Emerging Issues In Peace, Security And Unity In Nigeria: An Appraisal
Of Biblical *Shalom*

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Abstract

Nigeria at the moment is in dire need of solution to its
myriad of problems. Paramount in the scale of urgent
demand is how to achieve and sustain peace in the
nation. The question of securing peace must therefore
be given a holistic consideration. Bearing this in mind,
this paper examines some of the emerging issues in
peace, security, and unity in Nigeria in the light of the
Hebrew concept of *shalom*. The searchlight focuses on
the antecedents in Nigeria political history with special
attention on trends and events that foreground recent
developments in Nigeria socio-political milieu. The
paper adopts the expository and evaluative methods in
the crux of the discourse and submits that the Biblical
concept of *shalom* remains a veritable model in the
understanding of issues involved in peace, security and
unity.

Introduction

Nigerian national anthem literarily contains the hopes and aspirations of
the foremost Nigerian nationalists. The same is true for the genre of the
pledges. They vividly reveal that the nation was to depend on God in
the actualization of its dreams and aspirations. In the light of the
developments in Nigerian society, it will not be too much to say that
Nigerians have betrayed every line of the anthem and creeds. The

tumultuous situations that now stare us in the face on daily basis are a reflection of this reprehensible betrayal.

The issues of peace, security and unity, which represents the fundamental principles that guarantees the progress and development in a nation, is one that should motivate serious concern from all and sundry in Nigeria. There is need for Nigerian government to rise up to the occasion of maintaining peace, ensuring security of lives and property and guaranteeing the unity and continuity of the nation as a single indivisible entity. To achieve these herculean tasks, new approaches as well as strategies are needed. Things may need to be done differently. Peace cannot be achieved in isolation. It involves several factors. One of the approaches to lasting peace should be the holistic perception, appreciation and consideration of peace and issues involved in achieving it. This paper is concerned with *shalom* as the biblical concept that fully captures the essence of peace.

Shalom in Perspective

Shalom is a Hebrew word meaning "peace". However peace is only one small part of the meaning of *shalom*. It also means more than the interjections of farewell, hello or goodbye which it assumes in its usage as greeting.[1] It has an inference of peace between two or more entities especially the bipolar implication of it as peace between God and man, and man and fellow man.[2] According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, *shalom* also mean completeness, wholeness, health peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity,

perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord and even friendliness.[3] In a state of *shalom*, each entity has its own integrity, and each also possesses many edifying relations to other entities. By this, it is meant that each aspect of the lives of those seeking shalom should be harmoniously viewed with other aspects. For instance, or a nation seeking shalom would treasure strong family units as a microcosm of the wider society. In a state of *shalom*, ethnic nationalities and people groups would treasure differences in one another. It would include government making fair policies that can impact positively on the lives of it citizenry. It would mean downplaying the culture of impunity and corruption for the celebration of good virtues. Friendliness would thrive against hatred and undue suspicions among people. People would stimulate each other's virtues. The implication of *shalom* is far-reaching and the content of this definition forms the basis on which the issues of peace is discussed in this paper. A nation like Nigeria must take into account these guiding principles of *shalom* in its pursuit of sustainable peace and development.

Peace as Aspect of Shalom

Interestingly, the etymology of the word "peace" is traced to the vulgate Hebrew word *shalom* and the Greek version of it as *eirene*. Its meaning can be rendered in English as, safety, welfare, prosperity, security, fortune, friendliness[4]. *Shalom* as a biblical term is encompassing and it adequately covers the scope of the conception of peace in this paper. Maybe the prologue to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of

Nigeria "To live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God dedicated to the promotion of inter-Africa solidarity, world peace, international co-operation and understanding,[5]" should be understood in the light of the defining elements of *shalom* above.

According to peace terms of Academy for International Conflict Management and Peace Building, the word peace evokes a complex, sometimes contradictory interpretation and reaction. It is more of a concept than a literal word[6]. In the light of this, one would want to resist the tendency to submit to the popular dictionaries definitions of peace as the absence of war alone. Because according to Ibeanu:

> Although war may not be going on in a country where there is pervasive poverty, oppression of the poor by the rich, police brutality, intimidation of the ordinary people by those in power, oppression of women, or monopolization of resources and power by some sections of the society, it still will be wrong to say that there is peace in such a country. Consequently, it is quite possible not to have peace even when there is no war[7].

According to the University for Peace, peace is a political condition that makes justice possible[6]. This definition is particular of peace as a political condition rather than a whole which the biblical *shalom* represents. Rather than accept peace as a condition, this paper adopts the concept of peace as an integrated process thus:

> Peace is a process involving activities that are directly or indirectly linked to increasing development and

reducing conflict, both within specific societies and in the wider international community[8].

The implication of the above in Nigeria context is that, all the activities aimed at development, are motion toward the peace of the country, otherwise, they represent factors that seek to perpetuate underdevelopment and rancor in the country.

Security as a Function of *Shalom*

The term security implies freedom from risk or danger; safety[9], the state of being free from danger or injury[10]. Security also connotes things that are done to keep a person, building, or country safe from danger or crime.[11] In its extension, human security has been used to emphasize the need to focus on the needs of the individuals including freedom from fear and freedom from want, as well as specific needs such as food security[12]. Obviously, these ideas are well encapsulated in the biblical concept of *shalom* above

Unity as an Aspect of *Shalom*

Merriam Webster traced the origin of the term unity to the Latin word *unitat* or *Unitas* which is from the root *unus*, and it appropriately translates in English as "one"[13]. The term implies oneness or the quality or state of not being multiple or divided.[14] Again, it depicts the state of being united or joined as a whole[15]. Finally, it also signifies a combined group of people, sharing common interest, attitude or action.[16] unity in this understanding is only a strand of the biblical concept *shalom* as could be conjectured from the foregoing.

Nigeria as a Single Entity: The Beginning of the Quest for *Shalom*.

Before the advent of colonialism in Nigeria, the peoples had lived their lives as kinship groups. The various ethnic nationalities securely maintain their communal territories with their traditional method of governance. The people can be said to have relatively lived in peace and harmony apart from negligible communal cleavages which is nothing compared to the catastrophic dimensions of present day wars.

The events in the history of the people took a new turn with the coming of the colonial masters- the European nations. From as early as the mid-fifteenth century, the Europeans, notably the Portuguese had already establish contact with some people in the south of what will later be referred to as Nigeria.[17] This earliest contact especially with the people in the coast of Benin and Warri was motivated by religious and commercial concern.[18] This period was soon followed by the "dark age" of slave trade when many indigenous people were sold to slavery to Europe and America. At the first half of the seventeenth century, there were already clamour by the European nations as to who should take the administrative seat of the province. The fact that the potentials of the area which would later be known as Nigeria was already evident to the "whites" at this stage, was made obvious by the struggle between themselves as to who should take the administrative seat of the province. The Berlin conference of 1884/85 eventually saw the British paying decisive role in the administration of the teritories.[19]

It was at the wake of British colonialism that effort to bring the diverse people of the regions together to form the nation Nigeria was made. Before then, the British had kept the regions they conquered as separate entities. As early as 1906 the amalgamation of Lagos colony and the protectorate of the south had already taken place. According to Tamuno:

> The aim was to use the better financial position of the protectorate of the south to cover the costs of administration and development in the financially weak colony and protectorate of Lagos, then saddle with the white elephant project of a railway in need of extension since 1901.[20]

In a not too different circumstance, the southern and the Northern protectorates was amalgamated in 1914 by the British colonial administrator Lord Lugard.[21] From then on, Nigeria assumed a defined territory as a single political entity.

The critical issues raised in the light of the above in view of sustaining peace are, whether the people were consulted in the process of these amalgamations and what were the motivating factors that necessitated these unification exercises? In addressing these issues, Erhagbe submits thus:

> In bringing together the people of Nigeria, the British were politically and economically pragmatic in their decision…the decisions where not necessarily based on consideration of cultural unity, or political unity of the various entities before the coming of British.[22]

He added,

> As was to be the case with amalgamations exercises of the British in Nigeria, they did not seek the views of Nigerians in the two territories as to whether or not they supported an amalgamation.[23]

This paper adds here that these earliest moves to unify Nigeria were not by any means aimed at seeking *shalom* if the defining decimals of the term are brought to focus here.

The disintegration advocates in Nigeria have always supported their claims with the argument that Nigeria exits only in the "map" and in the "mouth", and that the solution to the current cleavages and grievances, expressed by the different regions of Nigeria, is the division of the country. This ideology is clearly exposed in Awolowo's *path to Nigeria freedom,* that Nigeria is a mere geographical expression."[24] This position is tolerated against the background of the failure of the British to make proper consultation with Nigerians before embarking on such an epochal exercise of amalgamations. Again, considering the cataclysmic nature and dimension some people and groups now evolved in expressing their disapproval of government or their policies, one is left with no choice than to sympathize with the idea of division. Orhiakhi, has since advocated a national conference to discuss the failure of the federal system and issues in the continuity of Nigeria as a single nation.[25]

Politics and the Quest for Peace, Security, and Unity in Nigeria
Politics perhaps represent the single most difficult aspect of Nigeria historical documentation. No other factor raises much interest as

politics in Nigeria. The reason for this is not far fetched. Ethnic proclivities dominate political platform and ideology. Right from the days of colonial administration, there has been ethnic based politics. Group struggle and ethnic hegemony started surfacing as early as the first half of 1950s. From this time also, the question of continuity of the nation as a single entity superimposed by the British suzerainty, had started gaining different views. According to Ikime:

> It would be recalled that the Northern delegates at the Ibadan conference threatened to pull the North out of Nigeria unless they were granted exactly one half of the total seats in the House of Representative. This request was granted by the British.[26]

Okajare added that this was a clear example of the structural imbalance of the 1951 arrangement which to him negated the principle of federalism. Citing J. S. Mill as quoted by Ijalaiye, Okajere submitted that the principle of federalism requires that:

> There should not be any one state so much more powerful than the rest as to be capable of vying in strength with many of them combined. If there be such a one and only one, it will insist on being master of the joint deleberation[27].

This indeed became the situation in Nigeria as the conservative Muslim North with the help of British overlord, continued to flex their hegemony. This unfortunate development eventually culminated in crises that greeted the 1951 Constitution and its subsequent collapse. The implication of this upon the unity and peace of the nation was

already made obvious as individual ethnic groups started mustering strength and gaining momentum. With the coming of the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 which made provision for the establishment of a federal system, the stage was finally set for ethnocentricism to become fully fledged. Erhagbe clearly observed that:

> The federal structure gave each of the major ethnic groups Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani and Igbo dominance in each of their region. The nature of this federal constitution was that it tended to weaken National unity since it tended to engender regionalism, through isolationism and the relative independence of each region.[28]

The import of the above excerpt is far reaching as it clearly brings to glare, the implication of ethnic sentiments in the issue of unity in Nigeria. This unfortunate development continued into the main stream of national politics and has variously manifested itself in unwholesome disagreement and rivalry, with their attendant devastating effects. Ethnicity in Nigeria politics has continued to distance the nation from near achievement of peace.

Suffice it to say at this juncture, that Nigerians are yet to learn from America democracy which favours national interest against other consideration. The fact that Nigerians do not have a common course for which they unanimously strive, is very well reflected in the ethnic based politics that have bedeviled the nation over the past five decade of its independence.

The centrality of ethnicity in Nigeria politics was again brought to the fore in 1959 independent election. Robert stock adequately captured the outcome of the polls this way:

> None of the three main parties won a majority, (talking about the Northern based Nigeria People Congress, (NPC) the Eastern based National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) and the Western based Action Group (AG)) but the NPC, thanks to the size of the region won the largest popularity. Tafawa Balewa head the (NPC) and entered a coalition government with NCNC as Prime Minister (Parentheses are mine) [29]

Such is the foundation upon which Nigeria politics is built. From the foregoing it is already conspicuous that one cannot absolve the impacts of ethnic politics from the factors that foreground and entrenched chaos and unrest in Nigeria. By implication, it will amount to a mere waste of time and energy to attempt to engage the issue of peace and unity in the country without considerable recourse to issues in national politics. Today while the term "unity in diversity" remains a slogan in the social lexicon of the people, the veracity of the statement, from the standpoint of the happenings in Nigeria society, is held in serious doubt especially with regards to the contents of *shalom*.

The Colour of Ethnicity in the Issue of Peace, and Unity in Nigeria
Some dimensions of ethnic impulses in the issue of peace, security and unity in Nigeria have already been pointed out. In addition however, it is stressed here that though the different ethnic groups give the country a rich culture, they also pose major challenges to notion building.

Ethnic strife has plagued Nigeria since it gained independence in 1960.[30]

As early as six years into independence, the ethnic cleavages had developed to such a magnitude to have resulted in the fratricidal civil war from 1967 –1970.[31] The war had such an exponential damage on the peace, security and unity of the nation being the first open confrontation on the issue of unification of country. Though the attempt to break the country at this stage was foiled, thanks to the "all against one" Nigeria Army, the interest has by no mean died as the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) remains a force to reckon with in Nigeria.

In what may best be described as a systematic war of ethnic hegemony of the Hausa/Fulani Muslim in Nigeria, Umejesi, having x-rayed the implications of Nigeria membership of the OIC, attached a very instructive appendix in this regards. The appendix revealed that, out of the twenty-one, ministerial slot that existed during the Babangida regime, seventeen were Hausa/Fulani Muslims, three were from the rest of Nigeria, out of which one was Northern Christian.[32] Perhaps, this is the most visible, but the same is true of all other Northern Muslim regime as they have had decisive role in the leadership of Nigeria since 1960. This mingling of politics, ethnicity and religious sentiments continue to rob Nigeria of any meaningful progress especially with regards to securing sustainable peace.

As would be expected, the other ethnic groups are not akimbo. They also have raised as much objections as possible in their disapproval of the Hausa/Fulani domination.

The issues of peace and security in the country took an entirely different turn with the rise of ethnic militias. The hitherto fragile unity of the nation vehemently shakes in the face of the recent heavily armed militia groups across the states, especially in the North. Olorode while analyzing the multidimensional nature of corruption in Nigeria, submits that in the peripheries like Nigeria, poor peoples' expression of anger masquerade themselves in ethnic militancy.[33] This is putting the situation mildly. The texture and features of militancy in Nigeria today, calls for a serious concern. Trends and incidences in the society obviously suggest that militancy in Nigeria has gone beyond poor people's expression of anger. The various decedent groups leading insurrection against government, now like never, threatens the unity of the nation.

With the strength of the Movement for Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People, (MOSOP), Odua People Congress (OPC), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), and the most devastating Boko Haram sect, Nigeria can be said to be heading for its worst days. These groups variously introduce new issues to the nation's quest to achieve relative peace, security, stability and

unity. Again, the demands of the various groups reveals in detail that Nigeria as a single indivisible entity, stand in great danger.

These defined groups apart, arm robbery, urban violence; area-boy-sm, corruption etc are factors that pose great challenges to the peace and security of Nigeria and Nigerians.

Religion and the Issue of Peace, Security and Unity in Nigeria
Religion on its own is problematic, not to mention its mingling with politics. Isiramen, quoting Wole Soyinka put it this way:

> Religion is one enemy of potential nationhood that requires not just a separate address of its own…religion must submit to community, to nation, otherwise co-existence become impossible.[34]

From the standpoint of the interplay of religion and politics in the country, it's clear that religion has not submitted to the ideologies of nationhood, hence the difficulty in the co-existence of the different groups. To say that religion plays a significant role in crises generation in the country, is to state the obvious. The two visiting religions-Christianity and Islam, introduced intolerance to the society against the amiable virtue of tolerance evident in the indigenous religion. The result has been crises resulting in unquantifiable damage to lives and property, insecurity, suspicion and apprehension across the nation. While subscription to both religion increase on a daily bases, Nigeria has be worse off for it. Some Muslims in recent times deliberately engaged in exploiting the negative aspect of Islam to undo national

progress. The Boko Haram sect remains a case in this light. Isiramen has since advocated secularization as against secularism as the solution to this incubus.[35]

Religion heats up Nigerian polity. The effort to nurture these religions at the national level has yielded no good result since 1960. Igboin agrees that religion and politics should not mix.[36] However; they continue to mix in Nigeria.

There have been accusations and counter accusations between Christians and Muslims in the country. The Christians Association of Nigeria (CAN) affirmed that all the disturbances and violence, resulting to break down of law and order causing lack of peace and insecurity, are the results of Muslims intolerance.[37] The Muslims have also argued on the contrary. Again, the Christians continue to insist that in Nigeria, Islam maintain the record of being the most bloody and controversial religion.[38] Some have argued that the spate of violence of Islam is to obliterate Christianity from Nigeria and make the country an Islamic Republic.[39] Christians' persistence at evangelizing the nation has been a major source of worry for the Muslims, hence the continuous rivalry resulting religious crises and degeneration of peace in the country. However, the concept of peace flourishes in both Christian and Muslims Holy Books. The Muslim readily submits to the ideology that Islam itself is peace and anyone embracing it automatically submits to peace. But how far this has been realized remains a question. To halt

the unending crises emanating from inter religious relation, Isidore submits that inter religious dialogue is a necessity.[40]

Issues that spell doom on peace, security, and unity in the country continue to emerge from religion. It may not be too long before the Muslim North demands a nation of theirs. This is already implied in their long time struggles in the country reflected in the sharia debate,[41] OIC debate,[42] the recent Boko Haram sect and the Islamic banking system advocacy.

Corruption and the Issues of Peace, Security and Unity in Nigeria

Needless to say, corruption remains the most difficult aspect of Nigeria's problem. Many now consider the problem as an albatross from which Nigerians must seek deliverance. Government continue to lack the moral and political will to face the endemic challenge.[43]

The Catholic Bishops in their ceaseless crusade against corruption decried the situation thus:

> The nation is still plague with the evil of corruption to an incredible degree. Recent revelations of colossal financial mismanagement and outright theft by people holding public office are but a mere suggestion of the extent to which corruption has pervaded our entire national fabric.[44]

The above reflects the situation in 2003. It is obvious however that the situation is worse now. Government continuous silence over the situation is worrisome. This silence has done more than render Cap 38,

section 404 and 112 of the criminal Code Act ineffective in the fight against corruption [45]

The problem of corruption and governments' neglect of the society, now manifest in armed robbery, kidnapping, cyber crimes, and general insecurity of lives and property. At this point, Adrian's Ten New Biblical Commandments for Fighting Corruption is very instructive:

> You shall not commit bribery, you shall not commit extortion, you shall not practice nepotism, you shall not practice tribalism, you shall not commit educational fraud, you shall not have poor work practice, you shall not be dishonest in business, you shall not misuse government property, you shall not commit political crimes, and you shall not show favoritism, [46].

The above addressed corruption situation in totality. It goes without saying that adhering to these commands will not only restore peace but strengthen it in Nigeria.

Security Agencies and the Issues of Peace and Security in Nigeria

The average Nigerian is not unaware of the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the security agencies especially the Nigeria Police Force which is supposed to stand up to the security challenges and forestall peace in the land.

Without contradiction, the duties of the police are contained in section 4 of the Police Act (Decree No 41 of 1967). It gave that the Police is tasked with the following;

1)   The prevention and detection of crime

2)   The apprehension and prosecution of offenders

3)   The preservation of law and order

4)   Protection of life and property

5)   The due enforcement of all laws and regulation with which they are directly charged.

6)   The performance of such military duties within or without Nigeria as may be directed under the Act and

7)   The maintenance of internal security.[47]

As beautiful as these may look, the reality on ground makes it almost ridiculous to think that the ill-equipped Nigeria Police will effectively carry out these duties in the near future.

Recently, a leader of the Boko Haram sect boasted that the entire Nigeria armory cannot stand their training and weapons[48]. The bombing of the police headquarters by the sect is a testimony to this fact. It would be recalled that before the bombing, the sect had earlier announced "our jihadist have arrived in Nigeria from Somalia where they received real training on warfare from our brethren who made that country ungovernable"[49]. The Police find it difficult to stem the tide of the Boko Haram sect as they have other aggressive groups in the country. It should be recalled again that the attack at the Police headquarter came barely 24 hours after the inspector General of Police, Hafiz Ringim, boasted that the violent Islamist sect, Boko Haram would be suppressed in a matter of days.[50] To many Nigerians, if this could happen at the police headquarter located in the nation's capital and seat

of the president, then, the entire nation is at the mercy of the violence sect.

The issue of security has reached its peak in the nation. Terrorism is here amid robbery, kidnapping, violent clashes, fraud of various degree and nomenclature, and other forms of crime that threatens the peace, security and unity of the nation. The security agencies have more than herculean task to deal with in the country. Top on the priority now is to address the critical case of the Boko Haram which is believed to have affiliation with al-Qaida terrorist group.[51] The siege which has witnessed a lot of mindless killings of innocent Nigerians, especially in the North by the Islamist sect lend credence to the claim that the Boko Haram have some form of external connection. The condition now is even more critical for the nation's security agencies as the sect has gained a global recognition by the bombing of the United Nations House at Abuja, enlisting Nigeria again as a major terrorist's nation.

While the National Assembly engage in trivial debates of whether or not to remove "Force" from Nigeria Police Force and the Police themselves are bordered by the colour and texture of it anticipated new uniform, the ugly news of daily bombings of innocent Nigerians continue to hit the radios and televisions.

Shalom: A Biblical Model of Peace in Nigeria

In the earlier stage of this paper, *shalom* was given a broad definition. Indeed, Strong's exhaustive definition makes *shalom* a model for the understanding of issues involved in peace, security and unity which we

have highlighted in the foregoing sections of the paper. In addressing these issues, the all encompassing meaning of *shalom* must be brought to bear.

Meanwhile, the Nigeria situation continues to negate the concept of *shalom*. It should be aptly noted that as a Jewish religious principle, *shalom* is one of the underlying principle of the *Torah* (the first five books of the Bible), which is believed to have been given to promote peace in the world.[52] As a principle, the Jews in their concerted effort work to ensure *shalom*. In instances where there had to be violence confrontations with other nations, the Israelites were fully mobilized to forestall *shalom*, and in common interest fought to secure it (see 1 Samuel 11:1-11)

This has been lacking in Nigeria. Instead of collaborative efforts of the individual groups at ensuring *shalom* in the nation, what is readily visible have been ethnic rivalry, tribalism, nepotism and the likes. In Nigeria's quest to secure peace and unity, it must call to mind, the detail principles and contents of *shalom*. It must begin to address the issues of poverty, poor health care delivery, break down of law and order in the society, the welfare of the people, corruption, tribalism, ethnicity, party politics, religion, general insecurity etc, with a sense of urgency.

Elias has however submitted that one reason why God may withdraw *shalom* from a people is because of sin.[53] Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:34). Needless to

mention that the reproach our nation is in, is as a result of the entrenchment of various degree of sins in the system.

Cornelius Platinga description of Old Testament concept of shalom in the book *sin: not the way it's supposed to be,* adequately surmise the points made in this section. According to him:

> The webbing together of God, humans and all creation in justice, fulfillment and delight is what the Hebrew prophets called *shalom*. We call it peace but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. in the Bible, *shalom* means universal flourishing, wholeness and delight-a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyfulness…*shalom*, in other words, is the way thing ought to be.[54]

Although the above seems impossible in the current state of affairs in Nigeria, it is strongly held that the return of the nation to the foundational principles reflected in its anthems would do more than establish *shalom* in the country.

How to Achieve Shalom in Nigeria

A *shalomic* state is one that peace, unity and security is guaranteed as could be conjectured from the foregoing. The Bible is explicit on the fact that there is divine influence in its achievement (Lev. 26:3-7). While this view is indisputable, achieving *shalom* in a nation like Nigeria would certainly require concerted efforts of parents, the

government, religious leaders, and every well meaning individual in the country.

Firstly, Nigerian parents must inculcate in their children and wards the value of peaceful coexistence which represents an aspect of *shalom* in all their engagement. This should be done by the exemplary life of the parents in dealing with each other, the children and members of the society. In addition the parents should instruct their wards specifically on matters regarding peaceful living. When this is done in the family which is the nucleus of the larger society, tendencies of animosity, discontentment, robbery, greed, etc which all negates the concept of *shalom* as x-rayed above would be eradicated from the society. (Prov. 22:6; 23:13; 29:17)

Secondly, in the quest to achieve shalom in Nigeria, the government has enormous role to play. The all encompassing nature of *shalom* as pointed out in this paper brings the government out as a quintessential agency in the quest for shalom. Guaranteeing peace, providing security for lives and property, provision of social basic amenities, provision of social welfare, halting corruption etc, which are all implied in the concept of biblical shalom, are mainly in the domain of the government. Therefore, the government in its effort at ensuring lasting peace should see to fair distribution of resources and ensure adequate appropriation to the grass root. The government must urgently formulate policies to address the problem of employment and poor social welfare in the country. Also, the government must now be decisive in dealing with

corruption by empowering the security agencies and other anti corruption graft agencies to effectively carry out their functions without fear or favour, while debunking the idea that politics is a money making venture. In doing these, the government should keep *shalom* in focus as this will avail it the conceptual frame work in dealing with issues involved in achieving peace as a whole rather than in piece meals.

Thirdly, the path to *shalom* would require sound religious teachings. In this regards, religious leaders of the various religious groups must wake up to the responsibility of teaching sound morals, love, compassion, honor and respect for one another, sanctity of life and property; and addressing the issue of sin as anti *shalomic* state. Also, a healthier inter religious relation is a necessity for Nigeria in its quest for *shalom*. Religious adherents must learn to respect the views and positions of other religions so as to forestall the unnecessary suspicions, intolerance, hatred, violent crisis, etc, resulting from misunderstanding of other religions. Romans 12: 18, specifically admonished the Christians to do all they can to live in peace with everyone

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to survey and outline some of the emerging issues in peace, security and unity in Nigeria, especially pointing out the challenges posed by them in the quest to achieving sustainable development and stability. It fetched a compass with the Hebrew concept of *shalom* which represents a true theological model in the understanding of the issues involved in peace, security and unity, and

submitted that the path of peace is conscientious commitment of all and sundry to the holistic concept of *shalom*.

Endnotes

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