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An Islamic Perspective: The Use of Religious Concepts as an Instrument to Improve Fostering Tolerance in Nigeria

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Abstract:

The establishment of Islam as the predominant religion in wide empire acted as a catalyst to civilization. Prophets were made by Allah as a model and embodiment of all virtues such as honesty, trustworthiness, faithfulness, humility, justice, intelligence, patience, courage, forgiveness, and love for Allah and humanity. The paper explored some major important areas that discuss the relationship between the Muslims and non-Muslims since the time of Prophet Muhammad (saw), his companions, and those who followed them. The paper draws on the life of Jesus Christ and his miracle from the Islamic view point. The paper also highlights Islamic civilization which includes skills acquisition in fostering tolerance and transfer of knowledge to the west. Foundation of tolerance from the Islamic concepts of social life have been clearly stated among these concepts is the concept of human thought which evidently explained the comments of some non-Muslims scholars acknowledging the contribution of Prophet Muhammad (saw) to the human thought in general. The paper suggested the guiding principles of fostering religious tolerance in Nigeria and other societies with similar setting the world all over, and also how religion should be made a source of strength for fostering tolerance.

1.1. Introduction

Religion in the day of ancient prophets of Israel was responsible in providing qualities of literacy in human society while in the world of Christian religion was a great fact which brought Europeans races to work together so much that one notices the more European become inclined to the religion the less aggressive and barbaric he becomes. In the world of Arab sand portions of the Middle East, religion has great record in uniting the Arabs internally. Here in Nigeria, the Hausa people had very little record concerning education making them ready to advance positively toward the direction of world civilization.

Islam and Christianity are the two major religions followed by most citizens of Nigeria. The two religions have scriptures documenting their teaching very clearly. Although the two religions have basic differences in matters of creed, but their moral virtue encourage good human relation between members of the religion. For instance, between one Muslim and the other so as between persuaded into the religion. Unfortunately, however there are various manifestations of conflicts or unguided statement between one religion and the other religious group which undermines the climate of peace and our survival as a nation. The central question is therefore, how best can fostering religious tolerance be achieved in Nigeria.

1.2. Attitudes of the Prophets

Muhammad (SAW) and Jesus (A.S) demonstrate a lot of understanding between them and their environments. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) together with his disciples lives under the persecution of Makkans without fighting back for good thirteen years and they granted concession and reasonable understanding in Madina. There was no fighting between Muslims and the Jews. Until the Jews violated all rules of agreements concerning living together by planning secretly together with Quraysh to eliminate Muslims, and it is a common knowledge that, Christ and his disciples neither fought Romans nor did they fight the Jews who plan under Roman administration to crucify Jesus Christ (A.S). But does this indicate religious people must suffer and do not fight at all. The scriptures of religious gave a reliable answer which we see the practical application of their teaching through the illustration of history. A religious man does not fight unless his scripture tells him to do so. And the scripture does not instruct him to fight except in a circumstance which only fighting could please God and except for a just cause because the God of religion is a just God and does not commit injustice against his creation. (A. I. Doi, etal., 1991),

1.3. *The Need and Qualities of the Prophets*

Allah, our creator had been sending prophets to this world for the guidance of mankind as from the beginning of human life on earth. The first prophet was Adam, and the father of man, who was created from soil of the earth, many other prophets followed him at different times.

Allah used the prophets for sending message for the guidance of mankind. They taught mankind wisdom and knowledge and guided them in the way of worshiping and expressing devotion to Allah. The holy Qur'an Says:

- "A Similar (Favour have you already received) in that we have sent among you an Apostle of your own, rehearsing to our signs and sanctifying you and instructing you in scripture and wisdom and in new knowledge; (Q: Ch. 2, Vs151).

The prophets were the bearers of good tidings of rewards for good deeds, and warns against punishment of evil deeds, Qur'an Says

- 'Apostles, who gave good news as well as warning, that mankind news well as warning. That mankind after the coming of the Apostles, should have pleas against God' (Q; Ch.4 Vs.165).

As a result of their unique position among mankind, and models to be followed, prophets were made by Allah as embodiment of all virtues such as honesty, patience, courage forgiveness and love for Allah and humanity.

2.1. *Muslims and Non-Muslims Relationship in the Time of Prophet Muhammad*

When Prophet Muhammad (SAW) peace be upon him started to preach openly about Tauhidi.e.monotheism, which is the belief that there is only one Lord for the whole universe, and that is Allah, and that none has the right to be worshipped, but Allah. The pagan aristocracy turned against him and his followers. Members of the pagan aristocracy were so deeply sunk in the depth of Ignorance that they could not accept any supremacy over their imaginary idols of wood their source of happiness and sorrow, reward and punishment.

But the number of prophet's followers grew which was an indication of serious revolutionary movement against their mode of worship, unjust ways of life and their existence as the custodians of the Ka'abah. To save their own institution from destruction, the Quraish started persecuting Muslims; it was then that the Holy prophet advised his followers to look in the nearby Christian kingdom of Habasha (Ethiopia). Abdulrahman, Doi, I. (1984).

2.2. *Prophet Muhammad Followers at Abyssinia "Ethiopia"*

Following the persecution of Muslims by the Quraish the prophet (PBUH) told his followers: if you go to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) you will find a king under whom non is persecuted. It is a land of righteousness where Allah almighty will give you relief from what you are suffering.

The news that these Muslims were kindly received under the protection of Najash, the king of Habasha, filled the Qurash with dismay and subsequently they deputed Abdullahi bin Rabi and Amr bin Al-As with precious gifts to the king to request that the fugitives should be returned. The king himself examined the refugees. He summoned them in the presence of the Christian Bishops and asked:

What is the religion for which you have abandoned your people and yet have neither adopted mine nor any other known religion?

Ja'afar bin Abu Talib answered in words that reflect the Arabs life before the birth of the Holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH) the early messages of Islam.

- "O king we were a barbarous nation, worshipping idols, eating carrion, disregarding every feeling of humanity committing shameful deeds, killing our blood relations forgetting our duty towards our neighbours, the strong men among us devouring the weak, we know no law save that the jungle, such was our state until Allah sent us an Apostle, from among ourselves, with whose lineage, integrity, trustworthiness, excellence of character and purity of life we were fully aware".
- "He summoned us to Allah, to believe in his unity to worship him and abandon the stones and idols which we and our fathers worshipped in his stead. He commanded us to speak the truth, to be faithful in our trust to observe our duties to our kinsfolk and neighbours, to refrain from forbidden things and bloodshed, from committing immoralities and deceits, from slandering virtues women. He orders us to worship God and associate no other with him, to offer prayer, give alms, and observe fast, so we trusted his word and followed the teaching he brought us from Allah. (This is our fault) and for this reason our countrymen turned against us and persecuted us to try and seduce us from our faith, that we might abandoned the worship of our God and return to the worship of idols." A'isha L. (2005).

The king asked Jafar bin Abu Talib what Prophet Muhammad said about Jesus Christ. Jafar quoted the text from the Qur'an, Maryam or marry chapter: 19. This Chapter was revealed before the first Muslim hijrah to Habasha being satisfied of his inquiries, the king saw no reason to listen to the demands of the Quraish, and returned their gifts saying "If you were to offer me a mountain of gold, I would not give up these people who have taken refuge with me." The Quraish ambassadors returned empty-handed and the Holy prophet held the Habashaites (Abyssinians) in considerable affection, he blessed the king and his progeny.

2.3. *Prophet Advice to His Caliphs about Non-Muslims*

The non-Muslims must be treated with leniency and must not be oppressed by any ruler and must not be taking from them except for a duty encumbering them the tradition of the prophet emphasizes on this point: Quoted by A. Doi, (1984),

- "Whoever oppresses a non-Muslims subject or taxes him beyond his capacity, then I shall be the opposite part to him in the litigation."

During his life time the prophet offered the following terms to members of the protected faith ahl-Al-Dhimmah, in return for the tax which was imposed on them.

1. If they are attacked by an enemy, the Muslims will defend them.
2. They will not be dissuaded from their religion
3. Their lives will be secured
4. Their trading caravans will be secured
5. Their wealth, goods and cattle will be secured
6. Their land will be secured
7. All that they possessed will be secured
8. Their crosses and churches will not be damaged
9. Military force will not be sent to their land
10. They will not be asked to deviate from their religious beliefs
11. None of their rights they have been enjoying will be infringed.

The above term covers the whole position of the people of the protected faiths under the Islamic States. Musa A. (1976, p. 249).

2.4. *The Position of Non-Muslims during the Time of Companion of the Prophet's Rightly Guided Caliphs*

The second caliph of Islam, Umar bin Al-khattab is reported to have said the following in the last moments of his life:

- "I exhort my successor regarding the treatment to be meted out to the covenanted people by the messenger of Allah they should receive the fullest execution of their life it is requires to go to war (with oppressors), and they should not be taxed beyond their capacity. (Quoted by Doi, A,1984, p. 433)

The khulafa Al-Rashidun (the rightly guided caliphs) use to enquire about non-Muslims whenever people come to see them from the neighbouring countries or provinces, whenever any complain came from non-Muslims they used to give their urgent attention to it in order to ensure that justice was done to them it is narrated by Al-Tabari in his famous historical work that caliph Umar used to question the delegates concerning the condition of non-Muslims and used to ask if any Muslim had hurt the feelings of non-Muslims in their countries. once he asked some delegates to narrate the treatment of non-Muslims at the land of Muslims in their home towns. They replied:

"We do not know except fair treatment by fulfilling their pledge."

The religion of Islam and the Shariah has emphasized a great deal on the right of non-Muslims so much so that any Muslim who violates any of their rights is deemed to have committed a grave sin. A. Doi, (1984)

3.1. *The Life of Jesus Christ from Islamic View Point*

The narration concerning the life of Christ in the Qur'an began from chapter 3:45 in which his mother Mary was informed that she will be blessed by Allah in his Grace by bestowing to her a virtuous child, whose name will be Christ and his ministries. The Qur'an equally mentioned that he will demonstrate special divine powers a testimony to his position (prophethood). God will give him powers to make out clay a figure of a bird, then breathes into it, life which will make it a living bird with the permission of Allah, and he will be able to heal the blind and lepers or bring the dead out of his grave or explain publicly what people kept in their stores all as miraculous proofs of his prophetic mission. For this purpose, Mary was given special divine instructions to devote her life in worshipping Allah constantly. NTI, (2000),

The prophecy came true with Mary conceiving the miraculous child. It continued to be a wonderful event to and a strange experience up to a palm tree where she began to cry in anguish wishing to die rather than to give birth to a child which she could not produce evidence to prove his integrity. Here under the Qur'anic version for the birth of Jesus Christ in chap: 3: v,342-48.

- 'Behold! The angels said: "O Mary! God hath chosen thee and purified thee chosen thee above the Women of all nations.'
- "O Mary! Worship Thy lord devoutly: prostrate thyself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down,". This is part of the tidings of the things unseen, which we reveal unto thee (O Apostles) by inspiration: Thou wast not with them when they cast lost with arrows, as to which of them should be charged with the care of Mary: ...
- Behold! The Angel said: "O Mary! God giveth thee Glad tidings of a word from him: his name will be Christ Jesus the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the hereafter and (the company of) those nearest to God; "He shall speak to the people be of the righteous. She said: "O my lord how shall I have a son when no man hath touched me he said: even so: God createth what he willeth: when he hath decreed A plan, he but saith to it be and it is! And God will teach him the book and the wisdom, the law and the gospel,

3.2. *Miracles of Jesus Christ (AS) In the Qur'an*

The Qur'an has described Christ to have been given the gospel and ability to perform several miracles as mentioned in chapter 19 verse 29-34.

- But she pointed to the babe, they said: how can we talk to one who is A child in the cradle? He said: I am indeed a servant of God: He hath given me Revelation and Made me a prophet; "and He hath Made Me Blessed whosoever's I be and hath enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live. He hath made me kind to my Mother, and not overbearing or miserable; "so peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again), "such (was) Jesus the son of Mary: (it is a statement of truth, about which they dispute.

A special miracle demanded by his disciples of sending down a table set has also been mentioned which correspond to what Christians regarded as the last supper of Jesus Christ. The Holly Qur'an chap: 5vs 115-118 says:

- “Behold! The Disciples said; “O Jesus the son of Mary; can thy lord send down to us a table set (with viands) from heaven? Said Jesus: “Fear God, it ye have faith; “They said; we only wish to eat thereof and satisfy our hearts and to know that thou hast indeed told us the truth; and that we ourselves may be witnesses to the miracles, “Said Jesus the son of marry; “O God our lord sends us from heaven A table set (with viands), that there may be for us from the first and the last of us a solemn festival. And assign from thee, and provide for our sustenance, for thou art the best sustainer (of our needs). “God said: I will send it down unto you; but if any of you after that resisted faith, I will punish him with a penalty such as I have not inflicted on any one among all the peoples.

3.3. *Compromising Statement between Islam and Christianity Concerning Jesus Christ*

Jesus Christ is regarded as one among the five greatest prophets of God Almighty by Muslim scholars. These great prophets were prophet Muhammad (PBUH), prophet Isah, (Jesus)(A.S) and prophet Nuhu (A.S) prophet Ibrahim (A.S), and prophet Musa (A.S) Jesus Christ was miraculously conceived by Mary in Nazareth or Gallia about 60 miles away from Jerusalem. He was born in Bethlehem in the southern part of Jerusalem under a palm tree. As it mentioned in the Holy Qur’an. The Christians may not object to all what the Qur’an has described concerning the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus Christ including his other miracles as a testimony to his prophet hood. (Encyclopedia)

There is also a compromising statement in the teachings of Christianity and Islam on the concept of paradise and hell. The Christians call paradise of the Muslims the kingdom of God and hell, hell just as the Muslims, the latter being the abode of righteous while the former the vicious. What is lacking in the teaching of the Christianity concerning the two abode is greater elaborations on paradise and terrifying picture of the hell fire. Another area of agreement is concerning the recitation of chapter, 1 (surah al-fatiha) when praying or supplication to God. The teachings of Islam concerning Fatiha agree in content with what the Christians refer to as “Lord’s prayer: it describes God as the cherisher and sustainer of mankind, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. The only Master and Judge in the Day of Resurrection. But where Fatiha teaches Muslims to recite, “you alone we worship and from you alone we seek for help”, the Christian bible teaches Christians to say” give us our daily bread;

It is significant to know that both Muslims and Christians maintain the teaching of only one God as a creator of heaven and earth. The prophet of God conveys the good news of his divine messages in form of revelation and document in the scriptures. Both religions believe in life after death and they all agree that devil is a black angel of spirit condemned by God and will meet the wrath of God together with His followers in the day of Resurrection. (Crisworld, 1923).

4. Islamic Civilization: Skills Acquisition in Fostering Tolerance

4.1. *Preamble*

Since Islam was taught initially to Arabs, it follows that the earliest converts were mainly Arabs, although there were people of other races holding honored places among the early converts such as Bilal (from Africa) and Salman (from Persia). When Islam spread out side Arabia it encountered, and soon became the religion of people of earlier civilizations, Byzantines, (the inheritors of Greek/Roman civilization in the eastern Mediterranean, Egyptians (descended from the ancient civilization of the Pharaohs’), Persians and other groups from the highly developed civilization of China and India.

Such people brought with them into the Islamic melting pot the intellectual legacies of their various civilizations. The attitude of Islam towards the ideas, discoveries, institutions, and fostering tolerance for the practices of other people was to examine them, and adopt or adapt or ignore or reject them according to how far they were compatible with the teachings, spirit and principle of Islam. Here under are some of the concepts to be used from the Islamic Civilization for skill acquisition in the process of fostering tolerance:

4.2. *The Bayt Al Hikmah (House of Wisdom)*

The movement to learn from earlier civilizations was fostered particularly during the Abbasid dynasty, established in 750 A.C with the capital in Baghdad.

Successive Caliphs were, al Mansur Harun ar-Rashid and al Ma’mun, gave generous patronage to scholars and encouraged translation of ancient books. This movement found its most systematic expression in the establishment by Al-Ma’mun in 830 A.C of the Bayt al Hikmah (the house of wisdom) or Bayt al- Tarjamah (house of Translation) as a center for translation and research. At this period the Muslims learned the art of paper making from the Chinese who were brought into the country and this gave further impetus to scholarly activities. (A’isha, B. L. p.263).

4.3. *The Preservation of the Learning of the Ancient World during Europe’s Dark Ages and The Development of Arts and Science by the Muslims*

The Muslims in the way preserved and revived the learning of the ancient world. In the case of Greek learning in particular this was a great service to mankind, since scientific studies had for centuries been neglected in Europe and left to decay. These centuries are known as the Dark Ages” of Europe, during which the light of scientific learning and enquiry was all extinguished. If the works of the ancient scholars had not been lost translated and developed by the Muslims, many of them would have been lost or destroyed before Europe began to emerge from the dark ages and realize the value of the scholarly legacy of the ancient world.

From the 9th to 13th centuries the Muslims were the acknowledged world leaders in the development of the arts and science. Among the arts, poetry, Calligraphy and architecture were highly prized and mosques and other buildings remain which express the Islamic ideals

of beauty and harmony. The love of beauty also found expression in artifacts for and production of fine fabrics and decorated carpets. The design of cities developed distinctive Islamic features, including Mosques, schools covered markets bath houses hospitals, caravan series (inns for travelers) and private houses based around central courtyards with gardens, trees and fountains.

Visitors from Europe and other lands at this period used to marvel at the comforts and luxuries available in the Muslim world, and at the general state of cleanliness and development, which owed much to the encouragement given by Islamic teachings both to hygiene and to technological improvements.

Philosophy and science sprang to life again as the Muslims Scholars translated commented on and developed almost every field of study: mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Botany Zoology, Astronomy, Geography, Medicine, Surgery, anatomy, physiology, optics, pharmacy, Agricultural science, pharmacology, etc. they made advances in the uses of drugs, herbs and foods for medication; establish hospitals, with a system of intern and externs; distinguished the causes of certain disease and developed correct diagnoses of them; proposed new concept of hygiene, made use of an aesthetic in surgery with newly innovated surgical tools, and introduced the science of dissection in Anatomy etc. NTL (2000),

4.4. Establishment of Schools and Universities

The Muslims search for Knowledge which began in the Mosque in Madinah developed into a widespread system of schools and universities all over Muslim world among the most famous were the Nizamiyyah University in Baghdad and Al-Azzhar University in Cairo (both founded in the 9th Century) Al-Azhar is comparatively the earliest university in the World to have survived continuously to this day. (The University of Paris was not founded until the 12th Century and that of oxford until the early 13th century) Al-Azhar University is still functioning today, taking in thousands of student from all over the world.

In West Africa also the movement for education was felt, with the establishment of Sankore University in Timbuktu in the 16th Century. The Scholars were numerous and often attached to mosques to a great extent they offered equal educational opportunity to all, and the universities also gave charitable assistance to poor students, since mosques were mainly education and literacy became widespread. At the time of Abbasids, 3000 mosques were reported in Baghdad alone, and in Alexandria in the 14th Century there were as many as 12,000 mosques most of them with schools attached. A'isha, B. L. (2005).

4.5. Transfer of Scientific Knowledge to the West

A'isha, B. L. (2005), make further explanation and said, in the 12th and 13th Centuries the nations of Europe began to awake from their condition of intellectual backwardness and set out to learn from the Muslims. Some European scholars travelled to Muslim universities to learn, particularly to the famous Muslims universities in Spain. Others embarked on translation of the Islamic work into Latin, these had a great impact on western scholars and students, and contributed in large measure to the European Renaissance. Some of the famous Muslim, books remained for centuries as standard teaching materials in the European universities.

It is thus ironic that the awakening of the west coincided with and partly contributed to the political decline of the Muslim world. The west took-up the development of scientific knowledge and began to reap its benefits in technology as the Muslims had done 500years earlier. It is therefore incumbent on Muslims, when reading about the past glories of Muslims civilization to learn the lessons contained in these events.

It is apparent that when the world of Islam was at its strongest and most vigorous, it inspired its followers to combine strong Iman (faith) with the pursuit of knowledge of all kinds, and from all source; knowledgedoes not belong of permanent right to any nation. Hence it has been likened to a touch that can be passed from one person or one people to another, as in a relay race.

4.6. Foundation of Tolerances from the Islamic Concepts of Social Life

Among the concepts regarded as the foundation of tolerance for the Islamic social life according to A'isha B, L. (2005), were Ultimate Goal, Peace, Unity of Mankind, Cooperation, Goodness and Piety,

4.6.1. Concept of the Ultimate Goal

The social life of the true Muslim is based upon supreme principles and designed to secure happiness with prosperity for the individual as well as for the society. Class warfare, social castes and domination of individual over society or vice versa are alien to social life of Islam. Nowhere in the Qur'an or tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (saw), can one find any mention of superiority on account of class or origin of wealth. On the contrary, there are many verses of the Qur'an and sayings of the prophet Muhammad (saw) reminding Mankind of the vital facts of life, facts which save at the same time as principles of social structure of the Islamic life. Among this is the fact that humanity represents one family springing from one and the same father and Mother, and aspiring to the same ultimate goals.

4.6.2. The Concept of Peace

To appreciate how Islam approaches the question of peace, one has only to consider a few elementary facts about Islam. Peace and Islam are derived from the same root and may be considered synonymous. One of God's names is Peace. The including words of the daily prayers of every Muslim are words of peace. The greeting of the Muslims when return to God is peace. The daily salutations among the Muslims are expressions of peace. The adjective "Muslim" means in sense peaceful. Heaven in Islam is the abode of peace. This is how fundamental and dominant the theme of peace is in Islam. The individual who approaches God through Islam cannot fail to be at peace with God; with himself and with his fellow men. Taking all these values together, putting man in his proper place in the

Cosmos, and viewing life in the Islamic perspective, men of good faith and principles cannot fail to make our world a better world, to regain human dignity, to achieve equality, to enjoy universal brotherhood and to build a lasting peace.

4.6.3. Concept of Unity of Mankind

The unity of mankind is conceived in the light of common parentage of "Adam and Eve". Every human being is a member of universal family established by the first Father and the first Mother, and is entitled therefore to enjoy the common benefit as he is enjoyed to share the common responsibilities. When people realize that they all belong to Adam and Eve and that these were the creation of God Almighty, there will be no room for racial prejudice or social injustice or second class citizenship, people will be united in their social behaviour as they united in nature by the bond of common parentage. There is a constant reminder of this important fact, in the Quran and in the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (saw). This is to eliminate racial pride and claims to national or ethnic superiority, and the way for genuine brotherhood. The Holy Quran has testified the above statement and it says:

- "O mankind! Reverence your Guardian Lord, Who Created You from a single person, created of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; Reverence God, through Whom he demands your mutual (rights) And (reverence) the wombs (that bore you), for God Ever watches over you. (Q, Chap: 4, vs, 1)

The unity of Humanity is not only in its origin but also in its ultimate aims. According to Islam, the final goal of humanity is God. From Him we come, for Him we live and to Him we shall all return. In fact, the sole purpose of creation as described by the Quran is to worship God and serve His cause, the cause of truth and justice, of love and mercy, of brotherhood and morality.

4.6.4. Concept of Cooperation Goodness and Piety

Besides the unity of humanity in origin and ultimate goal, and besides this mutual responsibility and concern, the social life of Islam is characterized by cooperation in goodness and piety. It is marked with full recognition of the individual and his sacred rights to life, property and honour. It is also marked with effective role played by the individual in the domain of social morals and ethics. In an Islamic society the individual cannot be indifferent. He is enjoined to play an active part in the establishment of sound social morals by the way of inviting to the good and combating the evil in any form with all lawful means at his disposal. In so doing not only does he shun evil and do good but also helps others to do the same. The individual who feels indifferent to his society is a selfish sinner; his moral is in trouble, his conscience is in disorder, and his faith is under nourished.

The structure of social life in Islam is very lofty, sound and comprehensive, among the substantial elements of this structure are sincere love for one's fellow human beings mercy for the young, respect for the elders, comfort and consolation for the distressed, visiting the sick, relieving the grieved, genuine feelings of brotherhood and social solidarity; respect for the rights of other people life property, and honour; mutual responsibility between the individual and society, it is a common thing to come across prophetic statements like these: Quoted by A'isha B, L. (2005),

- 'Whoever relieves a human being from grief of this world, God will have relieved him from a grief on the Day of the Judgment'.
- 'Anyone who has no mercy on the juniors and respect for the seniors is not one of us Muslims'. 'None of you is a true believer in Islam until and unless he loves for his fellow man what he loves for his own self.'
- 'Whoever invites others to good is like the doer of good and will be rewarded accordingly, and whoever investigates evil is like the doer of evil and will be punished accordingly.'

In the Qur'an, on the other hand, one finds numerous divine instructions like these:

- 'O you who believe! Fulfill all obligations....And help you one another in righteousness and piety, but help you not one another in sin and rancor. Mind God; for God is strict in punishment.'

4.6.5. The Concept of Equality

Hammudah Abdallati, (1975), has expressed that; one basic element in the value system of Islam is the principle of equality or better yet, equality. This value of equality is not to be mistaken for or confused with identicalness or stereotype. Islam teaches that, in the sight of God, all men are equal, but they are not necessarily identical. There are differences of abilities, potentials, ambitions, wealth, and so on. Yet none of these differences can by itself established a status of superiority of one man or race to another the stock of man the colour of his skin, the amount of wealth he has, and the degree of prestige he enjoys have no bearing on the character and personality of the individual as far as God is concerned. The only distinction which God recognizes is the distinction in piety, and the only criterion which God applies is the criterion which God applies is the criterion of goodness and spiritual excellence. The Holy Qur'an says:

- 'O Mankind, verily we have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and have made you into nations and tribe, that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is the most righteous (Q:49:13).'

4.6.6. Concept of Human Thought

To arrive at a full appreciation of prophet Muhammad (SAW) worth one has to view them against the background of history of the world as a whole. This reveals that this unlettered dweller of the Arabia desert, who was born in the dark ages' some 1400 years ago, is the real pioneer of our modern age. He is not only the leader of those who accept his leadership but also of those who do not. Even of those who denounce him the only differences being that the latter are unaware that he is still imperceptibly influencing their thoughts and their actions and is the governing principles of their life the guiding spirit of the modern times. Abul Ala, M, (1981),

Below are the comments of some non-Muslims scholars acknowledging the contribution of Prophet Muhammad SAW to the human thoughts. In general:

1. Arthur Leonard says: "Islam, in fact, has done a work she has left a mark on the pages of human history, which is so indelible that it can never be effaced.... That only when the world grows will be acknowledged in full."
2. John Devenport: A leading scientist observed: "it must be owned that all the knowledge, whether of physics, Astronomy, Philosophy or mathematics, which flourished in Europe from the 10th Century was originally derived from the Arabian schools, and the Spanish Sarasin may be looked upon as the father of European philosophy, Quoted by A. Karim in Islamic Contribution to science and civilization.
3. Bertrand Russell: the famous British philosopher wrote the supremacy of the East was not only military, science philosophy, poetry and the arts all flourished in the Muhammad world at a time when Europe was sunk in barbarism. Europeans, with unpardonable insularity, call this period 'The Dark Ages' but it was only in Europe that it was dark indeed only in Christians Europe, for Spain which was Muhammadan, had a brilliant culture." Pakistan Quarterly, Vol. Iv. No 3 (emphasis ours).
4. Robert Briffault: The renowned historians acknowledge in his book the making of Humanity: it is highly probable that but for the Arabs, modern European civilization would never have assumed that character which has enabled it to transcend all previous phases of evolution. For although there is not a single aspect of human growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of modern world and the supreme source of its victory-natural sciences and the scientific spirit... what we call sciences arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry; of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks, that spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs".
5. Stanwood Cobb: founder of the progressive Education Association, Says; "Islam..... Was the virtual creator of the renaissance in Europe'-Quoted by Robert L. Gullick. Jr..... in Muhammad the educator.

5.1. Reasons for Misunderstanding between One Religious Group and the Other in Nigeria

Islam and Christianity have their teaching well documented in their scriptures which can be quoted by their followers or being remembered in relevant occasions and circumstances. If conflict and misunderstanding arise between followers of one religion and the other, the responsibility can be rightly placed on followers of the two religions. Muslim may wish the whole nation to be community of Muslims. However, the free will of choice given to man by God has made some members of the nation to live outside the fold of Islam. Christians also know very well that, had the God of man permitted the life of a single social group, tribe or religious group to survive alone, he would have provided a decree, in the commandment to justify war of annihilation in human society. God had decreed that no community can survive in isolation of one another. And for them to live and survive well, co-operation and understanding is necessary. The holy Qur'an says:

- "Help one another in righteousness and piety but do not commit sin and injustice against each other fear Allah for Allah is strict in punishment."Q:5:2.

This verse teaches Muslims to treat one another and the rest of mankind with kindness in a social interaction in their political and economic relation. There are several guiding principles encouraging Muslims to contribute in a wellbeing of his society. And if one reads the sermon of the mountain in the Bible, he will find similar teaching encouraging Christians to do the same. NTI, (2000),

5.2. The Guiding Principles of Fostering Religious Tolerance in Nigeria

Religious tolerance implies becoming reasonable in treating one another in situation of peace or under provocation. Religious tolerance does not imply requiring one member of a religion to compromise the law of his religion, as matter of fact, Islam and Christianity in Nigeria do not require a compromising of the teachings of their scriptures to live together. In their scriptures there are many guiding principles encouraging reasonable co-existence in a society like Nigeria.

Education is the first instrument which can be used to enlighten Nigeria citizen concerning religion. The planners of education need to value religion and recognize its significance in the curriculum of education to understand his religion very well from his scripture. There are several cases of misinformation which became factors generating crisis. Su, (1968),

The mosque and the Church are places where religious preachers can preach to their communities the teaching of the scriptures this however can only be done successfully by one who knows the scriptures very well. The mosque of the prophet in Madina had a significant role in facilitating peaceful co-existence among Madina communities in spite of the fact that they had differences which existed as a result of difference of claims of Quraysh and between Muslims and the Jews of the day Islam united the Muslims with a document of unity which created understanding between Muslims and the Jews. Families are responsible in introducing their members to his religion as well as his society its proper understanding of religion is encouraged at family level by learning the scriptures properly and learning not to misrepresent religious teachings that will help in fostering reasonable tolerance in matters of religious. Uthman, b. Fodio, (1978),

5.3. Religions as a Source of Strength for Fostering Tolerance in Nigeria

Islam and Christianity have a greatest number of followers in Nigeria. Traditional religion has a large number of followers in Nigeria but not as organized as Muslims Christians and most cases they identify themselves with one of the two great religions.

Each religion in its mission may wish every Nigerian citizen to be its member, but the realities even in the days of the prophets are getting some who will deviate. The social and economic realities indicate that they must understand one another because they may need one another when they live under a single political authority. All scriptures of religions preach love and peace. Without peace educating human society is not possible and without love conviction cannot take place concerning the teaching of any scriptures, as can be understood from the teaching of the scriptures. Good will message is emphasized in the bible and Ihsan (Good human relation) as well as love of God which illustrated by Zakkat (alms giving) appear as a strong moral teaching in the Qur'an. All these provide sufficient training to good Nigerian who follows religion. One would therefore assume that the religious are source of strength for fostering good human relation, unfortunately Nigeria record several crises of religious conflict. NTI, (2000),

Factors Generating Religious Conflicts and their Solution

There are many factors generating religious conflict but the greatest of all are four Factors as follows:

- a. Poor religious education, in which adherents of religions do not understand their religions from their scripture.
- b. Religious leaders do not attempt to learn the religion very well preaching it to the public and do not give good advice to the political leaders the country. Some of them convert themselves into local heroes and became agent of instability.
- c. Wealthy men do not give out charity or encourage fair dealing in business or invest their wealth in a useful sector of production according to the teachings of their religion that would have created love in the heart of common man and to enable him understand that one should not regard his own neighbor an enemy.

Political authority and traditional rulers do not consult suitable persons in matters of religious crisis and not pay attention to religion unless it touches their political interest. They therefore, become unable to control tension until when it is too late. NTI, (2000).

5.4. Conclusion

The solution of all the problems mentioned can be achieved by teaching the members of their religions in their own scriptures in centers of adult education and formal educational institutions. The mosques and churches need good preachers. The communities can be induced to go to such centers and be persuaded to learn correctly their own religions. This can be achieved if the political authorities and traditional rulers encourage religious leaders to perform such an assignment. Home provide training at family level in which the parents received training from the mosques and churches which will enable them introduce their members to the proper teachings of the religion and the need to work for peace which even the missionary activity of propagation requires.

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