

HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH TO RESOLVING RELIGIOUS-ORIENTED INSURGENCE AND TERRORISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The very factors that fuel religious-oriented insurgency, radicalization and terrorism are rooted in the injunctions in the sacred books of the religious faiths. Such injunctions include; “Fight against those who (1) believe not in Allah, (2) nor in the Last Day, (3) nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad), (4) and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth (i.e. Islam) among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) until they pay the Jizyah (tax) with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued”; (Surah 9:29, the Noble Quran). Similar segregative and instigating injunctions are also prevalent in the sacred books of other faiths; for instance; “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for, what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?... Come out from among them and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:14-17); and “Do not permit a witch to live” (Exod. 22:18). However, in these religions that are less prone to insurgency and terrorist activities, it is because these texts are interpreted in such ways that dissuade the believers against taking up arms against fellow human beings. Hermeneutics is the art of textual interpretation. What religious adherents believe about a sacred text and how they act in response to it is dependent on the perspective advanced by the hermeneutical models used. This paper examines the ways in which the hermeneutical perspectives adopted in interpreting religious texts end up fuelling religious-based insurgency and terrorism, and strongly asserts that it is the duty of the interpreters of the religious texts to interpret such texts to their followers in such a manner that will strongly discourage them from insurgency and terrorist activities, but instead promote greater tolerance of people to diverse religious convictions.

Keywords: Terrorism, Insurgence, Radicalization, Instigation.

Introduction

Nigeria is on the verge of being torn asunder by large scale religious-based insurgency and terrorism. Particularly in the last five years, the shores of the country have been thrown open to a vast array of violent religious-based groups which have, on a daily bases, unleashed mayhem on the peace-loving citizens and inhabitants of the country. The state of security of lives and property of people resident in the country has gradually but concertedly deteriorated to such abysmal levels, that the very corporate existence of the country is now sufficiently threatened. This situation has in turn led to the rise of a vicious spate of the ethno-religious militias in a desperate bid to complement the glaringly insufficient efforts of the security agencies in the country. Even these ethno-religious militias have further heightened the already disturbed state of security in the country, in that as a measure to enable them function effectively, some of the ethno-religious militias are seeking a dismembering of the country in the face of obvious and/or perceived prejudices of the security agencies in the country. The

greatest fear in this situation seems to be the total breakdown of law and order in the country, and a resort to nationwide mutiny.

The predicament suffered in this country Nigeria in the face of large scale insurgence and terrorism is in fact, not peculiar to the country, but instead a recurring decimal in other parts of the world. Ndiokwere (2019) quoted the lamentation of Pope John Paul II over this widespread malady, thus:

I cannot remain silent about the disturbing situation experienced by Christians living in certain countries where Islam is majority religion. Expressions of their spiritual distress constantly reach me; often deprived places of worship, made the object of suspicion, prevented from organizing religious education or charitable activities in accordance with their faith, they have the painful feelings of being second class citizens. I am convinced that the great traditions of Islam, such as welcoming strangers, fidelity in friendship, patience in the face of adversity, the importance given to faith in God are principles which ought to enable unacceptable sectarian attitudes to be overcome. (p. 71).

The fact of overcoming unacceptable sectarian prejudices and aggressions, as the revered Pope harped on, should in fact be the hallmark of contemporary religious discipline and maturity, a situation which should in fact enable genuine deep-rooted peace to permeate our twenty-first century world and provide a global platform for genuine investment across religio-ideological divide. Indeed, it should be acknowledged that what humanity needs the most is this congenial atmosphere of peaceful coexistence which should naturally engage all and sundry in the wholesome enterprise of developing the goods and services for meeting the exacerbated needs of all humanity, irrespective of race or creed. Rather than bask in the primitive ideals of conquest, competition, slaughter, displacement and callous expansionist ideals, mankind, in this contemporary world of mental and emotional growth and stability, should be focused on the global challenges threatening human survival, and how to bring them under control, rather than escalating the challenges and threat to human existence and survival.

There is no doubt that the prospects of peace are meant to be rooted in the total internal resolve of the components of the human society to just life and attitudes that promote good life and ultimate well-being. Threats to peace and collective well-being, on the other hand, cannot be rooted in human obnoxious attitudes and excesses of human foibles. Thus, Umeanwe (2020) has pointed out that:

A video released by Islamic State on 26th December 2019 which claims to show the killing of eleven Christian hostages in the Northern Nigeria threatens to spark religious tensions in the country. The Islamic state sub-group called Islamic State, West Africa Province (ISWAP) said the “beheading” of the hostages was part of its campaign to “avenge” the killing of ISWAP leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in a US military raid in Syria. The findings of this paper

have shown that there is declaration of religious attack by Islamic religion on Christianity. Again, the deliberate effort to give religious coloration to the farmer-herders clashes and Boko Haram insurgency, in particular, had undoubtedly helped to conclude that the government is doing little or nothing to guarantee religious freedom in the country. (p. X).

The prevalence of primitive religious clashes in a twenty-first century society with extensive democratic principles and rule of law, speaks volumes of the wanton reluctance of contemporary homo sapiens to ascend to the Golean heights of mental and emotional stability. The regulations of modern society provide for redress in the court of law for persons and groups who feel unjustly treated, rather than recourse to self-help and jungle justice, that is taking laws into one's hands. For aggrieved persons to come out openly and claim responsibility for brazen acts of savagery in pursuit of a self-styled campaign, amounts to a deliberate denigration of the human status to mere savage beastly levels. The aspiration of modernity is to create platforms where persons who feel unjustly treated can seek recourse decently in an orderly manner without further plunging the world into the abyss of recklessness and mutiny. Pope John Paul II in Ndiokwere (2019) re-echoes this aspiration of the 21st century world towards enlightened humanity, thus:

I express my earnest hope that if Moslem believers nowadays rightly find in countries of the Christian tradition the facilities needed for satisfying demands of their religion, then Christians will similarly be able to benefit from a comparable treatment in all countries of Islamic tradition. Religious freedom cannot be limited to simple tolerance. It is a civil and social reality matched by specific right, enabling believers and their communities to witness, without fear, to their faith in God and to live out all the demands of that faith (p. 72)

Whether or not this aspiration is perceived of as creditably realizable, it remains a cardinal aspiration to which all of humanity must subscribe, not just in mere tacit, nominal assent, but in very attitude and very deed, in such a manner that it engulfs the totality of being and charts a new course of actions in a clearly defined direction.

Insurgence and Terrorism Rooted in Religious Injunctions

The religious-oriented insurgence and terrorism taking place in Nigeria today seem to be an extension of the aspiration of the Jihad that took place in Northern Nigeria from 1803 which led to the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate. Kukah (1993) has pointed out that:

The Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio (1754-1817), the Fulani scholar who founded the Sokoto Caliphate, has been the focal point of the history of Islam in Nigeria, but the undue emphasis on its centrality and dominance has become a source of consternation among other Muslims and scholars in what made up the former Northern Nigeria. Some of the reasons for this are cultural, theological, historical and political, all aimed at challenging Fulani and Anglo-Fulani tendencies in the presentation of Jihad history. For example, the people of the

Bornu Empire argued that Islam in their empire predated Sokoto by over seven centuries. They did not need to be evangelized. Kano, on the other hand rebuffed Sokoto, arguing that Islam had been in Kano since the reign of Yaji in the 14th Century. Sokoto's Supremacy was shrugged off by the events that finally led to the Kano Civil War in 1890. (p.1).

The critical point of the argument, anyway, borders on the struggle for supremacy between the caliphates. But whichever way the argument for supremacy goes, the significance of the Fodio Jihad of 1803 cannot be brushed aside with a wave of the hand.

It is important to realize that the primitive human societies existed on the principles of brutal, aggressive and oppressive conquests, and remained so until the period of evolution of refined government systems and international regulations for the preservation of law and order. Describing that period, with specific reference to South West Asia, Gabriel (2002) explained that in that period, South West Asia, then known as the Arabia Desert;

was not developed to the point of having distinct nations or countries. The people were not under any the authority of any type of law or government. The only authority was tribe leader over his members. These tribes were well known for their loyalty to their own tribe cultures. (p. 66).

Gabriel was referring here to the existence of the ethnic nationalities before the era of modern civilization occasioned by European expansionist and explorative invasions. These ethnic nationalities also existed in Africa, and more profoundly in Nigeria. Before the period of European invasion leading to amalgamation and eventually colonization, ethnic nationalities existed in Nigeria as local tribal empires which were quite established in Benin, Oyo, Ife, Igbo, to mention but a few.

The period in question was also one characterized by migrations in the search for conducive places for settlement, and these migrations and quests for settlement brought about sharp contentions and conflicts, leading to dispossessions and displacements. Gabriel (2002) captures the posture and attitudinal dispositions of the people of that dispensation:

Being courageous and violent was a sign of manhood in seventh-century Arabia. The people of this culture considered being quick to fight as a necessity for survival. Only the strongest survived; therefore these tribes fought constantly as a way of existence. This mentality was manifested into a basic lifestyle. Defend your own tribe and its territory. Plunder the possessions of those you defeat. Many individuals and groups would invade others to gain position and wealth. (p.67).

A complementary feature of this dispensation is recourse to religion and religious activities. Being a primitive period, in the pre-scientific era, the recourse was to religion for the explanation of all the complex and intricate features of life. Religion formed the nerve centre of all existence. For that reason, when people, especially leaders, wanted to issue commands, and they wanted such commands to acquire the ultimate force and compulsion, they couched such commands as divine injunctions. Thus, it was an era in which human beings spoke with the unequivocal voice of deities and by so doing, invoked and procured divine authority over otherwise mundane instructions.

It is therefore not surprising that the sacred books of various religions contain explicit instigation to brutal wars and callous conquests. A typical illustration of such instigation is found in 1 Samuel 15:2ff;

Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now, go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

Also in the early days of scrambling for membership of religious organisations, spiritual injunctions ostensibly aimed at bolstering such Machiavellian scrambling were also rife. One of such is found in 2 Corinthians 6:14ff.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers for, what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

Gabriel (2002) outlines many such explicit instigations to hatred, war and conquest contained in the Muslim sacred writings. Some of them are worthy of mention here:

Those who reject Islam must be killed. If they turn back (from Islam), take (hold of) them and kill them wherever you find them. (Surah 4:89, The Noble Quran).

So when you meet (in fight, - Jihad in Allah's cause), those who disbelieve, smite (their) necks till when you have killed and wounded many of them, then bind a bond firmly (on them, i.e. take them as captives). (Surah 47:4. The Noble Qur'an).

You who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are close to you and let them find harshness in you; and know that Allah is with those who are Al Muttaqun (the pious). (Surah 9:123; The Noble Qur'an)

Let not the unbelievers think that they can get the better (of the godly); they will never frustrate them. Against them, make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies, and others besides whom you may not know, but whom Allah knows. (Surah 8:59-60).

Commenting on these explicit injunctions and instigations to hatred of, and to war against non-adherents of the religion, Gabriel (2002) asserts that:

We find Jihad as a command to all Muslims, enforced by the Qur'an. The focus of Jihad is to overcome people who do not accept Islam. In Muhammed's day, Jihad was therefore practiced against Christians and Jews on a regular basis, as well as people who were idol worshippers – anyone who did not convert to Islam (p.33).

In Nigeria, sadly, religion, and by extended implication, the pursuit of these remote religious aspirations and ideals has become the basis and motive behind the jostle for political power in the country. Political power has, in fact, come to be recognized as the veritable instrument for pursuit of, and eventual stage-by-stage realization of these aspirations. So politics in Nigeria is not all about the even development of the country. It is all about subjugation and subdue unto total annihilation and submission. Kukah (1993) quotes the Emir Ja'afaru of Zaria as articulating the ideology of the ruling class in Nigeria, and warning his people that since the non-Muslims were meant to feed and sustain the power quest of the ruling class, he likened them to the horse and the grass, insisting that "the grass must never be allowed to eat up the horse" (p. 186).

At the base of all the insurgence and terrorism in the world, and particularly in Nigeria today, is the fact that these instigations and violence contained in the sacred books, particularly of Islam, aggregate into a philosophy of dominance, total annihilation and control on non-conformists, an ideal that has its origin in the evil Machiavellian attitudes of the primitive ages in which growth and expansion even of religious groups were achieved through callous conquests, displacements and dispossession. It may not be worrisome that such ideals were developed in the early days of primitive clashes and wars, displacements and dispossessions, but that such beastly instincts and instigations are brought into, and made valid in the modern twenty-first century society certainly smacks of colossal under-development, squalid decrepitude, and a deliberate refusal to embrace the light of civilization and modernity.

Hermeneutical Models

Hermeneutics is the study of the theories and principles related to the interpretation of sacred books. Sacred books, as documents of faith related to the various religions have, since especially the 18th century, been treated with decorum, as far as issues relating to interpretation are concerned. Although naturalist theologians who have played profound roles in the evolution of historical-critical perspectives to textual interpretation are content to see all literature as inspired writings and have frowned at the classification of some literature as sacred, all the same, the consensus has since

evolved which has placed sacred writings in a class of their own, requiring the use of hermeneutical models, rather than secular literary genres, for their interpretation. Thiselton (1988) has said concerning hermeneutical models:

Traditionally, and until recently, hermeneutics has been taken to mean the study of rules or principles for the interpretation of particular texts. But this definition is too narrow. First, hermeneutics concerns not only the interpretation of texts but the interpretation and understanding of any act of communication whether written or oral, verbal or non-verbal (such as symbols, or symbolic acts). Biblical hermeneutics is a scientific area which concerns the interpretation, understanding and appropriation of biblical texts. Second, theorists are no longer content to speak of rules for the interpretation of text, as if to imply that understanding can be generated merely by the mechanical application of purely scientific principles. Hermeneutics raises prior and more fundamental questions about the very nature of language, meaning, communication and understanding. The subject thus involves an examination of the whole interpretative process. It raises issues in the philosophy of language, theories of meaning, literary theories and semiotics (theories of signs), as well as, in Biblical hermeneutics, those which also arise in Biblical Studies and in Christian theology. (p. 293).

From the foregoing, it is clear that modern hermeneutics goes beyond the text to even question the prevailing perspectives of its interpretation and of its meaning. Hermeneutics interrogates the models of interpretation, and the perspectives of textual deductions. Being dynamic rather than static, hermeneutics examines the contexts of application and administration of its ethos, and reinvents itself in new and structurally deviant circumstances. Hermeneutics therefore holds the key to the deductions of textual meanings and ultimate implications. At the end of the day, what the adherents of a religious faith believe of their sacred writings is not very much what the writings say on the face (literal perception and perspectives), as what the scholarly exegetes say that the writings are saying, through the application of the hermeneutical models and methods. A brief look at some hermeneutical models would be useful here.

a. Biblical Hermeneutics

Biblical hermeneutics is the study of the principles of interpretation concerning the books of the Bible. It is part of the broader field of Hermeneutics which involves the study of principles of interpretation, both theory and methodology, for all forms of communication, verbal and non-verbal. Biblical hermeneutics is of four major types, namely:

- i. **Literal Interpretation:** Literal Interpretation asserts that a biblical text is to be interpreted according to the plain meaning conveyed by its grammatical construction and historical context. The literal meaning is held to correspond to the intention of the authors. This type of hermeneutics is often but not necessarily associated with belief in the verbal inspiration of the Bible according to which the individual words of the divine message were divinely chosen.

- ii. **Moral Interpretation:** This is the second type of biblical hermeneutics which seeks to establish exegetical principles by which ethical lessons may be drawn from the various parts of the Bible. Allegorization was often employed in this endeavour.
- iii. **Allegorical Interpretation:** This model interprets the biblical narratives as having a second level of reference beyond those persons, things, and events explicitly mentioned in the text. A particular form of allegorical interpretation is the typological according to which the key figures, main events, and principal institutions of the Old Testament are seen as types or fore-shadowing of persons, events and objects in the New Testament.
- iv. **Anagogical Interpretation:** This mode of interpretation seeks to explain biblical events as they relate to or prefigure the life to come. Such an approach to the Bible is exemplified in the Jewish Kabbal which sought to disclose the mystical significance of the numerical values of Hebrew letters and words.

b. Qur'anic Hermeneutics:

Qur'anic Hermeneutics is the study of theories of the interpretation and understanding of the Qur'an, the sacred text of Islam. Since the early centuries of Islam, scholars have sought to explore the depth of its meaning by developing a variety of different methods of hermeneutics. Many traditional methods of interpretation are currently being replaced with more modern and contemporary approach. The three primarily established typologies of interpretation in Quaranic hermeneutics are:

- i. Tradition (Sunni)
- ii. Opinion (Shi'i) and
- iii. Allegory (Sufi).

The two main types of verses to be interpreted are Muhukmat (clear verse) and Mutishabihat (ambiguous verse). The traditional approach to hermeneutics within the Qur'an embodies an awareness of isnad (chain of transmitters).

Consideration for Interpretation:

The secondary source (second to the Qur'an) that is used for interpretation and clarification is the Hadith. The Hadith report is a compilation of the things Muhammad did and said throughout his life (the portion that was not divinely revealed). Traditional hermeneutics consists of consulting the Hadith as the first step when a Qur'anic verse is in question. Within the Qur'an, there are two distinct types of verses: muhukmat (clear verse) and mutshabihat (ambiguous verse). The most important and well established tafsir typology is Sunni (tradition). Second and third to Sunni are Shi'i (opinion) and sufi (allegory).

A vital complement of Qur'anic Hermeneutics is a feature called naskh (pronounced nasik). Gabriel (2002) explains that;

Nasik is based on the fact that the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad at different times over a period of about twenty-two years. Some parts of the Qur'an came later and some parts came earlier. To solve a

contradiction, they (the scholars) decide that new revelations override (naskh) previous revelations. (p. 30).

The point being made here is that, as in the sacred writings, some injunctions may seem to contradict others. For instance, the same Bible that commanded: “An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth” (Exod. 21:24) also commanded “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you” (Matt. 5:44). In the case of the revelations to Muhammad in the Qur’an, there was time in which the adherents of Islam were a tiny minority in Mecca, and considering that they could be wiped out if they showed any inordinate behaviour, Muhammad enjoined them:

O you who believe! Take care of your own selves. If you follow the (right) guidance [and enjoin what is right (Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do), and forbid what is wrong (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden), no hurt can come to you from those who are in error. The return of you all is to Allah, then He will inform you about (all) that which you used to do. (Surah 5:105, The Noble Quran).

At the time the Muslims reached a sizeable population in Mecca, the prophet advocated a more drastic and vicious posture towards the non-believers.

Let not the unbelievers think that they can get the better (of the godly); they will never frustrate (them). Against them, make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom you may not know, but whom Allah knows. (Surah 8:59-60. Ali Translation).

In the second verse of this quotation, the Noble Quran adds some frightening commentary; “And make ready against them all you can of power, including steeds of war (tanks, planes, missiles, artillery) to threaten the enemy of Allah...” (Surah 8:60).

At the end of the day, it is the interpreters of the sacred texts today that tell the adherents of the faith what they are to believe the text to be saying. And how the adherents of each faith relate with the adherents of other faiths around them depends to a large extent on what their teachers make them believe the texts to be saying.

Radicalization, Insurgence and Terrorism

Weigel (1994) has succinctly associated the February 26, 1993 terrorist attack on the twin-tower World Trade Centre in New Jersey, USA, with the radicalist sermons of Sheikh Omar Abd al-Rahman leading an extremist group associated with the Al-Salaam Mosque of Jersey City. According to him;

Sheikh Omar Abd al-Rahman had been preaching fire-breathing sermons that were subsequently circulated in the slums of Cairo on cassette tapes. The Sheikh’s message – that true believers must kill “the enemies of Allah... in order to liberate themselves from the grandchildren of the pigs and apes who are educated at the tables of the Zionists, the Communists and the Imperialists”, - was thought to have been, at least partially, responsible for motivating the anti-tourist

(i.e. anti-foreigner and anti-Western) violence plaguing Egypt. (p.196)

He added that:

Meanwhile, investigation continued to explore the connections between the attack on the World Trade Centre and members of an extremist group affiliated with the Al-Salaam Mosque in Jersey City. (p. 196).

Radicalization is the contemporary terminology used to describe the instigations, on religious platforms, of religious adherents towards bitter hatred, vituperation, and eventually violent disposition against non-adherents of that faith. Gabriel (2002) confirms the suspicion that the attack on World Trade Centre in 1993 was associated with the radicalization activities of Sheikh Abd al-Rahman, when he stated:

The only goal of Sheikh Abdel Rahman's residency in the United States was to lead Jihad from within. The following are his objectives:

1. Base the Islamic Jihad Movements in nations of the infidels – these are his own words – preparation for the nationwide revolution.
2. To pressure the U.S. Government by threatening America's Security from within.
3. To use this pressure to change U.S. policies in the Islamic world, particularly to breakdown support for Israel and to resolve the Palestinian dilemma.

Sheikh Abdel Rahman's first operation of business was to shake the United States by attacking one of the foremost symbols of prosperity, success and free enterprise – the towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City. In 1993, as the world heard, the Jihad movement was responsible for a major explosion in one of the towers, killing six people. (pp. 176, 177).

Radicalization is actually a process of converting nominal, peace-loving religious adherents to radical, callous warriors, and is already happening all over the world, as yet only evident in Islam, enhanced by critical contents of the Islamic sacred writings. We know also that the insurgence and terrorism going on in Nigeria, starting from the Boko Haram activities in the Northern parts of the country, and now escalating, involving other terrorist groups such as the bandits, and spreading to other parts of the country, are being subtly enhanced internally and surreptitiously by intense radicalization processes. The Islamic programme of disciplining under-aged children in the tenets of the faith, in many cases complemented with total denial of (Western) education, provides a veritable platform for the preparation of potential terrorists. This disciplining programme, called Almajiri system, is very strong in Northern Nigeria, and is probably the major reason for the very little success recorded in the war against terrorism, as effective work force is constantly being supplied to the insurgent organizations from within.

Hermeneutical Models for Global Peace

From the foregoing, two facts are already manifestly evident. One, what religious adherents believe their Scriptures to be saying is wholly and entirely based on how the religious scholars interpret such Scriptures. Two, how religious adherents behave towards the non-adherents of their faith around them depends wholly and entirely on the injunctions given to them by their religious leaders, as a reflection of how such religious leaders interpret the contents of their sacred writings. For instance, though the Christian Bible clearly instructs; “Thou shall not suffer a witch to live” (Exod. 22:18), In the Old Testament, the word translated “witch”, is the Hebrew word, מְכַשְׁפָּה, the piel (intensive active) verb tense form of the qal perfect verb, כָּשַׁף, meaning “to practice, or one who practises magic”. WTM Morphology renders it as “sorcerer”, and includes as synonyms to it; “falseswearers, diviners, astrologers” (p. 506). Holladay (1988) presents other variants of the word, מְכַשְׁפִּים, מְכַשְׁפִּים, also commonly translated sorcery in the Old Testament. The New Testament word rendered with the same meaning, is the Greek noun, φαρμακία, which is the root of the English word, “pharmacy”. Vine (1996) affirms that the word means “the use of medicine, drugs, spells; then, poisoning, sorcery, as in Galatians 5:20” (p. 587). Another word commonly used in the New Testament with the same meaning is the Greek word, μαγία, the root of the English word, magic. This word was used in Acts 8:9-11, in relation to a certain man, Simon, a sorcerer. However, Christian teachers teach their followers that it is criminal to take up physical weapons against a “witch”, or one associated with any of such practices, as in the encounter between Paul the Apostle and Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:9-11; no matter how convinced one may be that such a one is a witch. At best, one can pray for divine help for protection and vengeance.

Similarly, Moses commanded the Israelites to take their swords and slaughter everyone that bowed down to an idol (Exod. 32:26ff) and Elijah commanded the Israelites to seize all the prophets of Baal (adherents of a different faith) and “he slew all of them” (1 Kings 18:40). The expression translated “and he slew them”, in that text, is the Hebrew composite expression, וַיַּשְׁחֵט, from the qal perfect, שָׁחַט. WTM Morphology and Whittaker’s Revised BDB Lexicon explains that the same verb is used for “killing for sacrifice, bird, beast; translated, slaughter, as in human sacrifice to false gods” (p. 1006). In other words, it carries the fullest connotation of physical, beastly annihilation and destruction, often, with the use of a sharp sword, as the tradition in those days would entail. Although such records still exist in the Christian document of faith, the Bible, yet, no Christian leader today will teach the adherents of the faith to take up arms against someone else who happens to hold a different religious conviction. Such actions may have obtained in a primitive society, but certainly are no longer permissible in a modern 21st century organized society with adequate regulations for protecting people of diverse religious convictions in our pluralist society.

Similarly, it is expected that Islamic scholars should brace up to their hermeneutical responsibilities in their faith in such a manner that satisfies the aspirations of global peace and well-being in our twenty-first century world. Using the naskh hermeneutical model, they should override and subsume (indeed cancel out) those textual injunctions that instigate bitter hatred against adherents of other faiths, and ultimately promote violence and threat to lives and property, in the overall interest of peace and wellbeing of the human society. For the avoidance of doubt, if the present level of armed religious

conflicts is allowed to go on, unabated, the survival of mankind on earth will indeed be severely threatened, and mankind may soon be wiped out from the face of earth.

Conclusion

Most, if not all religious sacred documents of faith contain all kinds of instigations to violence and war. These writings, no doubt, have their origin in the primitive periods of human development in which nations prospered by conquering the weaker nations and taking over their possessions. Injunctions to war and violence, no doubt, originated from human greed, avarice, and uncontrolled quests for expansion. Such injunctions were couched in divine language and inserted in religious documents of faith in order to grant them the force they needed to achieve the necessary obedience and loyalty. Today, mankind have become developed. Pursuit of such clandestine, beastly aspirations should therefore now be consigned to the primitive pages of history where they actually belong. Hermeneutics, which is an instrument for interpretation of sacred writings, should be employed to interpret the sacred writings in such a manner that promotes global peace and well-being. In doing so, the injunctions that instigate crisis and violence should be exegetically presented in such a manner that ultimately cancels out the instigation to physical violence, replacing it with demands for love of one's enemy and doing good in return for evil. By so doing, there will be greater promotion of peace and wellbeing in the world, especially in Nigeria where religious-based insurgence and terrorism are already threatening the continued corporate existence of the nation.

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