

ISLAM, THE RELIGION OF PEACE AND UNITY

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Abstract

Peaceful co-existence among people of different faiths is a thing that is admitted to be the yardstick of unity, hence encouraged by Islam. As ambassador of peace and unity, Islam spells out to its adherents how they could associate themselves with the non-Muslims in order to ensure peace, unity, stability and progress. It is in this content that this paper sought to discuss with prove from Qur'an, which encourages peace, tolerance and unity. The paper goes further to give highlight of numerous examples, in the content of the noble Qur'an and scholars view of religion, peace and unity.

Keywords: *religion, peace, tranquillity and unity*

Islam, the religion that shock the world in the 7th CE is still misconceived by considerable countries, even within the intra-faith followers. This is in connection with the discrepancies with the adherents that may pave ways to non Muslims interfering the entire system of Islamic councils.

In reality, Allah in His infinite mercy iterated that:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (49:10)

The believers are nothing else than brothers (in Islamic religion) so make reconciliation between your brothers and fear Allah that you may receive mercy.

This verse would indeed motivate the believers to shun hatred, schism and create environment to settle or reconcile dispute among followers in order to reach peace, safety and be in secure environment by one's free will. This, if it is done manifests Islam as submission to God, accepting His authority as well as obeying His orders, one's total submission to God and serving only Him, embracing the messages of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), abiding by his teachings, practices and commands. It is what is needed from a Muslim. In the part of the non believers, they would vividly conceive the fact and basic fossil of its peaceful root.

The Revelation of the noble Qur'an to humanity has been a right direction to embrace (silm) Islam,

which is peace and it reminds the followers to avoid following Satanic footsteps, (Q.2:208):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطَوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

O you who believe enter perfectly in Islam by obeying all the rules and regulations of Islam and follow not the footsteps of Satan verily he is to a plain enemy

Reasons were that; when the believers resist to cast in the peace, the next option will be the Satan to spread its footsteps to mislead the believers, and if the Satan succeeded its mission, then the enmities should persist by intra and inter Islam adherents, this is what mostly prevalent on today's planet.

Islam the Religion of mercy and forgiveness

Islam has laid down in theory and practice how Muslims should co-exist with non-Muslims peacefully. In spite of this plausible Islamic provision, suspicion, mistrust and even conflicts, have more often characterized Muslim relationship with people of other creeds. It is the objective of this paper to clarify Qur'anic verses on tolerance with a back up from historical accounts of how Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the companions; Umar bn Khattab associated themselves with the Jews and the Christians of their times, (M. Abdulwaha, 2008). At the ideological level the

glorious Qur'an called upon Muslim to believe in all the prophets of Allah, honour, respect and speak of them all reverently (cf. Ali, 1968 and Okenwa, 2003). A Muslim is a true believer who believed in the Divine prophets, scriptures, angles, and the Day of Judgment. Backing up this statement the glorious Qur'an testified.

In order to be able to portray a fair image of Islam, preventive measures be ensured to security of wealth, life, mind, religion and reproduction, this is the only way to build a conducive society in peace, tranquillity serenity, friendship, collaboration, altruism, justice, virtue and mercy.

According to the Qur'an, all Muslims are brothers and sisters to one another and if a disagreement appears among them they make peace and correct it as reveal in (Qur'an, 4:59).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ
مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا (59)

Oh you who believe obey God, and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer to it to God and His Apostle, if you do believe in God and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination.

Islam with Justice

The society, human being is facing today is the question of justice, and equity, the mantle of leadership of the world had wrong the society's obligation that is characterised with chauvinism. This alone had invited anarchy in politics, social and unity of the co-existence. It is not only neogeopolitical arena but threatening the continuity of detrimental to the climate change.

A believer, should stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses by Allah even as against himself, or his parents, his next of his kin, and whether it be (Against)rich or poor Allah is the best protector of both. Follow not the lust (of your hearts) lest you swerve, if you distort(justice)or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ
أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ
بِهِمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا وَإِنْ تَلَوُّوا أَوْ تَعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

O you who believe stand out firmly for justice and witness to Allah, even though it be against yourselves or your parents or your kin be he reach or poor. Allah is the better protector to both (than you) so follow not the last of your heart, lest you avoid justice and if you distort your witness or justice, and if verily, Allah is ever well Acquainted with what you do. (4:135)

Again, as mentioned in the Qur'an, a true Muslim is urged to follow the straight path. That means he or she be faithful, honest, just and calm, lives perfectly observe his or her religion in guidance of good reasoning. Pursuing straight path can be understood as being absolutely truthful and honest in all circumstances as well as a moderate way of life that encourages good relations with everyone, Muslim, Christian and as well as traditionalist.

وَكَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيهَا أَنَّ النَّفْسَ بِالنَّفْسِ وَالْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ وَالْأَنْفَ
بِالْأَنْفِ وَالْأُذُنَ بِالْأُذُنِ وَالسِّنَّ بِالسِّنِّ وَالْجُرُوحَ قِصَاصٌ فَمَنْ
تَصَدَّقَ بِهِ فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ لَهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الظَّالِمُونَ

And we ordained therein for them, life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth and wounds equal for equal, but if anyone remits the retaliation by way of charity is shall be of Him and expiation. And whosoever does not judge by that which Allah has revealed such are the Zalimum (polytheists, wrong doers, of a lesser degree).

Hadith; It was narrated by Abdullahi(RA)Allah's messenger(SWA)said the blood of a Muslim who confesses that(laillaha illallah known has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that I am the messenger of Allah his blood cannot be shed except in three cases (1). Life for life in case intentional mother (2). A marriage who commit

illegal sexual intercourse (3). A Muslim who revert from Islam.

Mercy and Forgiveness

The Ummah of the day is eluded from divine compassion and pathetic, which is the Prophetic tolerance. As God, the Most Gracious is merciful to all humanity. His Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is merciful and compassionate to all believers. And he forgave all the wrongdoers to him.

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ
بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

Verily, there has come to you a messenger (Muhammad SAW) from among yourselves whom you know well. It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty. He Muhammad (SAW) is anxious over you to be rightly guided, to repent to Allah and beg Him to pardon and forgive your sins in other that you may enter into paradise for the believers, full of pity, kind and merciful. (9:128)

The verse reminds the Muslims of piety, tolerance, forgiveness, it adopts ways of forbearance and tolerance, and enjoins what is good and right and withdraw from the ignorant ones. The Prophet (SAW) succeeded in establishing unity among people by his action, compassion and mercy. If he had treated the people around him severely and

rudely, they would have left him and their unity would have collapsed (Qur'an, 3:159).

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

And by the mercy of Allah, you dealt with them gently. And had you Muhammad being severe and harsh-hearted they would have broken away from you so past over their faults and ask Allah forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs. Then you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah, certainly, Allah loves those who put their trust in Him. (3:159)

Since God and the Messenger of God are merciful and compassionate to believers, those who take the divinely prescribed ethics and the prophetic character as their example should obviously treat one another with mercy and compassion. Therefore, those who have received the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) message wouldn't be severe, arrogant, antagonistic or hostile to a Muslim or non Muslim alike.

Furthermore, God Almighty advised His Messenger to be forgiving and to consult people by requesting for their ideas (Qur'an, 3:159;)

According to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), who reiterated that people are equal before God as the teeth of comb are equal. Characteristics like

language, ancestry, race, wealth and poverty are not signs of superiority. In the thirteenth verse of the chapter Al-Hujurat the creation of humankind from a female and a male, the division of humanity into ethnic groups or nations and tribes are made in order to know one another and the importance of fearing God in His wisdom and power.

The verse approves having an identity and being known by an identity, nonetheless, it rejects abuses of affiliation (to different gender, social or ethnic groups) as a means of superiority. Thus, it assesses a person's honour and value in terms of universal values that he or she gains through his or her own will and effort, and not in terms of gender or ethnicities, which are not obtain through free will.

In Islam, individual is considered as a person that gains value within the society, as someone who is responsible to the community in a social context. Islam, the life of a human being is a trust from God, irrespective of his or her ancestry, colour, tribe or language, and hence should be protected meticulously. The main idea in Islam is to praise God the Almighty (Qur'an, 1:2);

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ
الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

*And indeed we have honoured
the children of Adam and Sea,
and have provided them with
at-Tyyibat (Lawful good things)
of have preferred they to many*

of those whom we have created with a moves preferment to show compassion to creation. Humankind is the best of all creations (Qur'an, 17:70) and is created of the best stature (Qur'an, 95:4).

Thus, God loves good attitudes such as spending and serving for the sake of humankind at all times under all circumstances, forgiving people, and avoiding doing something wrong when we become angry.

Even if one has the right to retaliate in response to an evil action, forgiveness is more appropriate for those who are more pious. The recompense of an evil deed can only be an evil equal to it; but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God. Surely He does not love the wrongdoers (Qur'an, 42:40; see also Qur'an, 42:40).

وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

And verily, whosoever shows patience and forgiveness that would truly be from the things recommended by Allah. (42:43)

Besides, each of us lives on the path that God has ordained for him or her. For this reason, it is important to emphasize serving rather than fighting. God says in the Qur'an (5:48)

Strive then together as if competing in good works, and also, Say: Every one acts according to his own character (made up of his creed, worldview and disposition), and your Lord knows best who is guided in his way (17:84).

قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِلَاتِهِ فَرَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ هُوَ أَهْدَىٰ سَبِيلًا
O Muhammad Each one does according to Shaklatihi. (i.e. his way or his religion or his intension) and your Lord knows best of him who path (religion) is right.

Therefore, individuals should not dispute and fight over their different ideas to satisfy their ambitions and self-interests. Rather, on the contrary, they should compete to show good character and to serve in the best way; they should support each other not in wrongdoing but in doing well.

Trustworthiness

An important dimension of being a Muslim is trustworthiness, every Prophet is introduced in the Qur'an with attribute of trustworthiness. First and foremost, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the most trustworthy of the heavens and earth, and all the prophets preceding him, made efforts to promote trustworthiness in their societies.

In a place where trust does not exist, love, respect and solidarity are also absent. The lack of trust destroys family, as well as social, cultural and economic life. For this reason, the Prophet

Muhammad (SAW) states that trustworthiness and treachery cannot exist together and asserts, "One who betrays harms, or deceives a Muslim, is not of us". He describes the ideal Muslim as thus: "A Muslim is one from whose hand and tongue people are safe". A believer is one from whom people know that their wealth and lives are safe.

Messenger of God Muhammad (SAW) describes those who are good and those who are bad: "*The good amongst you is the one from whom good things are expected and by whom people are sure that they will not be harmed*". The bad amongst you is the one from whom bad things are not expected and from whose evil people do not feel safe. From this, it can be understood that a believer is one who is trustworthy, and therefore, no one would fear any danger from him or her under any circumstances.

Islam emphasised good moral character, love and respect for God and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is expected from believers. Appropriate love, mercy and compassionate are to be shown, not only to people but also to every creature .indeed, according to Islam's core understanding, every creation is a blessing from God and the protection of a blessing is the most fitting behaviour for a human kind.

Right to life is an absolute value: He who kills a soul unless it be (in legal punishment) for murder or for causing disorder and corruption on the earth will be as if he had killed all humankind; and he

who saves life it is as if he had saved the lives of all humankind (Qur'an 5:29).

إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبُوءَ بِإِثْمِي وَإِثْمِكَ فَتَكُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ

Verily I intended to let you draw my sin on yourself as well as yours then you will be one of the dwellers of the fire and that is the recompense of the Zalimun (wrong doers).

When the Messenger of God (SAW) explained Islam's potential to contribute to safety and peace in society, he specified one goal in his time as the following: "A rider will travel from Sana'a (a city in Yemen) to Hadhramaut (a region in the southwest of the Arabian peninsula) fearing none but God, or a wolf as regards his sheep".

If we consider the troubles due to the extreme violence Muslims were exposed to both in the Medinan and Meccan periods, we would understand how meaningful was this message expressed by the Prophet. It does not include any desire for revenge against any person or any group; instead, it only expresses an ardent desire for a violence-free world for all.

The Prophet commanded the followers to maintain social solidarity and cooperation, to open our hearts to our fellows, and to help one another at all times. He said, "Do not cut relations between each other! Do not turn your backs on each other! Do not

*grow hatred between each other! O God's servants!
Become brothers and sisters!"*

Islam and conciliation

The Arabic terms *islah* (reform) and *sulh* (conciliation) are from the same root. *Thus*, means one's reach peace and serenity leaving conflicts and deviations; in other words, it refers to leaving confusion by settling a dispute between two people or two sides.

Good deeds are actions that are beneficial for people and society, as well as actions that are taken to establish peace and serenity. This concept not only includes offering worship and spending in a good cause but also smiling, behaving warmly to others, establishing friendships, pleasing people by kind words, exchanging greetings, having warm conversation, and controlling bad feelings such as pride, arrogance, anger, envy, animosity, hypocrisy, rancour and burning ambition. Thus, essentially, virtuous deeds are acts that purify mankind from aggression and bring them to peace and tranquillity.

It is recommended to cease disagreements by peace and not to commence further disputes, fights, confusion, and discord; in addition, people are asked to take a balanced approach and seek justice (Qur'an, 8:1);

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَنْفَالِ قُلِ الْأَنْفَالُ لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَصْلِحُوا
ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

And they ask you O Muhammad about the spoil of war, say the spoil of war are for Allah and the Messenger so fear Allah and Adjust all matters of difference among who and obey Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad SAW) if you are believers.

It further went on to put that the essence of the of reconciliation between the two faithful who engaged in dispute or quarrel base on either mundane or spiritually.

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَتْ
أِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَفِيءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ
فَإِنْ فَأَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُقْسِطِينَ

And if two parties or group among the believers fall to fighting then make peace between them both, but if one of them outrages against the other then fight , the one who outrages till comply with command of Allah. Then if it complies then make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable, verily Allah love those who are equitable (Q.49:9)

It is forbidden to spoil peace and tranquillity by corruption; there are penalties for those who do it. It is possible to apply the verse; Peace is better (Qur'an, 4:128) which was specifically revealed to eradicate disagreements between couples, to all kinds of human relations. Islam recommends a united and mutually helpful society, and this vision does not only refer to the level of nation, but includes international relations, too. In this sense, from an Islamic perspective, international law should take the establishment of peace as a foundation.

Conclusion

To conclude it revealed that Islam emphasizes peace, unity and reconciliation as basic to all social and even international relations. The Noble Qur'an digested, Paradise, which is the reward for the pious, is a place of serenity. One of the ninety-nine names of God is Salaam, which means peace. Throughout history, Muslims have made every effort to establish peace and serenity everywhere in all divergent fields, only taking military measures when their enemies tried to hinder these efforts for humankind. Over the course of history, the general approach of Muslims has been supportive of maintaining peace, spreading in an environment of serenity and trust, and constructing a civilized community of love, compassion, mercy and forgiveness to share with other people in peace and unity. Alhamdulillah-rabbilalamin, that Allah made us Muslims, and we are grateful to our beloved prophet Muhammad (SAW) who was able to fulfil his message to mankind, it is through his effort that today we are Muslims enjoying peace and security in our society. We thank our President Muhammad Buhari who is the champion of peace, security and sustainability for our country Nigeria.

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