

**The Theology of Peace and War in Old Testament
and Its Relevance to Solving the Dilemma of Insecurity in Nigeria**

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, as a multi-faith state, has been bedeviled devastatingly with religious crises and civil unrest in recent time than any period in her national history. A lot of recommendations have been given to the country on her how to curtail the dilemma, all of which have proved irrelevant. A cursory look at Nigeria's situation in this decade shows some similarities to the occasions of war in the Old Testament. The theology of war and national security in the Old Testament is relevant to our current dilemma of insecurity in Nigeria. In the Old Testament there were so much war and violence sanctioned by Yahweh.¹ The Old Testament is full of reflections of warring activities in Ancient Israelite time. This is because there was what can be called 'the spirit of territorial dominion cum nationalistic expressions.' The horrific events of insecurity in Nigeria have served as a catalyst in making us to reflect on how one responds to such extreme actions of violence and insecurity. While some people advocated for swift military retaliation, on the other side of the spectrum, many proceeded to embark on 'bizarre rituals of symbolic self- flagellation.'

The question is 'how Christians should react to this heinous situation?' As the drums of war beat even louder, Christians are increasingly confronted with the necessity to think through, not only that stance on war, but also their attitude towards the use of force and violence in general. Christians in Nigeria need Peace which is a central concern of the Old Testament. The understanding of war and security must begin with a consideration of the Hebrew Bible. The Old Testament describes God as a Solider or Warrior, who often executes justice by war. Prof. Peter Craigie asserts that "Until lately, the Old Testament stood alongside the New Testament as inspire but large parts of the Old Testament glorify the God of Battles rather than the Father

¹Biblical, *Why so much war in the Old Testament?* (www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/.com Accessed: July, 2014).

of our Lord Jesus Christ”² This is because the occurrence of war and battle in the Old Testament are frequent that virtually every one of the 39 books of the Hebrew Bible mentions the subject of war, and some deal with it in great detail. Amidst the spirit of territorial dominion and nationalism, the nation of Israel was concern about the lives of her citizenry, and this often lead to war, conflict, in search of national peace and security.

In view of this, this paper investigates the relevance of the Old Testament concept of war and how the occasions of war in Old Testament were solved, to the dilemma of religious unrest in Nigeria. This paper attempts to answer the following questions:

1. *What kinds of war are found in the Old Testament?*
2. *What was the relationship between God and his people and the effect of such relationship on the outcome of their wars in the Old Testament?*
3. *What are the elements of and relationship between war and peace in the Old Testament?*
4. *What constituted 'a just war' and the relationship between war and peace in Israel?*
5. *What is the relationship between the Deuteronomite theology and pax divina in Israel?*
6. *What lessons for the present era should be drawn from the theology of peace and war in Old Testament?*
7. *How should Christian respond to the problem of insecurity from the O.T perspectives?*

Religiosity as a Cause of Crises in Nigeria

Nigerians, like than any other African people, are so incurably religious. Late Professor, Bolaji Idowu of University of Ibadan, Nigeria, had illustriously defended this thesis with illustrations from the Nigerian people’s ubiquitous acknowledgement of divine presence in the Nigerian world.³ According to Chris Umanus, research has shown that human beings are religious animals, and accordingly, human kind is a *homo sapiens cum religioso*, all in one.⁴ Various nations of the world have their own sense of deity or Supreme Being, and Nigeria of

²Peter Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament* (US: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 49.

³Chris U Manus, *Despite the Ubiquitous Holy Noises: s there still Relevance in Mainstreaming Religious Studies in the Curriculum of the Nigerian Universities: A Guest Lecture Delivered at the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan in Honour of Prof. S.O Abogunrin, 2008, 1.*

⁴Ibid

course not exempt, possess their inner capacity and inherent *desideratum* for religious experience. Finding has also shown that religion has played many active roles in the world since the time immemorial. Nevertheless, the increasing volume of the riots in Nigeria, the bloodshed noises that last the decorum of our news papers and network news compel me to assert that Karl Marx's⁵ view of religion as a divisive tool is nothing but a truism in Nigerian experience. The major cause of religious crises and civil unrest in Nigeria is high religiosity in the country; everyone is religious. This fact becomes so much obvious if one looks at various religious adherents in the nation. The African religionists in the country claim to have the only way to heaven, Islamic religionist claim to have the only way to God and Christians also claim to have Christ who is the Way. This is the root of the problem. It is particularistic expressions of these religions that have led to several unrest and crises. The interaction of these religions in Nigeria has been negative and it often results in blood shedding.

It is high time the problem of insecurity and religious crises in Nigeria be confronted with relevant biblical theology, most specific, the Old Testament theology. The attitude of Nigerian Christians to the ongoing problem of insecurity in Nigeria occasioned by religious disharmony has been unbalanced and extremely pacific, since a lot of the discussions that have been done on the subject are largely from New Testament perspectives. Don't we see the need to look for biblical solutions to insecurity in Nigeria beyond the latter 27 books of the Holy Writ? This is the thesis I strongly wish to defend in this paper.

Theology of war and peace in the Old Testament

The incidence of war and intense search for national security found in the Old Testament has for a long time become a thing of concern. The topic of war and peace in the Old Testament is vast in scope. Indeed, in the Hebrew Bible, war is assumed from outset as a necessary part of the world in which the ancients found themselves. Neither the speeches of God nor the actions of saints ever envisioned the absence of war in the Old Testament. Contrary to the **hostility-**

⁵Dr Karl Marx proposed his theory of conflict view of religion to show that religion should not be seen with the eyes of functionalist alone because there are also negative effects of religion, one of which is the fact that it can be a divisive tool in the society. Theory is referred to as 'Conflict theory of religion.'

thesis hypothesized by Rev Dr Gordon Wong ⁶ from the book of Isaiah and Micah, this ideal was never an historical reality in the periods in which the writers of the books of the Bible lived. Every generation of the Old Testament time knew war in search for national freedom and peace. While considering the brutality of blood shedding in the O.T, Dr. Rami Guirguis asserts that,

As a contemporary Christian reader of the Old Testament, the predominance of war has always troubled me a great deal. The conflict between war and religion was not reconciled in my mind, until recently. For me the problem of war in the Old Testament was not academic, but rather it was more related to my practice of Christian living. I was unable to answer the question of why there were wars in the Old Testament, and its relevance to Christianity. For a time when I was unable to answer these questions, I began to feel a sense of moral frustration, and theological anxiety. I am certain that the moral problem of war troubles many Christians and non - Christians alike. For me, it was disturbing to read about the ruthless laws of war in Deuteronomy 20:10-18. In Joshua 6:21, it is unsettling to read about the slaughter of “both man and women, young and old.”⁷

The problem of war in search for security in OT creates a real difficult even for those who unconditionally accept the OT as divinely inspired and authoritative. How can we as contemporary Christians understand the association of war and violence in the Old Testament with the loving and compassionate Jesus Christ? Initially, it may appear that these two portraits of God are not reconcilable, a view which was championed by Marcion, in the history of the church. How can we resolve this problem? Should we as Christians reject the Old Testament, and make the assumption that it is a “second class” revelation in contrast to the New Testament?⁸

Instead, there are at least three levels in which warfare in OT must be examined. First is the question of the nature of God as a warrior who leads his people in battle. This depiction of

⁶Gordon Wong, *Pacifism or Peace? War, Peace and Justice in then Old Testament*” <http://www.ttc.edu.sg/csca/cs/2002/aug/pacifism.pdf>. 2014. 12. Dr. Gordon opined that passages such as Isaiah and Micah are a portray of vision for total absence of war in O.T, a view which has been debunked by other scholars.

⁷Rami Guirguis, *Wars in the Old Testament*, 2.

⁸DL Baker has done an excellent work on the problem of theological relationship of the two Testaments. See DL Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: The theological relationship between the Old and New Testaments* (Intervarsity Press,2010)

God is foundational for most of the understanding of wars in the Hebrew Bible. Examination of this concept is necessary, for the people who worshiped the God of Israel were surely influenced and guided by the character of the God whom they honored. This is what Peter Craige referred to as the theological problem of God in the Old Testament. Second is the analysis of the different types of war described in the Bible and the explicit reflections on war that are suggested by the text. While this inquiry is complex and multifaceted, it provides the most important layer of understanding for appreciating the role of Israelites at war and the ethics that may have governed their prosecution of battle. Third, there remains the critical evaluation of the purpose behind the text's presentation of battles. This raises questions of ideology and propaganda. To what extent is the biblical presentation of warfare a distortion of the historical events, designed to serve the political purposes and nationalistic spirit in Israel? However, the third point cannot be pressed to far in respect to the concept of verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible.

What is war, as understood by the writers of the Hebrew Bible? The verb 'to make war' (*nilham*) and the noun form *milhama* (war) appear about 164 and 320 times respectively in the Bible.⁹ This relatively high frequency reflects the importance of the subject in the Bible. Also the verb *kadeshu*, which in qal stem means 'to be set apart' in niph'al stem means 'to be sacred' and in piel stem means 'to consecrate' and 'to be consecrated' in pual stem, is often used in the Hebrew Bible to refer to the act of preparing men for war. The stem in which it often occurs is in piel, for example in Jeremiah 51²⁷ קְדָשׁוּ verb piel imperative masculine plural is used. The word is used with the connotation of separating and consecrating men and women for the service of the Lord. This shows that going to war was seen as an act of service to God in Old Testament:

Lift up a signal in the land, Blow a trumpet among the nations!
 Consecrate (קְדָשׁוּ) the nations (people) against her. Summon against
 her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz; appoint a marshal
 against her, Bring up the horses like bristly locusts.

An exegetical consideration of these terms in the OT and its usage beginning from Exodus portrayed Yahweh as a warrior who leads his people in battle and fight for them and whenever the people are used as the agent of warfare in a battle, they had the sense of the fact

⁹H.D Preuss, '*milhama*' TDOT 8:334

that they were doing the work of God. The role of Yahweh as a Warrior is the model against which all other battles and warfare are measured. This model or thesis was proposed by Longman and Reid in their discussions of Old Testament God as a Warrior.¹⁰ For example, the song of Moses in Exodus 15 is particularly evocative. The writer of Exodus celebrates God's defeat of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea in the following words:

Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and said, "I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea.² "The LORD is my strength and song. And He has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will extol Him.³ "The LORD is a warrior; The LORD is His name.⁴ "Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; And the choicest of his officers are drowned in the Red Sea.⁵ "The deeps cover them; They went down into the depths like a stone.⁶ "Thy right hand, O LORD, is majestic in power, Thy right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.⁷ "And in the greatness of Thine excellence Thou dost overthrow those who rise up against Thee; Thou dost send forth Thy burning anger, *and* it consumes them as chaff.⁸ "And at the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were piled up. The flowing waters stood up like a heap; The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.⁹ "The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be gratified against them; I will draw out my sword, my hand shall destroy them.'¹⁰ "Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters.¹¹ "Who is like Thee among the gods, O LORD? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?¹² "Thou didst stretch out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.¹³ "In Thy lovingkindness Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed; In Thy strength Thou hast guided *them* to Thy holy habitation.¹⁴ "The peoples have heard they tremble; Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia.¹⁵ "Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; The leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.¹⁶ "Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Thine arm they are motionless as stone; Until Thy people pass over, O LORD, Until the people pass over whom Thou hast purchased.¹⁷ "Thou wilt bring them and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, The place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thy dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established.¹⁸ "The LORD shall reign forever and ever."
(Exo. 15:1-18).

It can be seen from this poem that God is focused as the leader of Israelite Army and the prosecutor of the war. Yahweh's activity in the battle is a response to the boast of the enemies in verse 9. The greatness of God is seen against his role as a Savior. Of particular interest is the

¹⁰Tremper Longman and Daniel Reid, *God is a Warrior* (Studies in OT Biblical Theology; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 30-37.

verse seven in which the expression does not primarily describe the event of drowning of the Egyptians but use general and universal terms to outline God's victory over all oppositions. The image of right hand in verse 12 is used in Egyptian literature earlier than this passage to describe the military security that Pharaoh provides.¹¹ According to Hess, Exodus 15 is therefore an intentional polemic against Pharaoh; Yahweh is portrayed as superior to the gods of Egypt by his defeat of Egyptian Army.

Clearly, the view of the writer is that this battle is not a slaughter of innocents but the containment of violence that otherwise would be directed at God's people. One thing that is reflective from the poem is that Yahweh is seen as One who is caring toward the salvation of His people both in spirit and in physical freedom. This is the background with which salvation is to be seen in Africa, and most especially, in Nigeria. Any religious denomination that will thrive in African soil must have solution to the physical problem of the people in addition to their spiritual problems.

To break this discussion down to earth, Israel's theology of war and peace will be discussed in the following sub headings:

God and War

The intimate connection between Yahweh and war is derived from two critical events in the history of Israel. The first one is linked to the liberation of the Hebrew people from the hand of the Egyptian Pharaoh; from that point on, Yahweh is known as a warrior (cf. Ex. 15:1-4) as noted above. Secondly, perception of Yahweh as a God of war is further reinforced by the conquest of Canaan, a phase during which God is portrayed both as one who fights for his people and as one who wishes his people to engage in active war in their longing for freedom (Deut 1:30, 20:1).

It should be noted that in both cases stated above, God's involvement in warring activities are given a rationale. In the first instance, the text states that Yahweh's acts of intervention to liberate his people from an oppressive and ruthless ruler. It is important to note that Yahweh destroys Pharaoh and his people only after a time of repeated warnings through Moses. Secondly, the biblical narratives indicate that the dispossession of the Canaanites was not simply some whimsical actions on God's part. Genesis 15 and the book of Leviticus indicate that

¹¹Richard Hess, *War in the Hebrew Bible: An Overview*, 112. cf. Ricahrd Hess, *War in the Bible and Terrorism in the 21st Century*(US: Eisebranus, 2008).

the decision to remove the original inhabitants of the land in order to make it possible for the Hebrews to possess it, was intimately linked to a moral criterion.

According to Professor Pierre Gilbert, although there is theoretically no necessity to justify God's action, the text nevertheless provides a moral justification. Incidentally, it is a consistent theme throughout the Old Testament. Whenever, for example, the prophets announce God's judgment against Israel, they meticulously and carefully build their case for judgment against God's people. God's fighting, whether it is against the nations or Israel herself, is never indiscriminate (Hab 1:2-4, Mic 2:1-2 and Amos 2:6ff).¹²

Kinds of War in Israel

Most of the ethical discussions of warfare as described in the Hebrew Bible consider it important to distinguish the different types of warfare in which Israel participated. Broadly speaking, one can classify these wars as those of aggression (whether in pursuit of land or loot or revenge), secondly of defence or liberation, and the holy war or divine judgement. Among these, the best known is the "holy war" initially described by the theologian Gerhard von Rad.¹³

a. **Holy War**- The basic element of holy war may be summarized as a war that involves a summons by God to battle, consecration of the warriors, sacrifices and receiving oracles, also Yahweh's movement in front of the army, loss of courage by the enemy, enactment of the *herem* (ban- Deut. 20:10-18).¹⁴ A good example of this is the dispossession of Canaan because of the sins of the people. Their moral decadence includes occult practices and child practices and moral abominations particularly in the realm of sexual behaviour.

Some cautions, nevertheless, need to be taken in the discussing holy war in the OT. First, the idea of holy war should not be pressed too far because no ancient war was entirely secular.¹⁵ Second, we should not say Israel never kill anybody unjustly in their account of holy war. I must emphasize that we must always preserve the distinction between a record of what actually happened and a moral evaluation of any account in the Old Testament Bible.

b. **War of Aggression**- King David provides us with a glaring example within Israel in his period at Ziklag, when he and his six hundred men not only went out raiding for plunder, but

¹²Pierre Gilbert, *Christians and Violence: A Two Part Series*, 3

¹³Cf. Gerhard von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel* (ed and trans. Marva Dawn and John YH (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991)

¹⁴Richard Hess, *War in the Hebrew Bible: An Overview*, 24

¹⁵Peter Craigie, *The Problem of War*, 49

massacred the whole communities to cover their tracks and sustain their deception of the Philistines (1 Sam 26:6-12). This includes the ideology of expediency, in which, whatever force is necessarily were used to eradicate the enemy and render it unable to fight again.

c. ***Fighting for defence or Liberation-*** This can be easily accepted than adventures in aggression; and it was for this that the Spirit of God came upon the Judges. A good example of this is Numbers 10:9. It seems to involve relatively less bloodshedding. However it could whet the appetite for blood, as the book of Esther reveals in its record of queen's request for a repetition of the day of slaughter. In this sense, all wars subsequent to the taking of the land in the book of Joshua are wars of defence.

In any way, every war that was endeavoured by the Israelites, whether great or small was dependent on the favour of God for its success and in all these incidences of war and battle, one thing underlies the motif of the Israelites, and that is motif to gain peace and security both at local level and national level.

There is no Peace without Justice in the OT

But what is the nature of peace in the Old Testament? One prominent and relevant characteristic will suffice: peace in the OT is closely associated with the establishment of justice. We see this in each of the visions of peace cited in Micah (5:4-5) and Isaiah. Let us take example of Isaiah:

⁶And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the kid, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them.⁷ Also the cow and the bear will graze; Their young will lie down together; And the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸ And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. ⁹ They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:6)

The idyllic peace envisioned in this text comes in the wake of the wicked being slain in the course of establishing justice and righteousness. The same is true of the vision of peace, to be occasioned by instrumentality of a king, envisioned in Zech 9:9-10. The ruler who comes in the proclamation of peace is, in verse 9, described as righteous or 'just' describes the removal of evil oppressors.

In the Old Testament peace is inextricably linked to justice, righteousness and war. Many times, as it has been demonstrated, war and violence were used to achieve peace, security and freedom. In the Old Testament, God's justice is often executed by war.

Divine Justice through human warfare in the OT

What was the role played by human beings in the attainment of peace? Though God was seeing as the Man of war or the Host of Israel, human beings notwithstanding played a glaring role in the attainment of peace in the OT times. For example, Exodus 32:26-28 shows us that divine anger is executed through human beings (the Levites) wielding the sword against their fellow Israelites:

²⁶ then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, *come* to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him. ²⁷ And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Every man *of you* put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.'" ²⁸ So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day.

A faithful believer in God could therefore understand himself as an agent of God's justice. The taking up of arms in the name of such justice was therefore assumed as justifiable and necessary. It is this same understanding of human force in the service of God's justice that underlies the prayer in Psalm 144:1: '*Blessed be the LORD, my rock, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle.*' In the Old Testament, God's Justice is often executed in human warfare. Although, the story of King David is a great caution to this. David, a man after God's heart (1 Sam 13:14) was disqualified to build the Temple because he was also a man of many wars.

A question that this paper is leading us to ask, as we can see from the ongoing discussion is "should Christians in (particularly Nigerian) also involve in warfare in order to gain peace and freedom just like the Old Testament people did? But before emphasis is laid on this question, there is a need for caution at this junction, in that despite the fact that God often used human engagement in warfare to attain peace in Old Testament, there was a theological principle upon which the outcome of any warring activity depends. The underlining theological principle is relevant to Nigerian situation. To this we now turn.

The Concept *Pax divina* and Deuteronomite theology

Looking at the Old Testament and the whole span of Israel's fighting history, we find that there was no a period either to idealize as an age of faith or to condemn out rightly as an age of secularism in the history of Israel. For instance, in the wilderness, those who had sung to the Lord as their strength would soon be at odds with Him, even to the extent of going into battle consciously without Him (Nu. 14:40-45). Under the Judges, miraculous victories were interspersed with internecine quarrels. God's participation in the wars of Old Testament was a means of executing and promoting his faithfulness to his chosen people. Many time He supported them and many time He provides foreign nations with victorious warfare in the execution of his judgment upon his own chosen people.

What is Deuteronomite theology? - It is the dimensions of the relationship between the people of Israel and God base on the covenant and its stipulations as spelt out in the book of Deuteronomy (disobedience = curse while obedience = blessing- cf. Deuteronomy 28) as made in the wilderness.

The two pictures of Yahweh, fighting for or against, blessing or cursing, friend or enemy of the people will depend on their ability to obey the stipulations of the covenant. When His people join in his holiness through faithfulness to him, they experience his battle on their behalf. However, when they turn away from him, they face Yahweh's wrath. Therefore, it is not the human instrumentality that matters most in the OT warfare but their relationship with God. If the church will leap after the Israelite to serve as the agent of his warfare against the enemy of peace in 21st century Nigeria, this is a point to consider first. The theme that resonated in the reality of war for Israel was that their success depended on their relationship to God. Has church in Nigeria able to sustain a good relationship with God?

Therefore, I opined that the peace attained in Israel is *pax divina*, that is the peace given by God because every war that was prosecuted in Israel, whether great or small, was dependent on the favour of God for its success. As Richard Hess asserts:

The peace of the Golden Age in the Old Testament was not thought to spring out of commercial and economic principles, nor from the circumstances of international affairs. It was not conceived of or desired as the handmaiden of civilization, but it was Yahweh's gift to His nation, Israel, whenever they obeyed Him.¹⁶

¹⁶Richard Hess, *opp cit.*, 24.

The thesis expressed here is simply ‘No God, No peace’ theology. The prospect is *pax divina*, the peace between God and man.¹⁷ Some Old Testament warriors understood this and they would never go out for war without consulting a true prophet who would tell the mind of God about it. Jehoshaphat-Ahab alliance against Ramoth-Gilead exemplifies this. Jehoshaphat would not go into the battle until enquiries were made from the Prophets.

Now the question is ‘like the Old Testament incidences of War, should Nigerian Christians retaliate in warfare in the face of intense insecurity in Nigeria, most especially, the ones occasioned by Islamic fundamentalists (Boko Haram) in the nation’?¹⁸

The Old Testament is part of the canonized Christian Bible, therefore, it will be very wrong for us to be extremely bias about its relevance to addressing our day to day problem, be it national or local problems. If Christians are to respond to the problem of insecurity in Nigeria going by the OT theology of peace and war, it will mean that we all get ready to choose some valiant men who will go to the camp of religious perpetrators and make it ‘a tit for tat’ approach; a proposal which will be seen to be good looking at what Christian are passing through currently. But some issues need to be brought to notice from Old Testament. For, although, while the antitype of wars in Christian era is spiritual warfare, this does not mean we cannot draw some lessons from the OT theology.

First, we need to understand the concept of ‘Just war’ stipulations and what constitute it. The followings are the stipulations which will make a convenient framework for this discussion.

- i. Just cause
- ii. A lawful authority
- iii. A just intention
- iv. No other ways of securing peace
- v. The use of right means
- vi. A reasonable prospect of victory
- vii. The good of victory to outweigh the damage of war

Of all these stipulations, number vi and vii are the most important to this discussion. If we are to engage in war as Christians in this multi-religious state, we must be sure the victory is sure, that is, a reasonable prospect for victory must be ascertained. Josiah and Pharaoh-Neco’s

¹⁷Derek F Kidner, ‘Old Testament Perspectives on War’ in *Perspectives on War* (Evangelical Quarterly, 1984), 100.

¹⁸*Boko Haram* is an Islamic fundamentalist sect that has been disturbing the peace of Nigeria for the past years. Presently some of our young girls in the Northern part of the country are abducted for months.

battle of Megiddo in 609 BC is a good object- lesson to this. Josiah challenged Pharaoh-Neco, when he knew that he lacked a hope of any reasonable prospect for victory (2 Chron.35:20ff.). Josiah was brutally killed despite the fact that he was a godly king who embarked on reformation in his kingdom. If the Christians will use the means of battle for battle to attain peace in Nigeria, then military miscalculation should be avoided and we should make sure we have the right tool of weaponry before we imitate the Old Testament saints.

Jesus Christ says if a man is to go for a war, he should first of all look at the number of his men if they will be able to withstand the attack from the enemy. Two things can be drawn from this Jesus' military hypothesis: first, it means Jesus also knows there can be incidences where Christians will need to fight so as to gain peace and freedom, and two, whenever they are to go for such a fighting they should make sure they do not bring shame to the fold by not ensuring victory.

Secondly, we need to borrow from ethicists' concept of consequentialism, that is, the rightness or wrongness of any occurrence depends on the outcome. The question we should ask is "will our engagements in battle as Nigerian Christians against religious unrest result to more good or bad evil, even if we win the war? If yes, then using war and battle can be seen as a necessary evil, and a lesser of two evils. But if we are not sure of victory-prospect we should learn to be gentle and silent, because in a situation where our enemies have advanced to the level of using bomb and other assorted weaponry, we should know that little preparation cannot be enough to counteract. Yoruba tribe of Nigeria are fond of saying "*ibere ogun la n mo, a o leseni ti yio mo opin re* (*i.e* It is the beginning of war that one can know and predict, no one can predict who will survive), and also *moja mosa lan mo Akinkanju* (*i.e* A Great warrior knows when to attack and when to be silent or run away).

Conclusion and Recommendations

We must remember that in ancient Israel, "church"¹⁹ and state were one; whereas now the two have had their spheres and functions differentiated. The true successor of the Israelite as the agent of God in bringing peace is the Christian Church not national armies. According to history, the Old Testament Bible influenced the First Crusades. In July 15, 1099, the first crusade captured and liberated Jerusalem from the Muslims. Unfortunately, their victory was achieved

¹⁹I use Church here to mean the group of people that could be referred to as a religious people just like we have church in the NT.

through bloodshed, during which almost 10,000 Muslims were massacred. The chronicler recounts this with joy. We need to learn from history. Many at times we strive for peace, but there cannot be peace without justice and there may not be justice if those who are receiving the effects of injustice remain silent and calm.

There are clear biblical reasons on a personal level to defend oneself and one's family from the actions of violent ones. Jesus, for example, in John 2:14, comes to the Temple and finds those who are selling and buying, He used a violent means to tell the people what is right. Peace-oriented war and violence can also serve as a means to peace and security. The attitude of Christians in Nigeria since the inception of Boko Haram bloodshed has been quite cold and extremely pacific, but looking at the thrust of this paper, this seems to be scripturally unwholesome. The Bible teaches our right to self defense (Exo. 22:2) and our right to protect the innocent (Deut 19:10).

Recommendations

First, we need to reinforce the concept of Christian ecumenism in Nigeria, a case whereby there is incessant disunity in the Christian Church, there cannot be any sustainable pursuit for peace. Yoruba Elders use to say that “*agbajowo la fi n soya, atete owo kan o gberu dori*” that is ‘to achieve peace there is need for unrelenting unity among the people. So also to pursuit peace we need unity among the Christians; the spirit of extreme denominationalism should be checked.

Also Holiness and faithfulness should be preached from our pulpits. Whenever the people of Israelites go away from their source of strength, that is God, destruction and defeat were inevitable as pointed from the Old Testament. God does not change. If Christians in Nigeria do not abide with God's standard, defeat and destruction will also be inevitable. Any peace that will last long will be *pax divina* i.e Peace granted by God

Scholars of theological studies should not hold their peace. They should strive to correct this problem of national insecurity both in writing and in teaching. Seminaries can also include some Para-military courses for their students, as this will inform them (the students who are future pastors) the intricacies involved in security and peace maintenance.

Finally, we should learn to pray alongside, though prayer should not replace our sense of self defense. Nehemiah puts the matter with almost Cromwellian brevity: we prayed to our God, and set a guard. Though, the wheels of God's justice often grinds slowly, it is clear that they are grinding.

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