

THE QURAN ON MUSLIM UNITY

BY

DR. MASHOOD BABATUNDE LAWAL

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

SUMMMIT UNIVERSITY, OFFA

lawalmb2009@gmail.com

+2348052315491 +2348109569985

ABSTRACT

The significance of unity as a fundamental and essentially determining factor among the Muslim Ummah in Nigeria cannot be overstressed. It should be stated without fear of contradiction that the Ummah cannot grow, progress, develop, accomplish and discharge its fundamental, mundane and sacred responsibilities without it.

Indeed, disunity and divisions are the greatest problems which the Ummah faces today. Granted that Muslims have been gifted with tremendous human forces, abundant material resources, important strategic resources, important strategic positions, high spirits and superior perspective.

However, division and disunity has weakened and opened the doors to their internal and external enemies, which, if left unresolved, may eventually lead to their total destruction; may Allah forbid! United we stand. Divided we fall.

The Muslim during the time of the Prophet (S.A.W) and the four rightly guided Khalifs were organized, co-ordinated, focused, held in high esteem, successful in their mundane and sacred activities and assignments because they were united.

This paper, against this background, highlights and discusses factors that are solely responsible for disunity and division among the Muslim Ummah in Nigeria as well as its devastating consequences on its overall interest.

Most significantly, relevant and appropriate verses of the Quran enjoining, preaching, teaching, emphasizing and underscoring the significance and benefits of unity and the Muslims in Nigeria will be extracted, analysed and discussed.

Finally, the paper concludes unequivocally that if the verses of the Quran on unity are faithfully implemented and properly applied, they will serve as a strong, effective and

permanent panacea to the issues leading to avoidable disunity and unnecessary division among the Muslim Community in Nigeria.

Introduction

Disunity and division should be avoided by the people in general and by the Muslims in Nigeria in particular.

Allah has created us with the sole purpose of worshipping Him and to be the role models to others; this can only be realized if we are united.

“And I (Allah) created not the Jinn and mankind except that they should worship me (alone) (Quran 51: V 56).

“You (true believers in Islamic monotheism and real followers of Prophet Muhammed (S.A.W) and Sunnah) are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin Al-Maruf and forbid al-munkar” (Quran 3: V 110).

The Muslim Ummah in Nigeria is dire need of unity with a view to achieving, succeeding, accomplishing and be relevant in the scheme of things. The following paragraphs will make the points clearer.

THE CAUSES OF DISUNITY AMONG THE NIGERIAN MUSLIMS

Deviation from the Right Part

Muslims in Nigeria are disunited and divided because they have deviated from the right path which Allah (S.W.T) has prescribed for them. Allah says:

“And verily, this is my straight path so follow it, and do not follow other path, for they separate you away from His path. This he has ordained for that you may become the pious.

This verse is also informing us that there are so many scattered paths, but they belong Satan.

And whenever the Muslims in Nigeria follow the path of Satan, they scatter and fall into disputes, disunity and division. (Quran 24: V 7)

“O you who believe! Follow not the footsteps of Shaitan (Satan). And whosoever follows the footsteps of Shaitan, then verily, he commands to commit indecency!

Abandoning or Dismantling a part of Islamic Shariah

The Muslims in Nigeria are divided and disunited because they have abandoned and dismantled a part of the Shariah/Islamic law that Allah has conveyed to them and will create animosity and hatred among them (1).

They have abandoned a good part of the message that was sent to them so we planted among them enmity and hatred till the Day of Resurrection (Quran 5: V 14).

The Muslims in Nigeria are disunited because they have refused to implement the rules of Allah (S.W.T) as a whole-integrated system. Allah says:

“Then you believe in a part of the scripture and reject the rest? Then what is the recompense of those who do so among you, except disgrace in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they would be consigned to the most grievous torment. Allah is not unaware of what you do”. (Quran 2: V 85).

Differences and Disagreements among the Muslim Scholars

Like Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi and Imam Hambali, may Allah be pleased with all of them in their different opinions in the minor matters related to the Shariah. This kind of disagreement or difference of opinion is natural and it is allowed. This happened in many incidents during the life of the Prophet (S.A.W). This did not create division and disunity among the Sahabah. The Prophet allowed and sanctioned it because they fell on minor issues not fundamental.

Today, in Nigeria, followers of these great Imams do not respect their different opinions. Rather, they are using their affiliations to these Imams to create division and disunity among the Muslim Ummah.

These people amplify trivial issues to cause disunity and division. Whereas, the Basic tenets of Islam are common to all the schools of thought. The differences, which are minors, are unnecessarily magnified.

Loyalty to Individual Ethnic Tribes

Divisions and disunity due to difference of language, ethnicity and culture are considered as an obstacle to Muslim unity. Most Muslims in Nigeria are loyal to their tribes at the expense of Islam.

Islam is no stranger to different peoples, customs, cultures and languages. Allah says:

“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 Al-Taqwa” (Quran 49: V 13).

The Prophet (S.A.W) says:

“He is not of us who proclaims the cause of tribal partnership; and he is not of us who fights in the cause of the tribal partisanship; and he is not of us who dies in the cause of tribal partisanship” (3).

Nigerian Muslim are sharply divided and disunited due to ethnic, linguistic and cultural reasons. They look down on other tribes and languages. They create unnecessary suspicion and hatred among themselves.

As far as Islam is concerned, all tribes and languages are the same. Allah says (Quran 14: V 45).

“And we sent not a messenger except with the language of his people, in order that he might make (the message) clear for them”.

Selfish Transgression

Selfish transgression is one of the causes of disunity among the Nigerian Muslims. It creates envy and hatred among the Muslims.

In an authentic hadith reported by Imams Ahmad and Tirmidhi that the Prophet (S.A.W) emphasized that envy and hatred are the main reasons for division of this Ummah as well as to the previous ones.

“He said, among you spread the disease of previous nations, it is the envy and hatred. It is what I call the shaver which whips out your deen, the same way the shaver shaves hair”.

Envy, one of the harmful diseases spreads among Muslims differentiating their hearts, making them hate one another. This is the selfish transgression among the Ummah. And in this kind of sick and effected society, unity and love never prevail (4).

The Missing of Allah’s Mercy

Allah (S.W.T) reveals a reason that causes disunity among the Muslims Ummah in Nigeria. (Quran 11: V118).

“But they (people) will cease to disagree. Except him on whom your Lord has bestowed His mercy”.

This verse implies that people's disputes, disagreements, disunity, hatred and misunderstanding are a sign of missing the mercy of Allah (S.W.T). Because Allah might shield His mercy from the people when they deserve it.

In another verse in the Quran 9: V 71 says; "The believers, men and women, are Awliya' (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another, they enjoin what is good and forbid what is bad. These are the characteristics of the people who deserve the mercy of Allah".

Poor and Weak Understanding of the Teachings of Islam

The weakness that overtook Muslims in understanding Islam in a proper way has led to a massive disunity and division among the Muslim Ummah in Nigeria. Lack of proper understanding of Islam and its original teachings is also a strong factor responsible for the disunity. They have not accepted Islam as a complete and total way of life. They did not subject themselves to the whims and caprices of Islam. Islam is on its own, they are also on their own. Allah say:

"O you who believe! Enter perfectly in Islam (by obeying all the rules and regulations of the Islamic religion) and follow not the footsteps of Shaitan (Satan). Verily, he is to you a plain enemy". (Quran 2: V 208).

It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His messenger (S.A.W) have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His messenger (S.A.W), he has indeed strayed into a plain error. (Quran 33: V 36).

Political Differences

Unity among the Ummah in the past was built upon Islam and it turned the Islamic lands into prosperous societies which welcomed all and excelled in various fields.

Muslims in Nigeria belong to different political parties and organizations. They are more loyal, faithful and obedient to the ideologies, programmes, supremacy and control of these parties.

They consider members of other political parties as their enemies regardless of their religions or faiths.

This development does not allow the Muslim to be united and fight for a common cause. It weakens the Muslim unity and strength.

The Sahabah of the Prophet dealt very harshly with the Kwarij who introduced foreign ideas into Islam which would have created disunity after the death of the Prophet (S.A.W) (5).

Faulty/Wrong Methodology by the Preachers

Many preachers lack Dawah methodology and approach. They are not well grounded. They lack objectivity and dynamism. Their Dawah activities are plagued with the diseases of division, disunity, disagreement and discord in total contrast to the teachings of Quran.

“Invite mankind, (O Muhammed S.A.W) to the way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better (Quran 16: V 125).

Many of these preachers take delight in referring to their fellow Muslims as Kufar (infidels unbelievers) Mushrikin (Polytheists) Munafiqun (Hypocrites) Muftadiun (Innovators, Heretics).

Misuse of these words has led into intolerance, hatred, disunity, division and enmity among Muslim Ummah.

In the Hadith of Ibn Umar related that the Holy Prophet said: If a Muslim calls another Kafir, then it is a Kafir let it be so; otherwise, he the (caller) is himself a Kafir”. (6)

The teaching contained in this Hadith is meant to stop Muslims from dubbing each other as sinners and kuffars.

Personal Assessment/Justification as the only representatives of true Islam

Muslims should be cautious of those self acclaimed and arrogant Muslims who claim to be the only representatives of true Islam.

These people underrate other Muslims and even attribute disbelief to them. In many cases, such preachers neglect their duties and Dawah and focus in opposing and eliminating others.

This attitude causes division and disunity among the Muslims in Nigeria.(Quran: 53: V 34)

“Those who avoid great sins and shameful deeds, only (falling into) small faults, verily your Lord is ample in forgiveness. He knows you well when he brings you out of the earth. And when you are hidden in your mothers’ wombs. Therefore justify not yourselves. He knows best who it is that guards against evil”

Foreign Power and Influence on Muslim Ummah

Colonial powers still influence and control Muslims lands or Ummah directly or indirectly which is a big reason of disunity among the Muslim Ummah in Nigeria.

The colonialist have created divisions among the Muslims Ummah following “their divide and rule” theory which was to ensure the Muslim never unite. Muslim still hold their former colonist lords in very high esteem (7).

The British Foreign Minister addressing the Prime Minister shortly before World War II:

“We must put an end to anything which brings about Islamic unity between the sons of the Muslims. As we have already succeeded in finishing of the caliphate, we must ensure that there will never arise unity for the Muslims whether it be intellectual or cultural unity.” (8)

Devastating Effects of Disunity among Muslim Ummah in Nigeria

Indeed, disunity and division are the greatest problems, which the Muslim Ummah in Nigeria faces today.

This is the main problem, which has divided the Nigerian Muslims into small and weak fragments and different groups.

Allah says: “O you who believe! Fear Allah as should be feared and die not except in a state of Islam (as Muslims with complete submission to Allah).

And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah’s favour upon you, for you were enemies one another but He joined your heart together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, and He saved you from it. (Quran 3: V 102-103)

In these verses, Allah indicates that the desired Muslim Ummah is founded on two important bases, This foundation enables the Muslim Ummah is founded on two important bases. This foundation enables the Muslim Ummah to perform the great task, which Allah ordains, in leading other nations to their goodness and happiness. Also Allah indicates that if one or both of those bases are absent, the whole society will collapse, and it will not be able to perform the task Allah assigned.

The first of these basis is Taqwa of Allah they avoid doing anything which is not pleasing to Allah. And also they will fulfill their duties towards Allah and towards other people.

The second base is unity among themselves, because disunity and division are characteristics of the unbelievers.

“And verily, this is my straight path, so follow it, and follow not (other) paths, for they will separate you away from his paths. This he has ordained for you that you may become the pious” (Quran 6: V153)

Disunity and division have weakened the Muslim Ummah politically, economically, educationally, religiously, socially and even diplomatically.

It has also opened the doors to their internal and external enemies which if left unresolved, may lead to total destruction.

“And obey Allah and his messenger (S.A.W.) and do not dispute (with one another) lest you lose courage and strength and be patient. Surely, Allah is with those who are the patient” (Quran 8: V46)

“The prophet (S.A.W.) said :

Do not be disunited among yourselves because those who had come before were destroyed because they were disunited” (9)

Shielding Allah’s Mercy and Support

When the Muslim Ummah is divided and disunited, it loses Allah’s mercy and support which it needs to succeed.

Allah says:

And if your Lord had so willed, he could surely have made mankind one Ummah (nation or community) but they will not cease to disagree. Except him on whom your Lord has bestowed his mercy and for that he did create them. (Quran 11: V118-119).

Failure to Achieve Goals

Our basic goals in this life are to worship Allah and spread Islam, implement the shariah verbally and practically to every nook and cranny of the world.

Allah has described us as the best community, society, nation, Ummah ever raised for mankind.

“You are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind, you enjoin good and forbid evil and you believe in Allah” (Quran 3: V110).

Division Dissipates our Energies

When the Muslim Ummah is disunited, they dissipate their energies in empty and useless arguments, instead of benefitting themselves and others.

Allah says:

“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair preaching and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly your Lord knows best who has gone astray from this path, and he is the best knower of those who are guided!!

(Quran 16: V125).

Disunity and Division Causes Hatred

When the Muslims are divided among themselves, they substitute love with hatred, trust with suspicion, and peace with conflicts, spying, gossip, backbiting e.t.c.

“O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion, indeed some suspicions are sins. And spy not, neither backbite one another would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it. And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is the one who gives and accepts repentance, most merciful” (Quran 16: V12).

“Abdullah reported that the Prophet, may the benediction and salutation of Allah be upon him, said:

“To abuse a Muslim is transgression and to fight him is unbelief” (10)

Disunity leads to Grace in this World and Punishment in the Hereafter

When the Muslims are disunited, they will be violating the laws of Allah, because He had forbidden disunity, hatred, division, unnecessary argument e.t.c.

Allah says:

“Then you believe in a part of the scripture and reject the rest? Then what is the recompense of those who do so among you, except disgrace in the life of this world, and is the day of Resurrection they shall be consigned to the most grievous torment. And Allah is not unaware of what you do” (Quran 2: V85)

“Do not be like those who became divided (into sects) and differed after manifest signs had come to them. For such, there will be a great punishment” (Quran 3: V105)

“Verily, those who divide their religion and breakup into sects, you (Muhammad) have no concern in them in the least. Their affair is only with Allah, who then will tell them what they used to do” (Quran 8: V159)

Verses of the Holy Quran Enjoining the Muslims in Nigeria to be United

As we all know, Muslims in Nigeria are a very divided people. We divided ourselves according to tribes, sects, cultures, political opinions, ancestry and even on the Imams we follow!

Islam came to dominate over the world. It is a universal ideology which unified peoples of different ethnicity, colour, culture and language under the same banner. All the aforementioned causes of disunity and division among the Nigerian Muslims should be demolished by proper implementation of Islam.

The Quran reminds us that originally, humankind was one Ummah, but this unity was broken by various differences which was created among themselves.

Islam does not encourage its followers becoming hermits and living a stoic life. Rather, Islam is a religion of society and encourages the establishment and sustaining of a society in which the members of the society interact and co-operate with each other. Islam wants its followers to live within the society and while staying there, make the existence useful for the members of the society.

The following verses of Quran, encourage, command, enjoin, require, advise and underscore the unity of the Muslim Ummah.

1. “Hold fast, all together cord and not to be divided (into sects). And remember Allah’s blessing upon you when you were enemies, then He brought your hearts together, so you became brothers with His blessing. And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, whereas, He saved you from it. Thus, does Allah clarify His signs for you so that you may be guided” (Quran 3: V103)

In this Ayah God speaks of holding fast to God’s cord and the most evidence – proof for this cord is the Holy Quran. It means Muslims should adhere to the letter and spirit of the Holy Quran, and not paying lip service to it. The concept of holding fast to the Holy Quran

has been likened to the one who fears to cross a dangerous path but by holding to a firm rope he crosses it confidently.

“Do not be like those who became divided (into sects) and differed after manifest signs had come to them for such there will be a great punishment”

(Quran 3: V105)

The Holy Quran considers all Muslims as brothers and sisters of each other in the following Ayah:-

“The faithful are indeed brothers. Therefore, make peace between your brothers and be wary of Allah so that you may receive His mercy” (Quran 49: V10)

This Ayah joins Muslims together as brothers in faith and considers making peace with each other as a way for receiving God’s mercy.

“The believers, men and women, are “Awliya” (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another, they enjoin good deeds and forbid evil deeds, they perform Salat; give Zakat, obey Allah and its messenger” (Quran 9: V71)

When the Muslims in Nigeria give up their differences and their hearts become close to each other, the enemies cannot harm them. (Quran 8: V46)

The Quran is telling the Nigeria Muslims to be united as a single Ummah. They should not break Allah’s role by dividing into groups or sects.

“Truly this your Ummah (Shariah or religion (Islamic Monotheism) is one religion, and I am your Lord, therefore worship Me (Alone)” (Quran 17: V92).

(Quran 23: V51-53)

“O (you) messengers! Eat of the Tayyibat all kinds of Halal foods which Allah has made lawful (meat of slaughtered eatable animals, milk products, fats, vegetables, fruits, etc) and do righteous deeds. Verily, I am All-knower of what you do”.

“And verily, this your religion (of Islamic Monotheism) is one religion and I am your Lord, so fear me”.

“But they (men) have broken their religion among them into sects, each group rejoicing in what is with it as its beliefs”.

Nigerian Muslims are being advised and castigated in these verses. Those who are divided along sects should know that it is totally wrong and is anti-Islam.

The disunited Nigerian Muslims have also been warned in the following verse that the Prophet (S.A.W) does not and will not recognize them. The implication is that they are not true Muslims.

“Verily, those who divide their religion and break up into sects, you (Muhammed) have no concern in them in the list. Their affair is only with Allah” (Quran 8: V159).

“And be not as those who divided and differed among themselves after the clear proofs had come to them. It is they for whom there is an awful torment” (Quran 3: V105).

The Holy Quran recognizes and admits that as Muslims, naturally they will disagree among themselves. But when they do, they should go back to Allah and the Prophet S.A.W.

“O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the messenger (Muhammed), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. And if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His messenger (S.A.W) if you believe in Allah and in the last day. This is better and more suitable for final determination” (Quran 4: V59).

(Quran 6 V 3) “He you one another in virtue, righteousness and pity; but do not help one another in sin and progression. And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is severe in punishment”.

This verse is also encouraging the Muslims to be one and help one another in virtue, righteousness and fear of Allah.

Definitely, this will enable them to co-operate and be united.

Allah says: There is no good in most of their secret talks to save (in) him who orders Sadaqah or Maruf or conciliation between mankind; and he who does this, seeking the good pleasure of Allah, we shall give him a greater reward.

The Nigerian Muslims are cautioned by Allah to be firmly united and they should not be like the idol worshippers who have divided themselves into sects. They must remain to united. Allah says:

“(And remain always) turning in repentance to Him (only) and be afraid and dutiful to Him; and perform As Salat and be not of Al-Mushrikun; (the polytheists, idolators, disbelievers in the oneness of Allah).

Of those who spit split up their religion and became sects, each sect rejoicing in that which is with it” (Quran 30 V 31-23).

In order to live in peace, mutual understanding, love, unity and co-operation, the Nigerian Muslim Ummah is advised to emulate and copy the companions of the Prophet (S.A.W) in the following verses. Allah says:

(And there is also a share in this booty) for the poor emigrants, who were expelled from their homes and their property, seeking bounties of Allah and to please Him, and helping Allah (i.e. helping His religion) and His messenger (Muhammed S.A.W) such are indeed the truthful (to what they say)”.

And those who, before them, had homes (in Al-Madinah) and had adopted the faith, love those who emigrated to them, and have no jealousy in their breasts for that which they have been given, and give them (emigrants) preference over themselves even though they were in need of that. And whosoever is saved from his own covetousness such are they who will be the successful”. (Quran 28: V8-9).

The Nigerian Muslims should imbibe the sterling qualities of the companions of the Prophet (S.A.W). They would be united if they do so.

“Muhammed (S.A.W) is the messenger of Allah. And those who are with him are severe against disbelievers, and merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and falling down prostrate (in prayer), seeking bounty from Allah and (His) Good pleasure” (Quran 26: V29).

“He (Allah) has ordained for you the same religion which He ordained for Noah, and which we have revealed to you (O Muhammed), and which we ordained for Ibrahim, Musa and Isa saying they should establish religion and make no divisions in it (religion) i.e. various sects in religion)” (Quran 42 V 13)

“Verily Allah loves those who fight in His cause in rows (ranks) as if they were a solid structure.

All the above quoted verses of the Quran enjoin the Muslims in Nigeria to be united.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this paper underscoring the significance of unity among the Nigerian Muslims.

The Muslim Ummah in Nigeria can only succeed in their religious, social, economic, political, educational and diplomatic undertakings if and when they are united among themselves.

They should recognize and avoid factors responsible for the disunity in the Ummah.

Finally, the Ummah should implement and apply the verses of the Quran on unity and its benefits with a view to justifying their mundane and spiritual purposes on earth.

References

1. www.islam/org.khutb 18th December, 2008.
2. <http://minhaj-al-nubuwwah.cf/index.html>, 06-07-2017.
3. A Rahman I. Doi; Introduction to the Hadith: Islamic Publication Bureau, Lagos, Nigeria, 1970, Page 100.
4. www.islam.i.org. 18th December, 2000.
5. Ibid. 18th December, 2000.
6. Submissionissolutionblogspot.com 9th December, 2010.
7. Abu Dawud: Book of Sunna, edition published by Quran Mahal, Karachi, Vol. iii, Pp 484.
8. Submissionissolutionblogspot.com 9th December, 2010.
9. www.alukah.net/shariah 12-12-2012.
10. A. Rahman I. Doi: Introduction to the Hadith; Islamic Publications Bureau, Lagos, Nigeria, 1970 Page 100.
11. Dr. Muhammed Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali: Translation of the Meanings of the Noble Quran in the English Language, University of Madinah, Saudi Arabia, undated.