



REVIEW ARTICLE

INTER RELIGIOUS HARMONY AS A TOOL IN BUILDING MORAL COMPONENTS OF THE NIGERIAN ARMY: THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

*Attahir Shehu Mainiyo and Muhammad Sani Abdullahi

Department of Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

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ABSTRACT

Islamic moral values, as a set of attitudes or divine conducts sent to mankind through the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), serve as guidance that is binding upon every adherents of the religion (Dansabo, *Globalization:64*). Studies have, over the years, shown that moral principles require everyone to cultivate justice, honesty, kindness, truthfulness, respect for human life and dignity, respect for other people's properties and respect for other peoples' interests etc. everyone is thus cautioned against murder, embezzlement of public fund, bribery, cheating, hatred to mention a few. The spirit of inter-religious harmony among the Nigeria Armed Forces has since been manifested from 2009 to date when the NA began the nationalistic assignment to rid the country and the North-East in particular of the grips of heartless insurgent as well as terrorist groups threatening Nigeria as one indivisible entity. Though, not of an identical religious faith, but members of the Nigeria Armed Forces found no difficulty in blending to pursue a common goal and interest, which is ultimately getting every inch of the country secured. The paper, in line with this backdrop, attempts to answer these questions and other relevant ones in order to unravel the religious harmony, being it tool in building and enhancing moral components of the NA. How does the NA intensify effort with a view to studying and properly understanding the impact of inter-religious harmony among themselves irrespective of language and location? How does the moral values helps build their working capacity and harness the cordial relationship that existed between them for maintaining peace and stability in Nigeria? To what extent does tribalism, religious bigots affect the collective responsibilities of Nigeria Army as well as harm the general security of Nigerians? How to identify and fish out bad eggs in the military service thereby enhancing service delivery? How to demonstrate the distinct nature of inter-religious harmony, discipline and moral values among all ranks in the Nigeria Army? How to weigh between Islamic and western norms and values thereby taking the praise worthy accommodated by Islam and discarding the blame worthy ones? (Muhammad, *The Qur'an: 21*). To achieve the objectives of the research, the paper adopts analytical phenomenological methodology.

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INTRODUCTION

Islam as a complete divine religion encourages its adherents to imbibe moral principles. These principles, Islam emphasized are required of everyone with a view to cultivating justice, honesty, kindness, truthfulness, respect for human life and dignity, respect for other people's properties and respect for other peoples' interests among others. The concept of equality among individuals in particular and between nations in general runs through the Qur'anic passages and other Islamic teachings. It is on the basis of this note that this article discusses the inter-religious harmony in building moral values of the Nigerian Army Fighting Force.

Multiplicity of the World Nation: Islam recognizes diversity of nations within the world community.

*Corresponding author: Attahir Shehu Mainiyo,
Department of Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

It is, unlike other religions, not a sectional or tribal religion; it is strongly against tribalism as it against polytheism. In fact, man, is a gregarious being and by nature, he is not created to live alone as doing so will be detriment to his life in many respects. For this reason man from the beginning of his sojourn on earth, lives in society. In a society, social order, understanding, respect for one another, recognition of differences in religion and other aspects of member cultures, wishes and aspirations are very necessary if only peace is to reign. The Islamic attitude is towards co-existence in peace and harmony with other religions; this is an essential part of Islamic message. Islam however, recognizes multiplicity of nations which is explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an. The framework of this recognition strongly argues against such claims which imply intolerance and rejection of co-existence with the adherents of other religions. It also implies the commitment of Islam; its attitudes, intention and capability to co-exist and live with other faithful in peace and harmony. If the Islamic attitude considers the adherents of other religions as enemy just

because of religious background or racial and cultural differences, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) would not order his *Sahabah* (R.A.) to migrate to and live in Abyssinian state of different religion, colour, culture and belief. The Glorious Qur'an negates division and or distinction on the basis of racial, linguistic and national grounds. It thus, recognizes diversity as a sign of God and it should be maintained as such. However, it should be fathomed that the diverse identities are only for recognition and never for pride ever hence should it not lead to any skirmish. Advancing acrimony and hatred on the basis of religious and cultural differences is extremely against Islam. This further confirms that the recognition of followers of other religions was in the early Islamic polity and practice. The notion of equality among individuals and between nations is a concept that runs through the Qur'anic messages and all Islamic teachings. On this note, the Glorious Qur'an emphasizes that:

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 honorable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has *At-Taqwa* [i.e. one of the *Muttaqun* (pious). Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware¹. (Q 49:13)

Implicitly, the verse is addressed to all humankind and not only to the Muslim brotherhood. Ali, in his commentary posits that humankind is descended from one pair of parents. Their tribes, races and nations are convenient labels by which we may know and appreciate certain differing characteristics. He however, holds that before Allah (S.W.T.) they are all one, and he gets more honour he who is most righteous² (Ali, A.Y., *The Holy Qur'an*: 1524). The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) has however stressed that the Arabs has no superiority over the non-Arabs. All are children of Adam and Adam was made of earth. Thus, Islam considers peace, equality, collaboration, right, justice and fairness as the basic norms of co-existence as well as religious harmony. Indeed, Islam is by its traditions committed to peaceful co-existence in the world community. This tradition enables it to make an especially rich contribution in promoting justice and peace as well as observe human values in both history and in the present time³. (Khatab. S. and Bouma. G. *Democracy in Islam*: 189)

Co-existence among the World Nations: It is equally of paramount importance for us to know that inter-religious harmony appears where there is understanding and agreement between the followers of various faiths and denominations. In order to realize this, basic ideas and principles establishing each faith must be well comprehended. This is because the significant issues for sustainable peace and serenity for both individuals and society is inter-religious harmony which includes respect of human dignity and freedom of religion. Islam is a religion of peace and not militant as some people see it today. It therefore calls for peaceful coexistence among its adherents and followers of other religions and encourage language of dialogue, understanding and cooperation between diverse nations. (Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia)⁴ In this

connection, the glorious Qur'an provides a number of references to the division of the world into a multiplicity of nations. Almighty Allah says:

And if your Lord had so willed, He could surely have made mankind one *Ummah* [nation or community (following one religion only i.e. Islam)], but they will not cease to disagree. Except him on whom your Lord has bestowed His Mercy (the follower of truth - Islamic Monotheism), and for that did He create them. And the Word of your Lord has been fulfilled (i.e. His Saying): "Surely, I shall fill Hell with jinns and men all together."⁵ (Q 11:118-9)

Ali, while commenting on this verse seemed to be polite when he observed that all mankind might have been one. But in Allah's plan, according to him, man was to have certain measure of free will and this made differences inevitable. Ali noted that selfishness and moral wrong came in and people's disputations became mixed up with hatred, jealousy and sin. But he still maintained that the object of their creation was to raise them up spiritually by Allah's grace⁶. (Ali, A.Y. *The Holy Qur'an*: 610). Elsewhere, Almighty Allah mentions that:

And if Allah had willed, He could have made them one nation, but He admits whom He wills to His Mercy. And the *Zalimun* (polytheists and wrong-doers, etc.) will have neither a *Wali* (protector) nor a helper⁷. (Q 42:8)

A simple analysis here suggests that the actual relationship between these nations is the natural result of the need for co-existence between all nations. And that it is one of the Signs of Allah that He made us different, that we may be tried in the exercise of our will and that we reach, through righteousness and faith, our highest development. Despite all this, we must not become contentious, falling into evil but our limitations have to be understood. It is on the basis of this that Islam orders Muslims to respect the rights and privileges of every individual. Muslim individual particularly, is exhorted by Islam to protect non-Muslim by a covenant of safe conduct (*ahd ul aman*) by which his life, possessions and business became safe and secure (*musta'man*).

This act is therefore binding upon the whole community; any violence against the *musta'man* is illegal⁸. (Khan, K.A. *The Concept of Tolerance*: 2017). Contacts between Muslim and non-Muslim, personal and official are to be conducted by the peaceful means emanated from inter-religious harmony, although differences in terms of faith they profess continued to exist. In connection with this, the Glorious Qur'an obliges Muslims to relate with non-Muslims with sincerity, and should not fail each other or help anyone against the other. Abu Bakr (R.A.) the 1st caliph exhorted the soldiers as follows:

Let there be no perfidy; no falsehood in your treaties with the enemy; be faithful in all things, proving your selves upright and noble and maintain your word and promises truly⁹. (Khatab. S. and Bouma. G. *Democracy in Islam*: 186-7)

¹ Qur'an 49:13

² Ali, A.Y. *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (IPCI, Islamic Vision: England, 1999) 1524, 49:13, footnote 4933.

³ Khatab, S and Bouma G *Democracy in Islam*, Routledge: (Milton Park, 2007) 189

⁴ Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia. It was said: It is a term referring to the state of peace in which the countries of social systems and different political ideologies (such as Nigeria) particularly West capitalist states as well as socialist States without wars between them.

⁵ Qur'an 11:118-9

⁶ Ali, A.Y. *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary*, (IPCI, Islamic Vision: England, 1999) 610, 11: 118-9, footnote 1622

⁷ Qur'an 42:8

⁸ Khan, K.A. *The Concept of Tolerance in Islam*

<http://www.milligazette.com/news/1761-the-concept-of-tolerance-in-islam> visited on 19.04.2017

⁹ Khatab S. and Bouma G *Democracy in Islam*, Routledge: (Milton Park, 2007) 186-7

Based on Qur'anic submission, Islam promotes peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance among the people irrespective of their language or tribal inclination through some principles meant to enhance permanent peace and harmonious working relationship; the ultimate objective of Islam. It is of paramount importance to note that Islam obliges Muslims to behave themselves morally anywhere they go, away from home, in their country or abroad. And if they work in a country they should show keen insight and good judgment and they should respect the rule of law or system of the country they choose to work. And when they are deployed particularly soldiers to counter-attack, as the case of Nigerian Army, they should know that it is prohibited to kill non combatant, mutilation of human beings and beasts, destruction of crops, fruits, harvest and cutting trees, adultery and fornication with captive women, killing of delegates, envoys even in retaliation, the use of poisonous weapons, force others to believe in Islam e.t.c. What a nice religion!

Moral Integrity: Moral integrity, as a sector of development in every nation, plays vital role in the transformation and changing the fortunes of individuals and the nation as a whole positively. It is therefore imperative to make sure that moral training for strengthening the Nigerian Army are appropriately planned and achieved¹⁰. (Jumare, *An Introduction to Educational Management*, 2015: 1)

Otherwise, if the Nigerian Army is without discipline and moral values, the whole system under which it operates becomes fruitless. That is why the importance of inter religious harmony and moral rectitude to Nigerian Army cannot be overemphasized.

The Nigerian Army and Inter-Religious Harmony:

Religious harmony is also expressed in different words such as 'tolerance', 'togetherness', 'living together', 'complementing one another', 'meeting each other' and 'closeness'. It is, in Islamic discourse, an attitude of agreeing to live peacefully on the basis of mutual respect and working together towards a common goal of societal development and progress. Islam is peace of the believer with his Creator and Provider, with fellow beings on earth, be that with fauna and flora and the other fellow human beings. Even at the time of war, when it becomes inevitable, Islam teaches compassion, decorum, morality and responsibility. In fact, inter-religious harmony is based on mutual understanding and not only on living together between classes of people. It means in reality accepting the status quo as regards relations between individuals. Though in the misinterpretation of fundamental texts of religion, many researchers assert that Islam does not tolerate believers in other religions; this is far from the truth as there is no any other religion on earth which advocates tolerance and harmony among its adherents than the religion of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) on many occasions had spoken against tribalism, warned Muslims not to engage themselves in any act of tribalism and condemned it saying that no Arab is better than a non Arab and vice-versa, and he who would fight others on the basis of tribalism or ethnicity does not belong to the Muslim community, meaning he is not a good Muslim. These are some of those things anyone who is interested in seeing that peace, tranquility and concord are maintained in any society

dominated by Muslim and Christian faithful should know¹¹. (Ibrahim, Y.Y. and Maishanu, I.M. *The Madinan Constitution: 2011*, 10) Inter-religious harmony can only be achieved when freedom of worship and the safety of Places of Worship, good interpersonal relationship and treatment, social care and dialogue between adherents of religions for maintenance of peaceful coexistence for all are allowed to operate fully. As part of its effort to ensure a solid foundation for Inter-religious harmony and Moral integrity, the Nigerian Army introduced three Directorates of Religious Affairs. The directorates include that of Islamic Affairs (DOIA), Chaplain of Services (Catholic) and Chaplain of Services (Protestant). This has cogently informed the idea of belonging to any of the three directorates as there is no any religious body recognized in the Army Barracks saved the ones mentioned above. The DOIA, as a Muslim religious body in the NA is saddled with the responsibility of educating and training of the NA personnel alongside with their families on issues relating to Islam and Muslims generally. It equally, ensures among other things, inter-religious harmony, peaceful coexistence as well as moral upbringing among the personnel and their families. Impliedly, inter-religious harmony in the Nigerian Army can be achieved and maintained through mutual respect. Man, generally complements the one who respects him, even if he hates his religious beliefs and actions. Other factors responsible for the growth and maintenance of religious harmony and moral values include but not limited to the following:

- a. Weekly Jumu'at Khutbas (Friday Sermons) designed to educate the NA personnel and their members on the receptive nature of Islam among world religions, moral integrity, mutual understanding among the adherents of religious faiths as well as character building mechanism among others)
- b. Teaching and Training Sessions on topical issues on Islam for NA personnel and their families should be maintained. The onus is on the NA personnel who are adherents of religious faiths to practice what they learnt, not just hearing or moving from one pillar to post.
- c. Inter-religious visitations among the NA Directorates. This will enhance inter-family and cordial relationships among the members of the three Directorates.
- d. Intensive Training on Comparative Religions for NA personnel. This can be periodically defending on the resource persons to handle it.
- e. Organizing a Training Workshop on monthly basis on inter-religious harmony, peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance (This should be carried out by specialists on the subjects to avoid misrepresentation and misinterpretation of religious texts).
- f. The determinants of religious morality and the nature of commitment have to be intensified through high quality religious teaching and living within the Army Barracks.
- g. There is the need for NA personnel to inculcate the Islamic cherished values such as obedience, respect for elders, truthfulness, dignity in labour, chastity among other values into their children. This will go a long way in fostering unity, love, togetherness, and tolerance among the NA personnel and their families irrespective of their religious inclination.

¹⁰ Jumare, A.M. *An Introduction to Educational Management and Ethics* (Concept Designs and Prints, 2015) 1

¹¹ Ibrahim, Y.Y. and Maishanu, I.M., *The Madinan Constitution: A Panacea to Ethno-Religious Crisis in Nigeria*, in *Journal of Islamic Sciences and Muslim Development: UDUS*, 2011) Series 5, 10

Principles of Inter-Religious Harmony: The famous Madinan constitution outlined common principles of inter-religious harmony and security concern. It has provided religious, economic and political freedoms among other things, not only to the Muslims but to all those that belong to other religions. With all the ethno-religious differences common to the people of this new city state, people of different religions lived not only together but in the same house. Maishanu, in his work hinted that the Madinan society was truly pluralistic. In line with the aforementioned, Will Durant has equally observed:

At the time of the Umayyad caliphate the people of the covenant, Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews and Sabians, all enjoyed degree of tolerance that we do not find even today in Christian Countries. They were free to practice the rituals of their religion and their churches and temples are preserved...

Nigerian Army Fighting Force should consider themselves equal and citizens of the country regardless of *religion, race or language*. They should work harmoniously in protecting the land against any onslaught and never engage in atrocities and violation of the law of the land¹². (Sheriff, *Religious Tolerance from Islamic Perspective: 6*). Inter-religious harmony should not be seen as static but dynamic which continues every day. Islam, as the last of the Divine religions believes that recrimination of any form, be it verbal or physical particularly between two different faiths, will not bring any good. Hence, Muslims and adherents of other religions should desist from anything that can cause religious or social upheavals in the atmosphere of peace and stability. One of the teachings of the Glorious Qur'an is that human beings are one and same. This suggests that every one of us descends from the same father Adam and mother Eve. Their disparity in *language, colour and ethnicity* are but superficial envisioned only to help them know and recognize one another. On this regard, Almighty Allah elucidates in the following verse:

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 of you with Allah is that (believer) who has *At-Taqwa* [i.e. one of the *Muttaqun* (pious). Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware¹³. (Q 49:13)

Labdo, in his submission asserts that people are generally supposed to feel at home wherever they happen to reside. They should be able to offer their contribution, make a living and be part and parcel of the area. No discrimination therefore should be based on *ethnicity, colour, language and geographical background*. Religious harmony guarantees peace and unity among people. It is therefore imperative to know the teachings of Islam, as not knowing them might sometimes be the cause of accusing Islam and Muslims of intolerance or extremism. There is an essential need for genuine efforts aimed at mutual understanding among people of the same locality, for a lasting peace and harmonious living. Most of the conflicts between religious adherents (Muslims and Christians), when viewed religiously, are as a result of intolerance emanating perhaps from ignorance or over zealotry of the believers in their religions. It is believed that lack of knowledge of the followers of both religions of some of the principles of their religions might be contributing to some of these confrontations resulting from intolerance. As long as one is ignorant of the beliefs and

value system of one's religion, it is likely that one might act in a manner that might appear intolerant. Taking Islam as the focus of study, religious harmony as taught in Islam towards other religions can go a long way in minimizing religious conflicts and maintain peace and unity among people. The Glorious Qur'an has frequently discussed religious beliefs and practices of many religions of its time and environment. That is why it speaks volumes of compassion, understanding, tolerance and harmony as well as mercy for other sections of humanity that have not yet come to terms with this all-encompassing message, Islam. It can be said without any fear of exaggeration, that if not because of this final message of Allah, we would probably not be able to see humanity as one nation religiously. Many today tend to look at the history of each religion independently, instead of taking guidance from this unified picture, which better explains the many similarities and agreements we find in many religions. When it comes to the practical guidance on this matter, it is well recorded in Islamic societies, beginning with the Madinan community under the guidance and leadership of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), how they were truly pluralist and tolerant. In a Hadith confirming this, from Imam Bukhari narrated by Usama Bin Zaid (R.A.) who mentioned that he and the Prophet (S.A.W.) passed by an assembly of Madinans among them "were Muslims, polytheists (worshippers of idols) and Jews." These were the only existing religions in Madinah at that time, but their adherents sat together freely and discussed issues of mutual concern. Their mere coming together, according to Maishanu to discuss is a pointer to the level of integration achieved despite the differences¹⁴. (Ibrahim, Y.Y. and Maishanu, I.M *The Madinan Constitution: 10*) Which religious harmony is greater than this?

It was also recorded in history that some of the Jews that stayed in Khyber with the Muslims interacted freely and in harmony till when they bet Abdullah Bin Umar and they dislocated his hands and legs then only they were sent out of it, as a result of their breach of the covenant between them and the Muslims. The more one studies Islam along with other religions and with an objective and unbiased mind the more he comes to affirm its reality. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) for instance gave preference to (a) the question of the rights and duties of individuals in the state (b) an understanding with the non-Muslims and (c) political arrangements and organization together with military defense of the state. He (S.A.W.) categorically disagreed with the theory that the 'King can do no wrong'. For this reason, all the people, without exception, had to obey the laws with total compliance. The understanding of the relationship between Islam and other religions, which is the mainstream belief of the overwhelming members of this *Ummah*, does not in any way call for disrespect or condemnation of other religions chosen by others who will be fully responsible for their choices. Islam, being the fastest growing religion in the world, as it carries in it all the attractive and convincing features which man yearns for in his spiritual journey in this world doesn't teach aggression, the Qur'an specifically puts it that:

For God does not love the aggressors¹⁵. (Q 2:190)

It has to be understood from the context of this verse that in Islam war is only permissible in self-defense and under well

¹² Sheriff, V.F *Religious Tolerance From Islamic Perspective: An Analytical Study*, 6

¹³ Qur'an 49:13

¹⁴ Ibrahim, Y.Y. and Maishanu, I.M., *The Madinan Constitution: A Panacea to Ethno-Religious Crisis in Nigeria*, in *Journal of Islamic Sciences and Muslim Development: UDUS*, (2011) Series 5, 10

¹⁵ Qur'an 2:190

defined limits. Strict limits should not therefore be transgressed and this will ensure that women, children, old and infirm men are not molested, nor trees and crops cut down and nor peace withheld when the enemy comes to terms. In the following verse Almighty Allah forbids *al-Baghy* (all kinds of oppression)

Verily, Allah enjoins *Al-Adl* (i.e. justice and worshipping none but Allah Alone) and *Al-Ihsan* [i.e. to be patient in performing your duties to Allah, totally for Allah's sake and in accordance with the *Sunnah* (legal ways) of the Prophet (S.A.W.) in a perfect manner...¹⁶ (Q 16:90)

Justice, as mentioned in this verse signifies all virtues; that is the doing of good deeds even where they are not strictly demanded such as returning good for evil or obliging those who, in worldly language, have no claim on you. Everything that is shameful, unjust as well as inward rebellion against Allah's Law or our own conscience in its most sensitive form are to be avoided. Similarly, the Qur'an also teaches that let there be no compulsion in religion when Almighty Allah says:

There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path. Whoever disbelieves in *Taghut* and believes in Allah then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower¹⁷. (Q 2:256)

One of the strong moral integrity as far as Islam is concerned is that compulsion is incompatible with religion; this is because religion depends upon faith and will and these would be meaningless if induced by force.

Invite (mankind, O Muhammad S.A.W.) to the Way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom (i.e. with the Divine Inspiration and the Qur'an) and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His Path, and He is the Best Aware of those who are guided¹⁸. (Q 16:125)

Interestingly, in this verse are laid down principles of religious teaching which are good for all time. This is a clarion call that we should invite all to the way of Allah; but however we should carry it with wisdom, discretion, meeting people on their own ground and convincing them with illustrations from their own knowledge and experience. Our manner and arguments should not be acrimonious but modeled on the most courteous and the most gracious examples. This is for the fact that the seed of the word of Allah germinates in people's minds.

Moral Values in Islam and the Need for Nigerian Army Fighting Force to imbibe them:

The entire Qur'an is full of moral teachings, and the entire canvas of the Divine plan of human existence on earth is under its purview. It is very interesting to note that all the major religions in the world preach morality as an indispensable part of their teachings, but the approach followed in these religions towards morality is what makes the difference. Islam, therefore, being the last revealed religion, provides the best and most comprehensive moral teachings that are capable of eradicating all forms of social vices in human society. There is no an aspect of human actions, psychological conditions, circumstances, rights,

excellence and etiquette which has been left out of the Qur'anic moral teachings.

Islamic Morality: For the proper understanding of its concept, the word must be taken back to its origin. The Arabic equivalent of this word is *Khuluq* (pl. *Akhlaq*) which literally means innate disposition, character, behaviors, and nature e.t.c. technically it means the science of virtues and the way to acquire them, of vices, and how to guard against them¹⁹. (Hussain, *Morality in Islam*: 2010, 80-1). Generally speaking, good and evil are often looked at as relative concepts (moral relativism). Moral codes differ over time and between places, and there are many cases of things being considered moral by one society and immoral by another. This wide divergence of moral codes assumes that there is no universal ideal standard which can be used to judge what is better or worse. Thus, what is morally good is what the group, society or culture decides²⁰. (Da'wah Institute of Nigeria: 6). However, the crux of the matter is that, in Islam the moral positions are not relative; this is because it (Islam) defines a universal standard by which actions may be considered moral or immoral. The Islam's universal nature made its moral system all encompassing guiding the entire human beings on how to achieve it at an individual or collective level²¹. (Da'wah Institute of Nigeria: 6) This is the reason why Islamic moralities are divine in origin, human in nature, universal in approach and comprehensive in its scope. Restrictively, morality in Islam has five basic foundations upon which all other Islamic moral values are attached. These are:

- (a) Patience, (*sabr*) which helps a Muslim to bear and conceal anger and all other undesirable attitudes. Nigerian Army should therefore imbibe the spirit of patience while dealing with others of same faith or otherwise to enable them conceal anger and other undesirable attitudes that may hinder them discharge their constitutional duties as at when due.
- (b) Temperance (*iffah*) which enables one to shun immoral behaviors in words and actions and makes him to be modest and prevents him from bad habits. This is also very important factor that enhances the morale of Nigerian Army. It is therefore imperative for the Nigerian Army to cultivate the habit of temperance as a catapult in preventing them from being involved in bad habits and other questionable characters.
- (c) Courage (*Shaja'ah*) which helps one to have self-esteem, uphold noble characters and properly control himself in love and anger. Nigerian Army should particularly be courageous in facing security challenges bedeviling the country in general and some other parts of the North-East where activities of BH are more pronounced.
- (d) Justice (*'adl*) which puts one on golden means. This helps him to be generous- a quality between miserliness and extravagance-, it also helps him to acquire forbearance (*hilm*) – a quality between anger and self disrespect. The High Command of Nigerian Army should establish justice and allow zero tolerance for

¹⁹ Hussain, H. A, *Morality in Islam: A Solution to Nigerian Political Corruption* in *Studies in Islam: A Journal of Islamic Sciences and Muslim Development*: UDUS, 2010) Series 3, 80-1

²⁰ Da'wah Institute of Nigeria (DIN), *Personal and Moral Development*: (Islamic Education Trust, 2013) 6

²¹ Da'wah Institute of Nigeria (DIN), *Personal and Moral Development*: (Islamic Education Trust, 2013) 6

¹⁶ Qur'an 16:90

¹⁷ Qur'an 2:256

¹⁸ Qur'an 16:125

injustice among the Officers and Men of soldiers. This will no doubt earn them respect and love from all concerned citizens of the country. These are the sources of all other moral qualities from which all the rest emanate.

- (e) **Wisdom** (*al-hikmah*) which is the fifth foundation comes from sound faculty of knowledge. It helps one to have foresight enabling him to distinguish between true and false in statement, right and wrong in belief and between good and evil in actions. In line with the Nigerian Army constitutional duties, wisdom should be given a considerable position so that those who have excelled others in terms of wisdom and technical knowhow are identified and awarded recognition for the display of such wisdom in quelling unrest and maintaining absolute security in the most troubled spots²². (Mainiyo, *Problems of Morality in Nigerian Education System: 143*)

The Noble Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) who was sent to train the *Ummah* has amply exemplified all the teachings of the Qur'an hence, Almighty Allah enjoined human beings to emulate him when He says:

There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern²³. (Q 33:21)

Pleasingly, having Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) as our role model makes us Allah fearing men with strong faith whose lives will be a reflection of moral rectitude.

Determinants of Islamic Morality: Morality in Islam has many factors that help to initiate, maintain and develop a sense of direction among people in their environment. These determinants are:

- a. **Motive:** This motive is also divided into two; extrinsic and intrinsic motive. These are attached with the power that causes a person to act and why an action is done. Extrinsic refers to doing certain things for the sake of physical reward he/she hopes to get. Intrinsic implies that which prompts a person to do certain actions in anticipating spiritual benefit. This is in line with the teaching of the following Hadith:

Motive determines the value of all conduct and a person attains that which he desires²⁴. (Bukhari: 36)

Nigerian Army on their part should always carry out their constituted assignments in anticipating spiritual benefits. This would help them greatly in achieving the desired goals of maintaining peace and order in almost every part of the country.

- b. **Faith:** One of the most significant ingredients of good conduct is faith. This faith has, no doubt, a decisive effect on the spiritual and material lot of a person as well as his social behavior, political conduct and financial life. It could therefore be understood that faith

in Almighty Allah is the foundation of good morality. The Officers and Men of Nigerian Army should keep to their faith in carrying out their assignments. This will guarantee them trust, partnership and mutual respect among themselves.

- c. **Fear of God:** One's ability to respond to any stimulus in doing good and abstaining from all evil and selfish desires is best achieved and promoted by the amount of fear of Allah one has. Of all the determinants mentioned above, fear of Allah is the most significant determinant of morality. Fear of God in doing the right thing and abstaining from evil is a clear pointer which places the Nigerian Army Fighting Force on a vantage position. With the fear of God, the Nigerian Army can have a successful peace operation in violence infested zones within and outside the country through restoration of peace and security in those areas.

Relationship between Religion and Morality: It is obvious that there has been a relationship between religious views and morals. Religions have value frameworks that guide adherents in determining right and wrong. It has been established fact that Islam has constantly been guiding its adherents towards Paradise, the ultimate salvation of every Muslim. Morality is therefore one of its important subjects. The Prophet (S.A.W.) was reported to have elucidated in one of his traditions that:

The religion is *naseeha* (sincerity and sincere advice). We said, 'To whom?' He said, 'To Allah, His Book, His Messenger, and to the leaders of the Muslims and people in general²⁵'. (Muslim: 55)

Impact of Inter-Religious Harmony and Moral Values in the Nigerian Army Fighting Force: It is a common belief among Muslims, which gets firm root from the Glorious Qur'an, that the only true religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. This conviction in Muslims about the religion of Islam does not stop them from personal inter-relationship with people of other faiths especially followers of Christianity. Such personal interrelationship however does not entail agreeing with the tenets of Christianity but only nodding in agreement due to the spirit of inter-religious harmony to achieve strategic aims and objectives. This is because religion remains the one factor of survival in Nigeria. It is a common belief that religion is a potent factor for peace and hence should be practiced to let the nation grow, overcome differences and survive. It is however not an exaggeration to say that the true practice of the tenets of our religions will make Nigeria build a nation where peace and justice shall reign. We should not therefore turn religion into a weapon of human and societal disaster as it is not possible for human race to survive without religious dimensions²⁶. (Nwanko, *Religious Boom and Moral Decadence in Nigeria, 2015: 16*)

An adherent of Christianity could relate, interact and even work in the same environment with their Muslim counterpart in the most convenient way without necessarily having to concur that Islam, is what should be a guide in their lives. It is clear that difference in religion should not necessarily be a barrier in a way of peaceful co-existence, as long as freedom of worship is adequately guaranteed. This is despite the existing differences

²² Mainiyo, A.S., *Problems of Morality in Nigerian Education System and the Prospects of Islamic Moral Values in International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition* Vol. 7, (2015) 143

²³ Qur'an 33:21

²⁴ Muhammad Bin Isma'il Al-Bukhari, *Alja'mi' al-Musnad al-Sahih al-Mukhtasar Min Umuri Rasulillahi Sallallahu Alaihi wa sallam Wa Sunanihi wa ayyamihi*: (Dar Turuq al-Najah., 2nd ed, Vol. 1) 36

²⁵ Muslim Hadith No: 55

²⁶ Nwanko, S.C., *Religious Boom and Moral Decadence in Nigeria: Implications for National Development, in International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition*: Vol. 7, (2015) 16

in colour, race, language and other interests. Having succinctly x-rayed inter-religious harmony towards attaining certain goals we will now look at such, as a tool in building moral component of the Nigerian Army Fighting Force particularly from the Islamic point of view. Kick starting this discourse, we will, without any fear of contradiction say, the spirit of inter-religious harmony has deeply manifested from 2009 to date when the Nigeria Armed Forces began the nationalistic assignment to rid the country and the North-East in particular of the grips of heartless insurgent groups threatening Nigeria as one indivisible entity. Though, not of an identical religious faith, but members of the Nigeria Armed Forces found no difficulty in blending to pursue a common goal and interest, which is ultimately getting every inch of the country secured. Not just readying guns for onslaught but the sense of togetherness and oneness that always creep into their minds anytime, they set out to cleanse the land of agents of aggression is a glaringly depicting inter-religious harmony. Also it goes to scale up the level of patriotism by Nigerian Army Fighting Force there by sharing up moral values in them, which could have been the effect to ginger them up towards accomplishing a sacred responsibility of safeguarding the country. Beside the North-East of the country afflicted by the obnoxious activities of the BH insurgents, other volatile regions of the country are beneficiaries of the constitutional duties of the Nigerian Army Fighting Force, in a responsible manner. They include, South East, South South and the North West (Southern Kaduna) where members of the Force are routinely being deployed to maintain absolute security. What is entrancing is the fact that the Army High Command does not screen officers of a particular religious faith for deployment to such areas to quell unrest.

Conversely, the national duty by tradition always cut across service personnel from different faiths on a mission to regions with various religious affiliations. All these show inter-religious harmony, which invariably breed favorable result that includes unity and national cohesion among the members of the Nigeria Army Fighting Force. It is not an exaggeration to say that such an important factor has for years been an indispensable tool in catapulting the Nigeria Army as a fighting force to an enviable disposition, which has ensured their successes at various trouble spots, not outlined here. This is not an overstatement but an impeccable reality. Additionally, the Nigeria Army by the inter-religious harmony imprinted on the minds of officers and men, has achieved, what to many, is impossibility. These are concrete pillars of enduring trust, partnership and mutual respect among themselves. This by implication is ceaselessly enhancing their moral capacity thus placing them on a vantage position to confront any security challenge staring at the country. One significant thing to note is that the Nigeria Army as a dependable fighting force has not only restricted its praise-worthy peace operations within the Nigerian territory but has extended such to other violence infested zones of the world and with a combination of personnel representing different religious groups (Muslims, Christians, Traditionalists) what a fascinating scenario! They all aimed at common goal, which is to restoration of peace and security and these are desired by Islam.

Conclusion

From the above discussions it is clear that Islam as the last perfected guidance from the Lord of creation to the best of creations, Muhammad (S.A.W.) has given brilliant guidance as

regards religious harmony and moral values. This symposium is filled with love, faith, sacrifice, dedication, commitment, hope, expectation and victory. It is our hope that the Nigerian Army Fighting Force will continue to live peacefully with one another thereby imbibing the spirit of inter-religious harmony and do their utmost to making Nigeria a beautiful place to reside. It is in our collective interest to live in peace because without peace no meaningful and sustainable development can take place. Lack of peace in one part of the country affects all parts of the country²⁷. (Omotosho, *Religious Violence in Nigeria, 2003:15-31*)

Nigerian Army must rediscover the values of peaceful co-existence, social justice and religious harmony and patriotism with a view to curtailing the menace. It is hoped that the Nigeria Armed Force would continue to work hand in hand without distinction. It is only through this harmonious working relationship that the Nigerian army will attain the lofty heights in development, growth and prosperity. In fact, it is via this that you, as a one family, promote peace and religious harmony at all times.

Recommendations

1. Inter-religious harmony should continue to be encouraged within the Nigerian Army so as to enable the personnel know that differences in faith should not deter them in the discharge of their constitutional duties.
2. Aggressive sensitization mechanism should be explored where by Army personnel would be made to know that their religious faiths abhor insecure environment and that the aim should be peace at all cost.
3. As a fighting force, the Nigeria Army irrespective of differences in religious and geographical locations should know that every part of the country is theirs and that they should spare no effort at protecting it whenever the need arises.
4. There should be a periodic seminars, conferences and workshops where by personnel of the Nigeria Army are availed with the opportunity to know that their religious faith recommend tolerance and patience while at the same time frown at things that are the direct opposite of the aforesaid.
5. Nigeria Army High command should ensure higher level of moral justice and fairness on issues bordering on religious so as to build confidence in the entire system.
6. The Army High Command should ensure that it does not discriminate against personnel on the basis of religions when it comes to the issue of their right and privileges. This will undoubtedly guarantee inter-religious harmony.
7. Nigerian Army as Fighting Force should ensure that while on a peace keeping assignment they treat their host communities impartially, without having regard to their religious leanings. This will in turn concretize religious harmony within them, as military personnel.
8. Confidence building measures should continue to be worked out by the Army High Command to make the civil populace develop belief that military personnel is not positioned to serve a particular religion. This would

²⁷ Omotosho, A.O. *Religious Violence in Nigeria – the Causes and Solutions: an Islamic Perspective* (Swedish: Missiological Theme 2003) 15-31

certainly entrench inter-religious harmony within the force, thereby building their moral prowess and ingenuity to execute their responsibilities professionally. This is because moral principles guide human conduct and specifically tell the good which the moral law obliges us to do and the evil which it prohibits us from doing.

9. The Army High Command should ensure that recognition of one another among Muslims and Christians is maintained and that no campaign of hatred and black mail should be allowed to generate into religious disturbance within the ranks of the Army.
10. As a fighting force, the Nigeria Army should intensify efforts in making sure that the Officers and Men of soldiers appreciate, irrespective of religious background, other beliefs and culture and should not buy the idea of extremism. All the recommendations listed are without doubt in line with the provision of Islam.
11. Having the Nigerian Army belonging to different religions and tribes, the religious groups could come together to discuss and agree on a number of issues on the basis of consultation. This is because, hardly one finds among the Officers and Men of soldiers one who does not belong to either of the dominant religions in Nigeria.
12. One of the ways through which inter-religious harmony among the Nigerian Army can be strengthened is accepting the fact that ethno-religious differences should be forgotten and all attention should be geared towards national achievement. This is achievable if only they view freedom and right given to them to join and serve the nation is irrespective of one's religious, cultural, ethnic and tribal affiliation.
13. Muslims and Christians Army personnel need to demonstrate better understanding and sympathy for each other. They must uphold the sacred nature of the human conscience and accord individuals the freedom to search for truth of their choices²⁸. (Idakpo, *Religious Pluralism in Nigeria, 2015:15*)

²⁸ Idakpo. S., *Religious Pluralism in Nigeria: Implications for National Integration*, in *International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition*: (Vol. 7, 2015) 15