime. Enough for him is hell; an evil bed indeed to lie on (Q7:33 see also Q2:205 & 206). The Apostle of Allah says: 'Whoever kills a person under the contract of protection shall never smell the scent of Jannat (Paradise) (Hadith reported by Ibn Majah).' God forbids you not, with regards to those who fight you not for your faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: For God loves those who are just. But transgress not the limits; for God loves not transgressors (Q60:8).

The Qur'an speaks:

Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error; whoever rejects evil and believes in God has grasped the most trustworthy hand hold that never breaks. And God hears and knows all things (Q2:256). Against the background of the insinuations of the antagonists of Islam that the religion was foisted on people with sword, Allah instructs:
Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for your Lord knows best who have strayed from His path and who receives guidance (Q16:125).

Allah (the Qur'an) and of course the Prophet (the Sunnah) had from the very inception extended hand of fellowship to the People of the Book (i.e. Jews and Christians) as partners in faith. The Qur'an says: *And dispute you not with the People of the Book except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong and injury* (Q29:46).

O Mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), He created His wife (Eve) and from them both He created many men and women and fear Allah through Whom you demand mutual rights, and do not cut the relation of the womb (kinship). Surely, Allah watches over you (Q4:1). O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another, verily, the most honourable among you in the sight of Allah is that (believer) who has piety and work righteousness (Q49:13). In his famous sermon during the farewell pilgrimage, the Prophet was reported to have said: *Allah has relieved you from the burden of ignorance with its pride in the fathers and ancestors. You are all from Adam, and Adam is from dust. There is no difference between an Arab and a non-Arab, neither between a black man and a red man except in piety* (Abu-Dawuud). He who calls to tribalism is not one of us, nor is he who fought for it, nor is he who died for it (Al-qazwini, Chapter 15, No. 2792: 933). He (Allah) has ordained for you the same religion (Islam) which He ordained for Noah, and that which We inspired in you (O Muhammad), and that which we ordained for Abraham, Moses and Jesus, saying you should establish religion and make no divisions in it (Q42:15, Q2:136). Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent to Ibrahim, Isma'il and Ishaq, Yaqub, and to *al-Asbat*, and that which has been given to the Prophet from their Lord. We make no distinction between any one of them and to Him we have submitted (Q2:136). Perished are the dogmatics (zealots). Avoid exaggeration (extremism) in religion, as it has destroyed those who came before you (Abu Dawud).

Even at war, in addition to the fundamental human rights espoused and encapsulated in the Qur'an and exemplified by the Prophet, certain rights and or privileges are given to the enemies. There should be no torture by fire (Malik (2004: Hadith No. 2982: 1174), the wounded soldiers should be protected, and prisoners of war should be treated with dignity and on no account should they be slain, nor should they be tied to be killed, no looting and destruction of lives and properties, dead bodies should not be mutilated, treaties should be respected and not violated, above all, Muslims are forbidden of starting aggression (Mawdudi, 1980: 35-39). Say: *O people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah (God); that we associate no partner 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)* (Q3:64).

Khaduri (1955: 51) in his treatise failed to draw a line of demarcation between Islamic history and law and this had led to wrong reading and interpretation of Islamic teachings on peace and war among the Western scholars.

There shall continue to be imbalance and misplacement of priority as long as man fails to recognise the fact that just as he needs food and water for his physical development and growth, he equally stands in need of *al-Hidayyah* (the Divine Guidance of Allah) for his spiritual development and growth as well. For injustice, oppression and suppression, adultery and fornication, anarchy and chaos, survival of the fittest and internecine warfare, ignorance and superstition, animism and barbarism, dissoluteness, luxury and wanton conviviality shall continue to be the order of the day (Adeyemo, April 26, 2002: 10). All of these are in contrary to peace, the primary objective/aim of Islam. It is Satan that sows the seed of discord among people by way of personal, racial/tribal, national/communal prejudice. Allah says: *Satan wishes to sow enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling* (Q5:91).

So if they believe in the like of that which you believe, then they are rightly guided, but if they turn away, then they are in opposition, so Allah will suffice you against them. And He is the All-Hearer, the All-knower (Q2:137). And who turns away from the religion of Abraham (i.e. Islamic monotheism) except him who befools himself? Truly, We chose him in this world and verily, in the hereafter he will be among the righteous (Q2:130). Our *sibgah* (religion) is the *sibgah* (religion) of Allah (Islam) and which *sibgah* (religion) can be better than Allah's? And we are His worshippers (Q2:138). Verily those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does righteous good deeds shall have their rewards with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grief (Q2:62). And We have not sent you except as a giver of glad tidings and Warner to all mankind, but most men know not (Q34:28). Say (O Muhammad): O mankind! Surely, I am sent to you as a Messenger of Allah-to Whom belongs the dominion of the heaven and the earth, *La ilaha illa Huwa* (none has the right to be worshipped but He), it is He Who gives life and causes death, so believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write, who believes in Allah and His words (this Qur'an), the Torah and the Gospel and also Allah's word: Be! And He was, that is, Jesus (son of Mary) and follow him so that you may be guided (Q25:7).

Abdul-Rahman ibn Abdullah (RA) relates that his father (may Allah be pleased with him) said: While we were on a journey with the Messenger (saw) we saw a pochard (a type of duck) with two of its chicks. When we took away the chicks the mother started fighting to have them back. When the Prophet came and saw what was happening he said: Who frightened this bird by taking away its chicks? Return its chicks to it immediately. He also noticed that an ant village had been burnt, about which he asked: Who burnt

this? We said: It was us! He then said: It is not for anyone to burn with fire except the Creator of the fire (Allah) (Abu-Dawuud, Hadith No. 26677: 8).

Principle of Justice and Non-Injury

Justice is the bedrock of Islam for without which there cannot be peace. It is therefore, a religious obligation for Muslims to be just and fair in all their dealings not only to and with their fellow Muslims but to all creatures. Allah says:

“O ye who believe! Stand firmly for Allah as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: and fear Allah, for Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do (Q4:135).

He also says:

“O ye who believe! Stand firmly for Allah, even as against yourself, or your parents, or your kin and whether it is against rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both (Q4:135).

Justice (*al-adl*) is one of the attributes of Allah, hence to stand firm for justice is to be a witness to Allah, even if it is detrimental to our own interest (as we conceive them) or interests of those who are near or dear to us.

Asserts Abdullah Yusuf Ali, (1409/1989): footnote No. 644 & 645229): *Islamic justice could not be compared with Roman or any other man-made law. It is even more effective and penetrative than subtler justice in the speculations of the Greek philosophers. It brings forth the innermost motives, because we are to act as in the presence of Allah, to whom all things; acts and motives are known.*

He observes further (1409/1989): footnote No. 644 & 645229): *Some people may be inclined towards favouring the rich, probably because of what they hope to get from them. Yet some may be inclined to favour the poor because they are generally poor and helpless. Partiality in both cases is wrong and unIslamic. Be just without fear or favour. Both the rich and the poor are servant of Allah and are under His protection as far as their legitimate interests are concerned, but they cannot expect to be favoured at the expense of others. To do justice and act kindly and righteously in a favourable or neutral atmosphere is meritorious enough, but the real test comes when you have to do justice to people who hate you or to whom you have aversion. But no less is required of Muslim by the higher moral law.*

The history of Islam is replete with such situation whereby under tense circumstance justice was rendered by the Prophet and those of his companions particularly, the Khulafau Rashidun to their enemies. One day a Jew who had borrowed Prophet Muhammad money came and demanded that Prophet pay his debt, abusing and harassing him. This act of his did not go down

well with the companions or followers of the Prophet particularly 'Umar (RA) who sought permission from him to deal with the man for his rashness. Rather than granting such permission, the Prophet responded by saying: 'You should advise me to pay my debt and him to be kind in demanding his right' It was reported that once Ali (R.A.) was in a battle fighting the infidels, he had already succeeded in falling his opponent down, what was left for him was just to cut his head; the man then spat into his eyes. He left him alone and walked away from his presence. The latter was so surprised so much so that he advanced towards him and asked why he had not killed him. His reply was that "I was fighting for the cause of Allah before you spat into my eyes but when you do so, I became angry and so I did not want to kill you just because of my anger".

Allah instructs, particularly those in positions of authority:

Behold! God bids you to deliver all that you have been entrusted with unto those who are entitled thereto and whenever you judge between people, be just (Q4: 58).

Neither Muslims nor their religion is war thirsty or mongers. Rather, Muslims are peace loving people. However, one must put in place all the necessary measure to ensure and sustain peace otherwise it becomes elusive. The Qur'an speaks on this:

Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your capacity, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom you may not know, but whom Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah, shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly (Q9:60).

Unless one understands the meaning and peaceful intents of Islam he may not be able to appreciate the religion. Islam and peace are derived from the same root and are considered as synonyms. One of the names or attributes of Allah is Peace. The Islamic greeting is a greeting of peace and *Salat*-the Muslim prayers-is concluded with salutation of peace. In fact, all the pillars of Islam as we have observed earlier are aimed at, and tailored towards peace. The message of al-Islam as encapsulated in the Qur'an and practically demonstrated by the Prophet and his followers is all about peace. Even the adjective Muslim with which its adherents are known and addressed means peaceful. *Al-Jannah*-the eternal abode of the righteous ones is abode of Eternal bliss and peace. Thus, one who approaches God via Islam is bound to be peaceful, faithful, kind and tolerant to and with himself and with his fellow men and other creatures unless he fails to understand Islam in the true sense of the word.

It should not be mistaken that the fact that Muslims are peaceful means that they should succumb to oppression, rather they are to resist it with all their power, all such oppression, tumult and injustice whether they are affected or it affects others, be they Muslims or non-Muslims alike. Even, before

his call to Prophethood, Muhammad (SAW) was reported to have led *hilful fudul*, a particular effort made to ensure that Zabidi collects what is due for his merchandise from Al-‘As b. Wayel who bought all his goods but refused to pay for them (al-Nadwi 1980: 174). About this, he was reported to have remarked thus: I had had a hand in making such a compact in the house of ‘Abdullah b. Jad’an to which if I were invited to have a hand in even after the advent of Islam, I would have undoubtedly joined again. They had agreed to restore to everyone that which was his due and to protect the weak from the highhandedness of the oppressors (al-Nadwi 1980: 174).

“You are the best community, ever evolved for mankind; enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah” (Q3:110).

The Prophet says:

He shall not enter paradise: he from whose evils his neighbours are not secured (Anas b. Malik, (2004: Hadith No. 2982: 1174)”.

So the guiding principle as taught by the Prophet is, *oppress not and do not allow yourself to be oppressed (Anas b. Malik Mutawa, Bab al Qadahu Vol. 2: 745 also Ibn Majah, Kitab Ahkaam, Vol. 2: 784).*

Jihad (War) and Peace: Intent and Conditions

The Qur’an makes it abundantly clear that whether we like it or not war is inevitable so long as there exist in the world oppression, injustice, arbitrary claims and capricious ambitions. It may sound incredible; however, history of man gives credence to this record of fact of observable reality as man had suffered from inhumanity of man to man-ranging from local to national, civil to regional and world wars. Sometimes, even holocaust and genocide and or ethnic cleansing take their ugly toll on man. Hiroshima and Nagasaki saga and the recent ethnic cleansing in Bosnia Herzegovina are important cases in the history of man.

So, Islam or the Qur’an which speaks virtually on all aspect of human life could not have ignored this aspect. More so, the message of Islam embodied in the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet is to produce a community of believer (*Muslim Ummah*) that is going to have neighbours, some of which are going to be friendly and others hostile to it. Hence, Islam has approved jihad (striving for the cause of Allah) as lawful and justifiable course for the defence of individual and community and to restore justice, freedom and peace. There cannot be peace without war particularly where a party is trying to dominate, oppress and suppress as well as subjugate the other. Since the oppressor would never like to give freedom freely to the oppressed unless it is demanded, it therefore becomes inevitable. Allah says:

Fighting is ordained for you, and you dislike it. But it is possible that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you love something which is bad for you. God knows and you know not (Q2:216).

And did not God checkmate one set of people by means of others, the earth would indeed be full of mischief; but God is full of bounty to all the worlds (Q2:251).

In yet another verse Allah says:

Had not God check a group of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in which the name of God is abundant measures commemorated in? (Q22:40).

Islam seems to be practical and realistic about the issues of peace and war and thus set out a robust regulation for them. This is understandable given the fact that the Qur'an is the Last and the Lasting Testament to be revealed, which is to endure till the end of time, after which none again shall be sent to man. In the last verse quoted above, a critical analysis and sincere appraisal will definitely reveal that Islam is interested only in the establishment, management and sustainability of peace as mosque was not the first but the last to be enumerated therein. Equally, when the Romans were defeated in a battle by the Persians, Allah revealed chapter of Rome (Qur'an Chapter 30) to the Prophet. Here, the Muslims commiserated with them being adherents of a sister monotheistic religion. And the Qur'an quickly adds that they would soon come to overcome their enemy which equally gladdens the Muslims (Hitti, 1970: 127).

Islam does not allow hostility or aggression from the Muslims, hence, Allah says:

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you and do not transgress limits (begin not hostility): For God loves not the transgressor. And slay them wherever you catch them, and turn them out; from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the sacred mosque, unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. But if they cease, God is forgiving, most merciful. And fight them until there is no more persecution or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God; but if they cease let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression (Q2:190-193).

According to Donner (1991: 57), the current state of scholarship on jihad in the West is "a practical one" suffering from the lack of "preliminary work on a vast subject" This does not mean as suggested by Al-Dawoody that jihad had not been treated at all, it had only generally been portrayed in Western literature as "holy war" to convert non-Muslims. He therefore suggests insider/outsider approach to research in respect of this subject matter since scholars/researchers, as he says, are influenced by their own religious, historical, cultural and personal experiences, which inevitably dictate how they analyse, study and judge others (Al-Dawoody, 2009: 4). We agree with him for we are all prisoners of our own time and places as we judge the new

and the strange with our own peculiar experiences based on our temperament and idiosyncrasies.

Islam, says Firestone, (1999: 13), is perhaps the most misunderstood religion to the West, and many stereotypes still hinder clarity about its tenets and practices. Western prejudice towards Islam is as old as Islam itself. It is as observes al-Dawoody, (2009: 5) a source of fear and suspicion to the West for centuries. The role played by the orientalist in this is quite enormous just like those of the media practitioners. One of the respected former Prime Minister of Britain W.E. Gladstone said one day in the Parliament as he was brandishing a copy of the Glorious Qur'an: "As long as this Book remains, Europe would never be able to control the East. On the contrary, Europeans should not feel save in their home land." Simeon, an imperialist Priest once remarked: "Islamic unity sustains the hopes of the brown people; and gives them the courage to refuse European domination over them." Lawrence Brown says: "The real danger lies in the regimen of Islam, its capacity to expand and dominate and its vitality. It is the only stone wall that European Colonizers will face. If Muslims unite under one hegemony they would be a real curse to the world (quoted in Marzouq, 1984: 34-67).

The questions that may well be posed, those that are germane and apposite to our study are: Why should the West control the East? Why should the European dominate the brown people? Why should certain people colonize and enslave others? For the verbs control, dominate, colonize and enslave have negative connotations that are detrimental to peace and are prone to war. All these are detested by people whether they are from the West or the East.

The established position of Islam as exemplified by the Prophet and those of his companions is that unbelief or kufr (infidelity) is not a valid justification for fighting a people. This is extensively explicated by scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah 2004/1424) (Abu Zahrah (1964/1384: 47-52, 89-94) and Wahabatu al-Zuhayli (1998/1419: 84, 106-136), among others. According to James ((1979: 24 also Said (2003: 105-165), 'between Western and Islamic culture there is possibly no other single issue at the same time as divisive or as poorly understood as that of jihad. He posit further that, Western "scholarship on Islamic normative tradition on war is considerably less well developed, there exist no general histories training the understanding of normative tradition on religion, statecraft, and war in Islamic societies or in Islamic religious thought. Many significant subjects remain unexplored for lack of researchers with necessary training and language skill (James Johnson, 24 also Said, 1997: 1-70). Rudolph, the Dutch expert in this field (1977:3), however holds a contrary view to those of earlier Western scholars on the objectives of Jihad. He argues that its aim was 'the expansion –and also defence-of the Islamic State. It may neither be completely true that the West lack the necessary facilities to study and understand normative tradition, statecraft and war in Islamic thought and civilization nor is it right to say

that they are completely negligent of it but they have done it with a specific aim and objective. The aim and objective is borne out of reading Islam and Islamic History and Civilization out of context. This resonates well with the observation of Johnson thus “that a prevailing ‘state of war,’ rather than difference of religion, was the *raison d’être* of jihad and that this ‘state of war’ has given way in modern times to a global ‘state of peace’ that rejects the unwarranted violation of territorial sovereignty of all nations (James, 76). It is worrisome however, that in post 9/11 literature jihad had continued to be used interchangeably with terrorism. This situation has portrayed all Muslims as being violent and therefore vulnerable to a lot of dangers.

Let us state categorically here no matter how brief, that it is not wickedness that a judge rules that a criminal should die for the crime he had committed. It is rather meant to safeguard the society and prevent others from committing the same and similar crimes so that the peace that we all desire is guaranteed onto all of us. This account for why Allah permits war against aggressors. It is therefore, crystal clear from the last three clauses in the verses of the Qur’an quoted in the previous paragraphs that those who fight the Muslims or oppress them did it for no other reason but their faith and the war Muslims are to wage against them is to check oppression, injustice and tumult. Thus, the moment peace is restored and religion is established for the sake of Allah, all hostilities should come to an end. There are so many instances in Islamic history whereby Muslims have displayed this kind of magnanimity. For example, there could not have been a better opportunity for the Prophet and his followers to deal with their enemies than the conquest of Makkah; rather they were given a general, unconditional and open amnesty.

War is therefore not the intent of Islam or the normal course of the Muslims. Every being is entitled to enjoy the peace of Islam and the kindness of the peaceful Muslims, regardless of whatsoever is their religious affiliation, colour, geographical and racial considerations, as long as they do not practice aggression or oppression against Muslims in particular and humanity in general. So long as non-Muslims are peaceful towards Muslims or even indifferent to Islam they shall be at peace with Islam and the Muslims.

Having engaged in four different migrations, two to Abyssinia, one to Taif and the last and by no means the least to Yathrib (Madina), yet being threatened constantly from within by the disenchanted at Madina and equally by incessant raids organised from Makkah. They were driven to a point that they could no longer stand the persecution and threat. Even, doing that may be suicidal. They endured for over thirteen hellish years at Makkah. Thus, with the new tactics adopted by the Quraysh there was no course for the Muslims but to await their final humiliation in a repeated massacre or defend themselves against oppression, injustice and persecution.

Observes Abdalati (nd: 145):

“It must have been a paradox. Islam came to assure them of dignity and strength, freedom and security, and to ally them with God, the Supreme source of goodness and help, power and peace, yet there they were helpless and anxious, threatened and terrified. Islam commissioned them to establish peace, to enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, to support the oppressed and emancipate the subjugated, and to prove how reliable and helpful to His servants God is. But how could they do that, if they themselves were oppressed, subjugated to terror and projected to helplessness?”

They were mostly surprised over the silence of revelation for quite a long time since the Prophet too has not given categorical instruction on the matter. God relieved them of this burden when the following verses were revealed: *“Verily God will defend those who believe: Verily God loves not any that is traitor to faith or show ingratitude. To those against whom war is made, permission is given to fight, because they are wronged; and verily, God 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 God”. Did God not 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 God is commemorated in abundant measures. God will certainly aid those who aid His cause; for verily God is full of strength, Exalted in Might, (Able to enforce His Will). (They are) those who, if We establish them in the land, establish regular worship and give regular charity, enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, with God rests the end (and decision) of all affairs”.*

It should be noted here, that before permission was granted to wage war against the oppressors there was no resistance from the Muslims. However, the moment that happens, the infidels thenceforth ceased to have the exclusive prerogative of violence and by the time they were routed in the first expedition they began to behave and even recognised Muhammad as a leader of a community rather than just an ordinary outcast they had hitherto considered him to be. It should therefore be reinstated, as we have observed earlier that we cannot have peace in a situation whereby there are oppression and suppression, injustice and subjugation of one group or individual by another until when they assert themselves and demand their liberty.

Islam, observed Al-Bana, is not alone in resorting to war and fighting as a means of safeguarding the truth and enforcing justice. In fact, all the past and present laws came with a similar principle, he asserts further. Deuteronomy 20 verses 10-12 states: *When you come near to a city to fight, call for peace; if it responds to your call for peace and opens its doors in front of you then all its people will be under your command and all will be your slaves. If it does not heed to your demands for peace besiege it, and if your Lord God pushes it to you then strike all its males with the edge of your sword. As for the women, children, and beast and all that is in the city, they are all a booty*

for you. And eat the booty, of your enemy, which your Lord had given you. Such should you do to all those cities that are very far from you and those cities that are not the cities of those nations. As for the cities of those people which your Lord God gives unto you do not leave a soul in it-the Hannites, the Amorite, the Ankanites, Fayarazites, Yousite, like your Lord has ordered you. From the Gospel of St. Mathew verse 25 upwards comes the following: Think not that I have come to spread peace in the land, but the sword. For, I have come to separate a man from his son, and the son from his father, and daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law.....and the animosity of the person with his household, whoever loves a son or a daughter more than I, will not deserve me, and whosoever does not take his cross and follow me also does not deserve me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find me.

Modern Law and legislations have also admit certain circumstances under which war may be permitted and set rules and condition for prosecuting it yet a thorough and unbiased study of all these laws shows that the Islamic rules regarding this issue are more detailed, just, more merciful and humane, finer and indeed aimed at establishing peace by checking oppression.

Dawah and Dialogue

Although, there are a lot of misgivings about Islam and the Muslims which is not at all a new thing, so it was in the time of all the Messengers of Allah including Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus Christ) and Muhammad (A.S.A.). It is normal, for this represents the struggle between the truth and falsehood. They were able to dispense all these by constant call to the way of their Lord. This responsibility has been given to the Muslims, however, much still need to be done by them. It is their duty to invite all and sundry to Islam much as they suppose to represent the epitome of the same. The onus has been given to them to let the world know that there is only one God who created the heaven and the earth, that humanity has only one single parentage of Adam and Eve (thus brothers and sisters either of humanity or faith), that we have only one planet to share as neighbours. One God, one planet, one humanity, thus Islam preaches unity of humanity. Our press has a big role to play in this enterprise for they have the key to information dissemination in our society, given the fact that everybody is a function of information at his/her disposal. The present situation with our media is unwholesome. A situation whereby, as observed Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Steven, nd. : 13) the media fail to give the full or true picture of what really happened but rather give you the picture the editor or the director wants. He asserts further: *When we see the news about Islam or the Muslims, we see distortion going on. There is a kind of concealment of certain facts and therefore it is important for Muslims to take part in trying to project Islam in the media.*

He asserts further: *I believe that the Muslims have a big duty [role] to play in the world. The first duty [role] is to practise Islam. Unfortunately, many*

people are turned away from Islam because of the misdeeds, misactions [inactions] and misbehaviour of certain so called Muslims. When we read the *Qur'an* we get a completely different picture of what a Muslim should be. Then they must share their knowledge of Islam with others. The best way to introduce Islam to others is to practice [it] Islam. This is the way that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) influenced those around him. It was his example that made people turned to Islam (nd: 5). It is a reminder to us, that when we remember God, who is the source of Peace, that we start to find happiness (nd: 5).

Observed Mawdudi (1992: 46):

To proclaim Din fully and to witness to it faithfully, it is, therefore, absolutely essential to launch an organised, collective struggle. All those who are conscious of their duties and responsibilities as Muslims, who are determined to discharge them, must unite, must organise themselves, and must make every effort to unite mankind to Islam. They must translate it into practice, remove all those obstacles which hinder and impede the task of calling mankind to Islam, and establish it.

We should therefore begin to build bridges and mend walls in order to realise the much needed peace that man so much desire.

According to Ábd Al-‘Aziz (1999: 7&8), effective d’awah must embrace the following: good presentation, refined style, awakening the truth, resorting to wisdom and fair preaching, argument in a way that is the best, cognizance of the environment and peculiar circumstances, using the best means and medium of modern technology, analogy and persuasion, etc. To buttress this further he quoted Imam Eini (in At-Tahan 1999: 35) who says: Wisdom needs good knowledge of the secrets of life, and the nature of people and the society, as wisdom signifies fine and precise knowledge, teaching it signifies perfect knowledge and applying it signifies perfect actions. Hence, he opines that for one to succeed in his call to the way of Allah, he needs to possess the following: good understanding, deep faith, strong love both for and of Allah and his audience, profound awareness, humility, sincerity and continuous work (Abd Al-‘Aziz, 1999: 7&8).

Historical Antecedents

We have taken excursion into history in order to dig out how Muslims have sacrificed so much in the past in order to give peace a chance. Observes Finlay, the English historian: *During the Muslim rule there was no organised attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on a non-Muslim population and no systematic persecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion. Had the Caliph chosen either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain or Louis XIV made Protestantism penal in France, or the Jews were kept out of England for three hundred and fifty years. The very survival of Christian*

Churches in Asia to the present day is a strong proof of the generally tolerant attitude of the Muslim governments towards non-Muslims subjects (Ahmad, 1999: 121-122).

Consider what Aurthur Gilman (in Ahmad, 1999: 121-122) writes about the conquest of Makkah: *It is greatly to his praise that on this occasion, when his resentment for ill usage in the past might have excited him to revenge, he restrained his army from all shedding of blood and showed every sign of humility and thanks giving to Allah for His goodness. Only ten or twelve men who had on a former occasion shown barbarous spirit were proscribed and of them only four were put to death, but this must be considered exceedingly humane in comparison with the acts of other conquerors, in comparison for example with the cruelty of the Crusaders, who, in 1099AD put seventy thousand Muslims, men, women and helpless children to death when Jerusalem fell into their hands....*

With regards to the protection of non-Muslim citizens in the Muslim land, 'Umar bn Khattab left the following words for his successor: I enjoin on him with regards to the people who enjoy the protection of Allah and His Apostle (i.e. non-Muslims) to keep covenant made with them, to fight in their defence and not to lay on them a greater burden than they can bear (in Ahmad, 1999: 121-122). In the 12th century, a Patriarch of the Greek Church in Antioch had the following comments to make about his Muslim conquerors in respect of his fellow Roman Christians: *This is why God of vengeance, who alone is all-powerful and changes the empire of mortals-beholding the wickedness of the Romans, who throughout the dominions cruelly plundered our Monasteries and Churches and condemned us without pity-brought from the region of the South the sons of Isma'il, to deliver us through them from the oppression of Romans* (in Ahmad, 1999: 121-142).

Here again comes the glittering example furnished by the action of 'Umar bn al-Khattab in the agreement he made with the Grand Patriarch of the City of Jerusalem when it was surrendered to him-In the name of Merciful Allah, this is the security which 'Umar, the servant of Allah, commander of the Faithful, grants to the people of Jerusalem. He grants to all, whether sick or sound, security for their lives, their possessions, their Churches and their crosses and for all that concern their religion. Their Churches shall not be turned into dwelling place nor destroyed, neither shall they nor their appurtenances be in any way diminished nor the crosses of the inhabitants nor aught of their possessions nor shall any constraint be put upon them in the matter of their faith nor shall any one of them be harmed (in Ahmad, 1999: 121-142).

Making Our World a Safe Haven for All

There is a wonderful, mystical law of nature that the three things we crave for in life-happiness, freedom and peace of mind-are always attained by giving them to someone else (Yusuf Islam, 3). God has also set a fixed

pattern (law) or Shari'ah or pathway within the limit of which every human being has to move such that if everybody keeps to his respective limit, peace automatically becomes attainable and sustainable in the society. However, when these limits are left unobserved in the society, there is bound to be confusion, fracas and anarchy. All the affairs of man are regulated in order to ensure that peace reign supreme (Khan 1999: 19 & 20 also see Al-Balagh Foundation 1991: 1-43). This is necessary given the fact that there cannot be rights where duties are neglected, for our duties so to speak, are the rights of others and vice versa. Muslims need to engage people of other faith and or ideologies in dialogue since they cannot singlehandedly foster peace as this is a two way issue. The Islamic Fiqh Council at her sixteenth, seventeenth, and the World Supreme Council for Mosques at her several fora and also the Muslim World League have reinstated the peace intent of Islam and condemn in an unequivocal way all acts and utterances aimed at disrupting peace, causing confusing and commotion regardless of whether they are targeted at Muslims or non-Muslims (Muslim World League Secretariat General, 2002: 5-75). Muhammad (SAW), had warn Muslim not to abuse the object of worship of a people as they would in turn abuse their own God too. This resonates well with what Wilfred (1996: 191) says about fourteen hundred years later. He says:

Don't argue about religion. It ends nowhere and usually leaves a lot of bitterness behind. We therefore appeal to everyone to live and let others live. All act and utterances which are capable of offending the sensibility of people, particularly when they have to do with religion should be avoided. The press should be fair in their reports and play their roles with sense of dignity, free from fear or favour, rather than brainwashing people and causing confusion and commotion.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Many scholars particularly the orientalist have written so pejoratively about Islam, the Prophet and the Muslims. They have also committed blasphemy not only against the Messenger but equally against God. They always read Islamic history out of context and unabatedly lose sight of circumstances under which it was nurtured and developed. They need perhaps to behold what Machiavelli says hundreds of years later: *"Nothing is so dangerous to execute nor more dubious of success than to introduce a new order or system into a society for whoever tries to do so must be prepared or get ready to have as his enemies all those who profit from the old existing order as they would want to maintain the status quo ante in order to sustain their interest"* (Micheaveli 1515:158).

In fact, new ideas are like pregnancies, they are easy to conceive but difficult to deliver. This was exactly the situation Muhammad (saw) and the first generation of Muslims found themselves. The same situation is what Muslims everywhere around the globe are experiencing today, as Islam begins as a strange religion and the world shall not come to an end until it becomes

strange just like it started. The whole essence of Islam is to give meaning to human life, meaning that releases and frees him from servitude to everything other than God and make him a king, a happy servant of the True Master Lord so that everybody becomes equal before their Lord and the distinction being God consciousness which propels man towards righteousness and engender peaceful co-existence. For peace to reign in our world; a lot need to be done not only by the Muslims but equally by the non-Muslims for it takes two to tangle and peace is a two way affair. Justice is an important factor in building, maintaining and sustaining peace, the need for justice from all the stake holders cannot therefore be over emphasised.

W. Montgomery Watt (d. 2006), (1997: 182) says: Normally a person can only reach important levels of religious experience through participating in the life of the community in which he has been brought up and basing his activities on its ideas. There are expectations, but this is the normal case. It is not easy for a person brought up in a Christian environment to appreciate the religious ideas of Islam, for less to make than the basis of satisfactory life. The same is true for the Muslim with Christian ideas. This means that it is Christian ideas which give the Christian the best chance of attaining a richer and deeper experience, and likewise Muslim ideas the Muslim.

Observes Maududi (1966: 13):

Man is suffering today because he has adopted a way of life at variance with truth and reality; he will know no peace until he brings his life into harmony with truth and reality. Based on observation of Mawdudi (RA) as stated above, we should make truth and truthfulness our watchword and do unto others as we would love them to do unto us.

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