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**DISCOURSE ON JIHAD: A QUEST FOR DIALOGUE (EXCERPTS FROM
“ISLAMOLOGY” BY PROF.A. KILANI)**

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Abstract

The concept of Jihad in Islam is mostly mis-understood and abused by few Moslem groups and non-Moslems at large these days, as it is assumed to be synonymous with “waging holy war”, “terrorism” or “killing of infidels”. Unfortunately, this mis-presentation has created a dent on the Islamic religion as these indiscriminate and incessant slaughtering of the innocent citizens, uncontrolled violence and restiveness is a stigma to Islam in the comity of peaceful religions of the world. In order to dis-abuse these wrong notions among the few Moslems and non-Moslems, Professor Kilani, a re-knowned Islamic Scholar explicates on the various modes of jihad, the lesser and the greater on whose base the writer attempts to explain the need for continued dialogue between the Moslems and non-Moslems and Importance of teachings on Jihad using the Quran to support the argument. The Quran advocates forgiveness, pardon and tolerance for the non-Moslems; “ “ which is complemented by Surah 60:8 the term “holy war” is no where found in the Quran but rather Islam is for the promotion of peace and tolerance except in the case of self-defence, aggression and oppression of any kind is abhorred by the Quran Surah 8:60-61 “ “ except in the fight for justice “2:19, 22:41” where the command is to even protect churches, synagogues, temples and mosques from attacks. The method used is the qualitative with emphasis on the Quran.

Introduction

A renowned Islamic professor of high repute, kilani (2014:360) in a scholastic discourse on Jihad attempts to correct the distorted picture hitherto held by the non-Moslems about Jihad- the Islamic holy war. In an effort to clear the view of Islam and Jihad as an aggressive religion of forceful imposition and rulership through the sword and drums of war, for religious, political and economic domination states that:

The institution of Jihad in Islam is the means of striving by the Muslims to establish, maintain and develop, or re-establish the kingdom of God on earth, for the welfare and happiness of

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mankind.... to set goals and to achieve them is the hallmark of Jihad in Islam. To bring about the total transformation of a decadent system, giving it thereby God transformation is the very demand of Islam and the very purpose of Jihad. It is therefore, wrong and unscholarly to view Jihad from the stereotype theories of imperialism, forceful conversion and economic consideration.

From the above statements, kilani asserts that Jihad, through an holy war, was instituted by Allah in the Quran not for oppressing non-Moslems but for the purpose of re-establishing the kingdom of God on earth, where justice and equity reigns by transforming the earthly corrupt system to a moral, egalitarian society suitable for mankind, and this is the real goal of Jihad. However, the recent events worldwide negates this view as Islam has been associated with worldwide terrorism, suicide bombing, and socio-politico religious uprisings. Unrest culminating in massive destruction and loss of lives. How effective then is the mantra of Islam as a religious of peace meant to operate in live and let –live manner?

To absolve Islam from the tag of a crusade or holy war stigma though, holy war is considered as a war which is characterized by religious tendencies, kilani (2014:361) affirmed that the authority under which jihad is made is at once both religious and political and Islamic law does not distinguish between state and religious. Furthermore, he added that Islam cannot be properly established without authority or through sermons and speeches only since Allah has prescribed as a duty the establishing of a good and the abolition of evil, hence, the establishment of an Islamic law must involve force to dominate or control the unbelievers. Nevertheless, Jihad is a divinely ordained obligation with varied forms of operation, he added.

It is on this premise that he (2014:363) explicated on the different forms of Jihad as follows:

- i. Jihad bi'I-Tal involves self purification, to prepare one-self for other duties in Islam, like exerting oneself to learn guidance and struggling against satanic desire and doubts
- ii. Jihad bil-ta' lim which is a sincere effort or struggle to acquire or disseminate knowledge of Allah to everyone including the ignorant.
- iii. Jihad bi'I-Tabligh for evangelizing the non-Muslims, bringing the truth of Islam in accordance with the precepts of Mchammed.

Prophet! Truly we have sent thee as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings, and a warner, And as a lamp spreading light. Then give the glad tidings to the believers, that they shall have from Allah a very great bounty.

Surah 33:45-47

- iv. Jihad bil-mal encourages the use of the believers wealth to propagate Islam on earth in the spirit of Altruism.

And let not those who covetously withhold the gifts which Allah hath given them of his grace, think that it is good for them. All is well acquitted with all that well do.

Surah 3:180

- v. Jihad al-siyasi which involves practice and administration in Islam whereby Islam is presented in a peaceful manner in any state under the control of non-Muslims, but using force to eliminate obstacles if no other alternative is available.
- vi. Jihad bil-qital is for the establishing of God's laws on earth with a goal of world control, and in the case of hostility towards the Islamic state by the un-believers. Islam approves fighting to achieve it.

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight's you,..... and slay them wherever ye catch them. And tum them outfrom where they have turned you out.... such is the reward of those who reject faith..... and fight them until there is no more persecution and the religion becomes Allah's.

Surah2:190-192

It should be noted that this Jihad is not an individual obligation upon every Muslim like the mandatory five pillars of Islam which are: Shahada – testimony of faith in Allah, daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan, alms giving -Zakat and pilgrimage to Mecca (if possible).

Prof. Kilani further expatiated on the reason for the Jihad bi'l-Qital the military Jihad which is the most assumingly popular but detested **by** the non-Muslims.

The practice of military Jihad only becomes an obligation upon Muslims when the conditions arise, such as an attack on Muslims, their land or their religion Quranic verses which ordain fighting against un-believers are for the un-believers who assail the Moslems missions..... Islam is a call to peace; it abhors war, but cannot prevent it, hence it prepares for it. The institution of Jihad is not meant to compel anybody to accept Islam on the Orientalizes....believethe institution of-Jihad in Islam has no relations to modern warfare.....Jihad implies.

A right to live and defend oneself assuring thereby security of life, prosperity, honour and religion for each and everyone.

In tandem with the above, it may be concluded that the non-Moslems might misunderstand the fact that Islam Jihad were not all fought for the imposition of the Islamic beliefs or the believers are projecting a wrong mis-conception to the non-Muslims, in this regard, the writer is of the view that the issue of religious dialogue which is prevalent all over the world may be focused on the teachings of Jihad in order to reduce the tension between the Moslems and non-Moslems as regards the mis-conception of Jihad.

It may also be inferred from Kilani's exposition above that Jihad is in two phases, the Jihad bi'l-Tal for self purification, Jihad bi'l-Talim for dissemination of the knowledge of Allah, Jihad bi'l-Tabligh for missiology purpose and jihad bi'l-mal, encouraging the use of believer's wealth to propagate Islam, these pre-hegira Jihad (before 622 AD) was mainly practised by Moslems in Mecca while the post-hegira's Jihad, al-siyasi and Jihad bi'l-Qital began in Medina, Cooper and Maxwell (1993:125) referred to the former form of Jihad as the "greater Jihad" and the latter as the "lesser Jihad". They observed that:

The Arabic word Jihad has a number of meanings. The first definition is of a personal striving in the cause of Allah, to struggle to the utmost of one's capacity to be a good Muslim.

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This includes writing and speaking to call people to moral, intellectual and spiritual renewal. Jihad of the pen and speech, and in one's personal life is called the "greater jihad", the second meaning is that of the holy war and defence of Islam..... conquest against enemies of Islam..... is called the "lesser Jihad".

This greater Jihad is a pure missionary enterprise supported by the Quran Surah 2:256, "let there be no compulsion in religion" and advocates as a better relationship with. The non-Moslems and the Hadith says "The ink of the scholars is more holy than the blood of the martyrs". It connotes peace and self defence and corroborated by Quran Surah 2:62.

Those who believe in the Quran and those who follow the Jewish scriptures and Sabians, any who believe in Allah and the last days and work righteousness, shall have reward with their Lord, ion them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.

Rassamni (2006:78) citing Lakhdar argued that the pre-hegira Jihad (Hegira departure from Mecca) calls for peace and tolerance were abrogated for the past-Hegira instruction, though the Pre- Hegira has the idealistic tendencies which makes dialogue feasible as a means of peace resolution", the bitter claims otherwise, as it involves the establishment of God's law and rule on the earth with sound Islam administrative policies. This era in medina resulted in Islam's growth and the need for the defence of faith. The Quran injunction to the Moslems in this regard states:

Make ready against them all the power you can gather, including steeds of war to strike terror into the hearts of the enemies of Allah and your enemies.
Surah 8:60

The writers opines that, inspite of the numerous forms of dialogue both locally and internationally by religious experts to quell the tensions and animosity between the Moslems and non-Moslems, the effort have yielded little but if the religious leaders can agree to find solution to the issue of Jihad bi'l-Qital by coming to terms through a sincere, un-biassed and solution seeking dialogue, the efforts for peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance among the adherents may yield positive and rewarding results.

Rifat Atay (2006: 317) asserts that "Holy war is an insignificant part of the jihad concept, for Mohammed considers holy war to be the lesser jihad. The greater jihad takes place in a Muslim inner self and represents the struggle to do good and abstain from evil in all circumstances." The writer observes that there is no substantive support from the Quran, Hadith or Sunna to corroborate this of the military Jihad as the lesser, while the struggle to do good and abstain from evil, the greater Jihad.

Mawududi (2009:285-292) a renowned modern Muslim writer however disagreed with Rifat Atay, Cooper and Maxwell on the distinction between the greater and the lesser Jihad but rather posits that the reverse is to stand up and uproot corruption so widespread on- God's earth by taking power and using it on God's behalf and not just by preaching Islam alone inferring that Jihad is more appreciable and recognized by Allah through arms

and violent ways than peaceful Jihad. This is however supported by the Quran in Surah 2:190-191 and 29:69, it says;

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you..... and slay them wherever you catch them, and turn them out, for persecution is worse than slaughter..... and those who strive in our cause, we will certainly guide them through our paths; for verily Allah is with them who do right.

From Mawdudi's argument, Islam is portrayed not as a peaceful religion but otherwise, thus creating an impression of oppression, violence and supremacy over other religions, negating the instruction; "there is no compulsion in religion". This problem could only be resolved by a sincerely organised dialogue where the parties dissuade themselves from and supremacy or hidden apologetical agenda with the aim of persuading the other party to surrender.

Agi-otto (n.d,82) discouraging the notion of supremacy of one religion over the other comments that any religion that has survived for thousand years and followed by hundreds of millions even a billion people must be considered to have some truth else such would not have spread and lasted till date. This view is supported by Uzoka (n.p 2008) that every religion has followers that must be respected for their belief.

Corroborating on the peaceful conversion of some Easterners in Nigeria through the Non-military Jihad, Prof. Uchendu (2012,4) elaborates that;

The Islamization process in Eastern Nigeria that began in the 1930's differs in character than similar incidents in Northern, western and north central Nigeria during the 19th and 20th centuries in place of any aggressive or forceful conversion through jihads, intergroup warfare and state coercion witnessed in these parts, the conversion to Islam in eastern Nigeria have occurred in friendly atmosphere of peaceful interactions in social and political stable surroundings.

Waziri upheld this same non-military jihad in his decision of the introduction of Islam KANEM-BORNU in the lake Chad area of Nigeria between the 10th and 19th century. He noted that the same socio- economical contacts through trading between Kanem and Tunisia in the 13th century like the Igbos of the east religious preaching was very small in yielding dividend unlike the outcome of trade and other contacts.

Notwithstanding these gradual conversions of the Igbos to Muslims, Otternberg (1971) doubt massive conversion of the Igbos due to the old tensions between the Igbos and the rest of Nigeria, he noted that these present success could have been motivated more by the role of trade and social contacts rather than religious preaching. This economic reasons may not necessarily be as a result of poverty but for opportunities to improve on their economic status or widen their political network by identifying with Islam regarded as a powerful national religion with international influence. In any case, this form of non-military Jihad has achieved its purpose of proselyting the Igbo Christians into Islam in tension-less and non violent manner. Jeremy Hinds (1932-1993) cited by Rodger Pitch (1996: 13) narrated his experience living with the Moslems in Zaria District in Northern Nigeria that one area where Christians might seek to dialogue with the Moslems today is with regards to the concept of Jihad.....Such a dialogue could help Christians and Moslems to a better understanding of the other community and assist in looking for ways of

peaceful co-existence. "however Kilani disagrees with Hinds on equating Jihad as one of the pillars of Islam but both agreed on the distinction of the greater and lesser Jihad alongside Cooper and Maxwell. (1993:125).

The writer agrees with Hinds submission that an organised dialogue between religious leaders defined by Johnson (2013:44-45) as the religious authorities of the religious system personalities which the religious system as a social institution produces, whose roles includes bringing people close to their creator and compendium of the religion they represent of the various belief. The Moslems and Christian leaders should come together with the aim of finding solution to the incessant violence and religious unrest which has become a menace in the society. Oho agrees that in as much as the federal government should be careful not to generate tension about preferring one religion over the other in superiority, the religious leaders should be dissuaded from casting aspersion on doctrines of other religions and added the importance of grassroot elucidation of the controversial doctrinal issue to avoid misunderstanding and as a result of the similarities in Islam and Christianity, understanding each other on their beliefs is sacrosanct to peace resolution.

Conclusion

The understanding of the different forms of Jihad as both military and for self-development is a good reason for dialoguing between the adherents of Islam and Christianity. The important thing is to educate the- religious leaders who are 'the compendium of these doctrinal facts to follow the rules of dialogue whereby no one feels superior or suspicious of the other. The goal of the dialogue should be in enlightening one another about the facts of the doctrine of jihad and seek for mutual agreement on tolerance and desire to accommodate one another. The understanding of the doctrinal issues should bind them rather than gathering tension. Islam seeks for peace as Christianity does too.

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