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ISAIAH'S THEORY OF NONVIOLENCE IN ISA 2:1-4 AS A WAY TO PEACE

Philip Igbo, CMF

Abstract

Peace is one of the values that humans yearn for, yet violence, conflicts and insecurity are among the major problems confronting the contemporary world. Violence and conflicts are militating factors to human and societal wellbeing. The problem of violence and armed conflicts had bothered the people of Isaiah's time just as they trouble and agitate the minds of people today. Isaiah envisioned a world where people of all nations will reject war and adopt a nonviolent approach to conflict resolution. This can be if there is a change of mindset among humans. The change of mindset as Isaiah had envisioned it will be when people conduct their lives according to the direction of YHWH's *torah*. True and wholesome peace can be achieved if all nations put in a straightforward commitment to peace. It demands respect for the value of life. Dialogue and international cooperation are indispensable to peace among humans.

Key Terms: Violence, war, conflict, disarmament, nonviolence, Peace.

Introduction

Peace is one of the fundamental desires of humans in any society. Yet today some parts of the world have been rendered

insecure by various shades of violence and armed conflicts. Reflecting on the socio-economic situation of Nigeria or other African countries, one is shocked by the level of underdevelopment and poverty, which in many instances have been orchestrated by armed conflicts and violence. The problem of armament, warfare and armed conflicts is not limited to Nigeria, or even to the African continent, it is a global problem. The problem of violence and armed conflicts had bothered the people of Isaiah's time just as they trouble and agitate the minds of people today. The prophet Isaiah envisioned a world where people of all nations will reject war and violence and embrace peace. This article presents Isaiah's message of nonviolence (Isa 2:1-5) as a panacea to the problem of armed conflicts, insecurity and underdevelopment in the Nigerian society. The work, therefore, seeks to ginger a positive change in people's relational attitude towards one another.

Exegesis of Isa 2:1-4

Isaiah 2:1-5 constitutes Isaiah's theory of disarmament and nonviolence. This passage begins with a superscription which identifies the material which follows as "the word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw" (v.1a). The superscription in 2:1 presents a rather unusual construction; it tells us that Isaiah saw (*hāzāh*) the word (*haddābār*). Verse 1b is straightforward regarding the thrust of the vision. It indicates that the "word" which Isaiah "saw" concerns Judah and its capital city, Jerusalem. The Hebrew word *hāzōn* (vision) always refers to prophetic vision, something other than or beyond ordinary vision.¹ The two terms, *hāzōn* ("vision") and *dābār* ("word"), are interchangeable in the prophetic

¹ F. Landy. Vision and voice in Isaiah. *JSOT* 88 (2000) pp.19-36.

literature. The Hebrew word, *haddāḇār*, commonly signifies “prophecy” or “vision”. The word *haddāḇār* in Isa 2:1 carries the broader meaning of “event.” Thus, what Isaiah saw refers to an event that will take place in an undetermined future. The “word” (*haddāḇār*) which Isaiah “saw” (2:1), according to J. D. W. Watts,² G. Gerleman,³ and W. H. Schmidt,⁴ refers to God’s desire or will for Israel and the nations. Thus, we may interpret the whole of Isa 2:2-4 as being concerned with God’s will or desire for Israel and the nations.

When Isaiah proclaimed this oracle of peace and nonviolence at the beginning of the eighth century B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel had been conquered by the Assyrians under Sargon II, and the southern kingdom of Israel was under threat of invasion by the Assyrian forces.⁵ Isaiah spoke for a people longing for a universal peace in which nations would live in harmony under a divine system of justice. Amidst all the confusions and uncertainties of the Israelite society of his time characterized by threats of war, Isaiah foresaw a time when God would act to bring about the transformation of the present reality characterized by conflicts and wars.

² J. D. W. Watts. *Isaiah 1-33*. In B. M. Metzger (Ed). *Word Biblical Commentary* 24. Waco, Texas: Word Books. 1985. P.28.

³ G. Gerleman, *dāḇār*. *TLOT* 1. E. Jenni & C. Westermann (Ed). Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. 1997. P.331 (pp.325-332).

⁴ W. H. Schmidt. *dāḇār*. *TDOT* 3. G. J. Botterweck & H. Ringgren (Eds). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1978. P.100 (pp.84-125).

⁵ P. Igbo. *Isaiah's Vision of Peace (Isa 2:1-5): From the Perspective of Eschatology*. A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Religion and Human Relations in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Degree in Religion and Human relations. Faculty of Arts. UNIZIK Awka. 2018, p.168. Unpublished.

Zion: The Center of World-wide Attraction (v.2)

Isa 2:2a speaks of what will happen to the “mountain of the house of the Lord” (har bêt-yhwh) “in days to come” (*be 'ahǎrîṭ hayyāmîm*). The noun feminine construct *'ahǎrîṭ* means “afterwards.” The word refers to what comes afterwards, which suggests an event “in the future”, but not necessarily the end of time. Thus, the feminine prepositional construct *be 'ahǎrîṭ* means “afterwards,” or “after this”. Scholars agree that the phrase “in days to come” (*be 'ahǎrîṭ hayyāmîm*) in Isa 2:1a points to an unspecific future.⁶ The phrase does not necessarily refer to ‘the last days’ (*en taîs/exchatais hemetais*) as the Septuagint (LXX) translation suggests. The futuristic implication of this phrase is supported by many other biblical versions. The NRSV renders *be 'ahǎrîṭ hayyāmîm* as “in days to come”, thus suggesting an indefinite future time. This agrees with the RSV’s translation (“In the latter days”). It refers neither to the end of time nor beyond time, but within time and within history.

The future which Isaiah foresees is one characterized by peace and harmonious co-existence among nations. The prophet foresees a radical transformation of history, circumstances will change dramatically, and the Lord will reign, fundamentally as

⁶ J. Blenkinsopp. *Isaiah 1-39: The Anchor Bible*, 19A. Doubleday: The Anchor Bible. 2000. P.190; J. A. Motyer. *The Prophecy of Isaiah*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press. 1993. P.54; A. Groenewald. The significance of *Tôrāh* (Isa 2:3) within Isaiah 2:1-5: The relationship of the first overture (1:1-2:5) to the book’s conclusion (Isa 65-66). 2016. Retrieved December 15, 2016 from <http://www.scielo.org.za>; A. S. Herbert. *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, 1-39*. Cambridge: Cambridge University. 1973. P.35; G. M. Tucker. The Book of Isaiah 1-39. In L. E. Keck (Ed). *NIB* 6. Nashville: Abingdon. 2001. P. 67; E. Lipinski. *be 'ahǎrîṭ hayyāmîm* Dans Les Textes Preexiliques”. *VT* 20 (1970) 447-450.

judge and peacemaker among nations.⁷ Isaiah declared that this "mountain of the Lord" (*har-yhwh*) "shall be established as the highest of the mountains" (*nāḵôn yihyeh har bêt-yhwh berō'š hehārîm*). The phrase "shall be established" (*nāḵôn yihyeh*) points to a specific event that will happen in the future. The future import of the participle is intensified by the verb *yihyeh* ("shall be") which is the qal imperfect form of the verb *hāyāh*. The phrase, "shall be established as the highest of the mountains," is parallel to "shall be raised above the hills." The term "highest" (*berō'š*) here probably means most exalted in honour, not actually physically highest.

Verse 2 ends with a poignant statement: all the nations (*kol-haggôyîm*) shall flow to it. Isaiah envisioned that "in days to come" Mount Zion will become a lofty peak that will attract other nations. Mount Zion is in reality not the highest peak of all the mountains and hills in Palestine. The fact is that YHWH's presence on mount Zion lifts Zion's importance to supremacy, compared with other mountains and hills. Purely because YHWH is there, Zion attracts the nations. The nations "flow" uphill (*nāhārû 'ēlāyw*) to the summit of YHWH's mountain to learn from the God of Jacob (*'ēlōhē ya'āqōb*) the lessons which will eliminate war among them and lead to peace. The verb *nāhār* is a denominative verb related to the noun *nāhār* ("river"). The verb *nāhārû* ("will flow") in v.2d evokes a river imagery.⁸ Isaiah

⁷ G. M. Tucker. The book of Isaiah 1-39. In L. E. Keck (Ed). *NIB* 6. Nashville: Abingdon. 2001. P. 69.

⁸ H. J. Fabry, *Nāhār*. *TDOT* 9. G. J. Botterweck (Ed). Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans. 1998. p.263 (pp.261-270); H. Wildberger. Die Völkerwallfahrt Zum Zion, Jes ii, 1-5. *VT* 7 (1957) 62-81; J. J. M. Roberts. "Isaiah in Old Testament theology." *Int.* 34/2 (1982) 130-143; E. A. Martens. "Impulses to mission in Isaiah: An intertextual

employs this river imagery to paint the picture of the movement of the nations to mount Zion (Isa 2:2; cf Mic 4:1). Normally streams flow down the mountain slopes, but the nations are literally viewed as flowing like water uphill to Mount Zion to seek the God of Jacob. J. A. Motyer writes that the incongruity of a stream flowing upwards to Mount Zion is intentional; a supernatural magnetism is at work.⁹ Here the natural laws of gravity are overcome by the magnetic hill of Zion. Such is the attraction of YHWH to the peoples. The phrase “all the nations shall flow to it” provides a vivid imagery of its importance. Zion is portrayed as a place of the peaceful gathering of the nations (Isa 2:2-4; 18:7), the focal point of mankind.

Motive of the Up-ward Flow to Zion

Verse 3 addresses the purpose of the upward flow of the nations to Zion. The conjunction particle, *kî* (that) in Isa 2:3, introduces the motive of the pilgrimage of the nations to Mount Zion. The purpose of the journey of the nations to Mount Zion is expressed in parallel structure in v.3b: “That he may teach us his ways” (*weyōrēnû midderākāyw*); “and that we may walk in his paths” (*wenēlkāh be'ōrḥōlāyw*). The nations come to Zion to learn the *lōrāh* and to hear the word of the Lord. The nations (*kol-haggōyīm*) stream up to the mountain of the Lord ('el bêt-yhwh) and to the “house of the God of Jacob” ('el bêt-'ēlōhē ya'āqōb). The phrase, “mountain of the Lord,” (*har-yhwh*), is in apposition

exploration.” *Bulletin for Biblical Research*. 17/2 (2007) pp.215–239.

⁹ J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press. 1993. P.54.

to "house of the God of Jacob," (*bēt- 'ēlōhē ya'āqōb*). Here YHWH is referred to as the "God of Jacob" (*'ēlōhē ya'āqōb*).

The nations stream to Zion, because they can no longer endure the desperate condition in which they live. Therefore, they come to Zion in order to learn the ways or conduct which YHWH prescribes and approves.¹⁰ The nations go up to Zion to learn the *torah* and YHWH's word (*dehār-yhwh*). The *torah* is portrayed as the way of righteousness, the secret of peace and the clue to the new world order. Another reason why the nations let themselves schooled in YHWH's *torah* is that they may "walk" in YHWH's ways. "To walk" is a biblical figure of speech that embraces the conduct of the whole of life. The term "his Way" (*derākāy*) metaphorically denotes a lifestyle of faith one is expected to obey and walk in (cf. Exod. 16:4; Isa. 30:20; 42:24; Jer. 9:12; 26:4; 32:23; 44:10, 23; Zech 7:12). Walking in God's paths means conducting one's life in accordance with God's instruction (*tōrāh*). As a result of the divine teaching (*torah*) and divine way which the nations have learnt, their lives and mentalities undergo significant transformation. Such a new-found knowledge leads them to embrace peace and practice it.

As the Isaian text implies, the divine way is taught by YHWH himself. By turning to Zion to learn the secret of peace and by accepting YHWH's *torah*, the nations bear testimony that YHWH alone is God and that there is no god besides him (Isa 45:14). It must be noted here that the primacy of Zion is first of all spiritual, not political. However, the spiritual significance of

¹⁰ G. B. Gray. *A Critical and exegetical commentary on the book of Isaiah I-XXVII*, 1. Edinburgh: T & T Clark. 1975. P.46.

Zion, according to Musija, has social and political effects as well.¹¹ By streaming to mount Zion to learn YHWH's way, as Van Winkle¹² and J. A. Motyer¹³ remarked, the nations acknowledge the universal sovereignty of "the God of Jacob" and thereby submit themselves to his authority. YHWH's way learnt on Mount Zion brings about transformation of the people, from a tendency to conflicts, violence and wars to an embrace of peace and fraternal co-existence.

Torah-YHWH as the Expression of YHWH's Will

In the OT, the term *tôrāh* means more than the Mosaic Legislation. The word can be translated as "instruction."¹⁴ The *tôrāh* may also be understood as God's word mediated by a prophet (Isa 1:2, 10, 20).¹⁵ In the context of Isa 2:3, the *tôrāh* has the general sense of "instruction" or "teaching" of God which provides guidance to humans.¹⁶ Thus, the *tôrāh* is an expression

¹¹ Z. Musija. (2011). *The Eschatological hope in the book of Isaiah*. Marusevec: Adriatic Union College. Retrieved March 12, 2017 from <http://www.academia.edu>; cf. also Z. Musija. (2011). Eschatology in Isaiah. Retrieved September 10, 2017 from <http://www.academia.edu>.

¹² D. W. V. Winkle. The relationship of the nations to Yahweh and to Israel in Isaiah XI-Lv 1. *VT XXXV*, 4 (1985): pp.446-458.

¹³ J. A. Motyer. *The Prophecy of Isaiah*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press. 1993. P.55.

¹⁴ Koehler, L. and Baumgartner, W. *tôrāh*. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Leiden: Brill. 2001. CD-ROM Edition.

¹⁵ C. J. Fantuzzo. Torah in servant-form: Torah, servant, and disciples in the book of Isaiah. 2012. Retrieved January 30, 2017 from eprints.glos.ac.uk.

¹⁶ W. Brueggemann. *Isaiah, volume 1, 1-39*. Louisville: Westminster. 1998. P.25; cf. W. Brueggemann. *Peace: Living toward a vision*. 2014. Retrieved July 24, 2017 from <https://thevlaueofsparrows.com>;

of YHWH's will. The *torah* which goes "out of Zion" is portrayed as the way of righteousness, the secret of peace and the anchor of a world order characterized by nonviolence and fraternal co-existence. In Isa 2:3, the two terms, *tôrāh* and "word of the Lord" (*deḥār-yhwh*), are used synonymously for the same teaching. Like the term, *tôrāh*, the expression, *deḥār-yhwh*, which occurs 242 times in the Hebrew Bible and is used as a technical expression for the divine will revealed through prophecy. The word of God is the vehicle for the divine will.¹⁷ In this sense, the phrase "*tôrāh* from Zion" (*tôrāh missiyyôn*) and the "word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (*deḥār-yhwh mîrûšālāim*) in Isa 2:3c are used as synonymous terms expressing YHWH's will for the people, both religious and civil.¹⁸

The *tôrāh* directs one to do what is right and gives guidance to humans for right living. The *torah*, when assimilated in the community, becomes the source of righteousness (*ṣedāqāh*), the foundation of justice or right judgment (*mišpāt*) and the secret of

W. J. Harrelson. *Torah*. *IDB* 4. G. A. Buttrick (Ed). New York: Abingdon. 1962. P.673; K. Gutbrod. *Nomos*. G. Kittel (Ed). *TDNT* 4. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1967. P.1038.

¹⁷ G. Gerleman. *ḏāḥār*. *TLOT* 1. E. Jenni & C. Westermann (Ed). Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. 1997. P.331 (pp.325-332); W. H. Schmidt. *ḏāḥār*. In G. J. Botterweck & H. Ringgren (Eds). *TDOT* 3. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans. 1978. P.100 (pp.84-125); A. C. Myers. Word. *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans. 1987. pp.1064-1065; J. L. McKenzie. Law. *Dictionary of the Bible*. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation. 2002. P.498 (pp.495-501).

¹⁸ F. L. Moriarty. Isaiah 1-39. In *Jerome biblical commentary*. R. E. Brown (Ed). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. 1968. P.268 (pp.265-282); G. Liedke, and C. Petersen. *tôrāh*. *TLOT* 3. E. Jenni & C. Westermann (Eds). Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. 1997. P.1420 (pp.1415-1422).

peace (*šālôm*). Thus, the nations are motivated to journey to Mount Zion by the desire to learn YHWH's *tôrāh* which they recognize as the only way to end global strife and to achieve fulsome peace. YHWH's *tôrāh* is portrayed here as the principle which provides the nation with a non-violent way to resolve their disputes.

Isaiah's call to Disarmament (v.4)

The *torah* that goes forth from Zion has an effect on the people who imbibe it. It brings about a change of mentality. As a result of the lessons which they have learnt on Mount Zion, the nations reverse their warring tendencies into the desire for peace as v.4b makes clear. Such a peace, according to J. Jensen,¹⁹ is not an armed peace, but a true and enduring peace. In v.4b, Isaiah uses two sets of parallel statements to describe the worldwide peace: "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." The torah-education which the peoples imbibed leads to their transformation. The nations will be so much transformed by YHWH's *torah* that they will be moved to transform their swords (*ḥarḇôṭām*, from *hereb*) and spears (*ḥănîṭîm* pl. of *ḥănîṭ*) used for war into *ploughshares* (*'ittîm*) and *pruning hooks* (*mazmērôṭ*) used for agriculture. "Sword" and "spear" together represent the entire military arsenal. The transformation of weapons of war into implements of agriculture serves as synecdoche for the whole of the disarmament process and a return to the era of peace.

¹⁹ J. Jensen. *Isaiah 1-39*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier. 1984. p.59.

Verse 4c explicitly expresses the result of the nations embracing disarmament and nonviolence: "nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore." The nations (*haggôyīm*) will be so tremendously changed by being taught the *torah* that they will not learn the techniques of war (*milhāmāh*) any longer. Since nations will no longer attack their neighbours, there will neither be any more need to stockpile weapons of war nor will there be any more need to train for war. The art and study of war will be removed entirely. Consequently, the customary practices of equipping the army for war will be reversed. Such a voluntary disarmament can only happen when a complete change of mind has taken place. As the Isaian text suggests, the encounter with the God of Jacob (*'ēlōhē ya'āqōb*) can effect a lasting change of mind-set. "Learning war" will be replaced by "learning torah" and practicing peace. The peace will be so encompassing that the weapons of war will be reshaped so that they can be utilized in peaceful pursuits. Isaiah sees the word of God as the agent of transformation and the anchor for a future world peace.

Peace is not Forged with Force

Peace is built from values, attitudes, behaviours and ways of life based on nonviolence, justice, equity, tolerance, and respect for fundamental human rights. O. E. Ekpenyong stresses that the culture of peace is not created with the barrel of a gun but from participation, dialogue, and cooperation. A culture of peace rejects violence in all its forms.²⁰

²⁰ O. E. Ekpenyong. "Peace and Justice as a Religious Panacea for National Development in Nigeria." *American Journal of Social*

True peace is not enforced by violence. There are two forms of violence - the physical and passive violence. Violence in its physical manifestation is expressed in the use of physical force - wars, fighting, killing, beating, kidnapping, rapes, etc. - where physical force is employed. But unlike physical violence, passive violence does not employ force as such. Passive forms of violence are expressed in name-calling, insulting, use of "hate-speech," etc. Acts of passive violence generate anger in the victim. And if this anger is not well managed it can generate physical violence. Passive violence can fuel the fire of physical violence.²¹

Disruptive Effects of Armed Conflicts

Today, there is an ever-increasing spate of violence and armed conflicts in many parts of Nigeria and the African region at large. This is due, among other factors, to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The indiscriminate use of weapons by hoodlums and terror-minded persons contribute not only to the destabilization of conflict zones, but also destabilize regions, fuel conflicts, hamper development, foster a "culture of violence" and threaten peace and security in the society.

Today, while many regions of the world have moved towards greater political and economic stability and co-operation, Africa remains a cauldron of instability and economic deprivation. This is owing, among other factors, to political and sectarian conflicts. These conflicts have over the years hampered

Issues & Humanities. Vol 1/2, (2011). pp.96-97 (pp.95-106). Retrieved March 3, 2017, from <http://www.ajsih.org>.

²¹ P. Igbo. *Treasure of Difference*. Enugu: Claretian Publications. 2012, p.117.

human and infrastructural development in the conflict zones. The menace of Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast of Nigeria, for instance, demonstrates the effect of violence and armed conflicts on human wellbeing and on infrastructural development in any nation. War causes devastation and loss of lives, destroys the social infrastructure, hampers development and sets in motion a cycle of violence. After decades of civil war, war-torn countries lose much of their skilled work force needed to rebuild the society. R. B. Potter notes that the psychological effects of the use of violence are devastating. It engenders ferocity and a spirit of revenge and generates a cycle of retaliation. It tends towards a relentless escalation beyond the limits originally envisioned.²²

The Papal teachings have over the years consistently addressed the danger of armed violence. In his Encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII insists that war is never a suitable means of settling disputes. The Pontiff maintains that true and solid peace among nations rests on mutual trust, not on the use of war and violence.²³ Equally John Paul II rejects violent solutions to problems and called for solidarity among nations. John Paul's position is informed by the fact that violence destroys what it claims to defend, i.e., the dignity of life and the freedom of human beings.²⁴ In the Encyclicals, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) and

²²R. B. Potter, "The Moral Logic of War," in *War in the Twentieth Century*, Ed by R. B. Miller, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, p.204.

²³ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*. Vaticana: Libreria Editrice. 1963, n.27; see also the English Translation, Boston: St Paul, n.112.

²⁴ John Paul II, "Address in Drogheda, Ireland. Origins 9 (1979) p.274, quoted by L. S. Cahill, "Christian Just War Tradition: Tensions and Development," in *Concillium, The Return of the Just War*, M. P. Aquina and D. Meith (Ed), London: SCM, 2001/2, p.81.

Centesimus annus (1991), John Paul II emphasized on the themes of international co-operation, social justice, and respect for human rights and the dignity of human beings.²⁵

Nonviolence as a Way to Peace

One of the ways to peace is the application of a nonviolent approach to settling conflicts among humans. This is the main thrust of Isaiah's oracle of peace (Isa 2:2-4). Isaiah calls on the nations to reject the arbitrament of war and weaponry and to embrace a peaceful and nonviolent approach to conflict resolution both on the national and international dimensions (Isa 2:4). Isaiah is not only a prophet of justice, but also a prophet of peace and nonviolence as the oracle of peace in Isa 2:2-4 makes clear. In this passage, Isaiah invites humans to turn away from violence and armed conflicts which not only set in motion a cycle of violence and conflicts but also have the potential to destroy humanity.

Violence includes hostile encounters, battles, and wars. M. E. Jeden defines war as a particular kind of conflict that involves the legalized killing of enemies, including civilians and non-combatants. The devastation caused by war goes beyond the number of persons directly killed. War leaves in its wake wrecked lives and families and a legacy of bitterness that all too easily becomes the seedbed for another war in an ever-escalating spiral of violence." Jeden notes that "war may put a halt to a conflict in the short run by inflicting an unacceptable level of pain on an

²⁵ Cf. L. S. Cahill, "Christian Just War Tradition: Tensions and Development," in *Concillium, The Return of the Just War*, M. P. Aquina and D. Meith (Ed), London: SCM, 2001/2, p.81.

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enemy" until he/she surrenders. Jeden, however, recognizes that the arbitrament of war is not a good way of resolving conflicts.²⁶ The peace which war enforces is not a true peace but an enforced peace.

Armed conflicts have destructive effects on the society. O. E. Ekpenyong writes that "conflicts have the capability to hinder, constrain or destabilize severely every developmental effort by destroying lives, infrastructure, interrupting the production circle and diverting resources away from productive uses."²⁷ Violent conflicts disrupt the process of production, create conditions for pillage of the country's resources and divert their application from developmental purposes to servicing war. Violent conflicts are among the factors that perpetuate misery and underdevelopment in the society. The culture of peace engenders development in any society. Peace can occur when conflict is successfully managed. This is referred to as negative peace, that is, an absence of direct or physical violence.

Isaiah envisions a time when all nations (*kol-haggôyîm*) will reject the arbitrament of war and embrace non-violent way to conflict resolution.²⁸ The prophet Micah succinctly paints a

²⁶ M. E. Jeden. *Just peace maker: An introduction to peace and justice*. New York: Paulist. 2006. P.57.

²⁷ O. E. Ekpenyong. "Peace and justice as a religious panacea for national development in Nigeria." *American Journal of Social Issues & Humanities* Vol. 1/2 (2011). pp.96-97 (95-106). Retrieved March 3, 2017, from <http://www.ajsih.org>.

²⁸ Much later, Joel takes the promise and turns it around as a satirical call to the nations to prepare for war (Joel 3:10). Here Joel called on the nations to prepare for war: "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears." In Joel, plowshares and pruning

picture of a society of *shalom* as one where all shall “sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid” (Mic 4:4).²⁹ The personal peace of everyone sitting under his vine and under his fig tree in Mic 4:4 is matched by the social peace of nations laying down their weapons of war and not learning war any more (Isa 2:4), and the natural peace of the wolf dwelling with the lamb in Isa 11:6.

Peace and order in the society are founded on the presence of justice. There is a distinction between negative peace and positive peace. According to J. Galtung, negative peace can be interpreted as the absence of violence, while ‘positive peace’ is “the capacity to deal with conflict nonviolently and creatively.” Negative peace involves interventions designed to prevent and mitigate direct violence. Peace intervention is considered positive if it contains social and cultural transformations that reduce structural and cultural violence and promote more equitable social order that enhances both individual and societal development.³⁰

hooks, symbols of peace, would be transformed into swords and spears, symbols of war. The fact that Joel’s prophecy is the reverse of Isaiah’s prophecy does not mean that both prophetic oracles are contradictory. Here Joel is looking ahead to a different phase of the eschatological future. Joel foresees a time of great warfare among the nations. (P. Igbo. *Isaiah's Vision of Peace (Isa 2:1-5): From the Perspective of Eschatology*. 2018, pp.144-145. Unpublished.).

²⁹ The text of Isa 2:1-4 is substantially same as Mic 4:1-4. Both texts speak of a time in an unspecified future when human will reject war and embrace peace.

³⁰ J. Galtung. After violence, reconstruction, reconciliation, and resolution: Coping with visible and invisible effects of war and violence. In M. Abu-Nimer (Ed). *Reconciliation, justice, and coexistence* (pp.3-23). New York: Lexington. 2001. p.3.

The opposite of structural violence is positive peace. Positive peace, therefore, is the absence of all kinds of violence - physical, economic, political and cultural. Positive peace may be interpreted as the building of non-exploitative social structures on the basis of equity, justice and human rights. When justice becomes a stranger in the land, the community becomes susceptible to chaos and disorder. In the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, Pius XI discussed the implications of the social and economic order. The Pontiff said that "justice alone can, if faithfully observed, remove the causes of social conflict."³¹ O. I. Anthony-Orji and P. E. Ezeme stress that true peace is not "the absence of war, fear, conflict; it is rather a state of harmony and justice." According to them, peace "is a dynamic social process in which justice, equity, and respect for basic human rights are maximized, and violence, both physical and structural, is minimized".³²

Peace Education: A Panacea to Conflicts in the Society

One of the ways a society can eradicate violence and armed conflicts is through peace education. Isaiah puts the emphasis on learning. Isa 2:3 refers to it as torah-education. Isaiah portrays the *torah* not only as the expression of the will of God but also as the rule of life. The significant thing here is that the *torah* will not be imposed; rather, the nations will freely agree to embrace Yahweh's *torah*, as a secret of peace. The *torah*

³¹ Pius XII. *Quadragesimo Anno*. Vaticana: Libreria Editrice. 1931. no.137.

³² O. I. Anthony-Orji, and P. E. Ezeme. *Theory and Practice of Peace Education*. A. O. Onu, et al (Eds). *Social Science perspectives to peace and conflict*. Vol.2. Pp.215-232. Owerri: Grand-Heritage Global Communications. 2017. P.215.

functions here as the light drawing all nations to Yahweh and leading all nations to the realization of the need for peace. Isaiah portrays the *torah* as the rule of life that guides all nations to walk in the right path.³³ The aim of peace education, according to O. I. Anthony-Orji and P. E. Ezeme, is to enlighten humans on how to prevent armed violence and how they may contribute to building a just society. Peace education can lead to behavioural change and a change in mentality in people. It is a deliberate attempt to educate children and adults in the dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peace.³⁴ Anthony-Orji and Ezeme write that peace education can help in changing the culture of violence and aggression that we find in our present-day society, by emphasizing on values of nonviolence. The early acquisition of peace education can help in suppressing acts that are violent in nature, and encouraging peaceful acts.³⁵ As the Prophet Isaiah saw it, the effect of the *torah education* is a change of mindset, from the production of the weapons of war to the development of agriculture, from the empowerment to destroy to the

³³ P. Igbo. "Peace as a Precondition for Sustainable Development." *Maryland Studies: An International Journal of Philosophy and African Studies*. Vol. 11. 2014. P. 127.

³⁴ O. I. Anthony-Orji and P. E. Ezeme. Theory and practice of peace education. A. O. Onu, et al (Eds). *Social Science perspectives to peace and conflict*. Owerri: Grand-Heritage Global Communications. Theory and practice of peace education. 2017. P.216.

³⁵ O. I. Anthony-Orji. and P. E. Ezeme. *Theory and practice of peace education*. 2017. P.217.

empowerment to build, from learning to make war to learning the art of being human.³⁶

The realization of peace requires addressing the course of justice "here and now" and addressing the global danger of arms proliferation, by applying the Isaianic formula: "beating of swords into plowshares."³⁷ Isaiah looked forward to a time when people will drop their weapons of war and embrace peace. The beating of "swords" (*ḥarḥôṭām*, from *hereb*) into "plowshares" (*'ittîm*) and "spears" (*ḥănîṭîm* pl of *ḥănîṭ*) into "pruning hooks" (*mazmērôṭ*) demonstrates man's realization that peace among humans cannot be achieved by an arbitrament of war, rather through a nonviolent approach. Any sincere commitment to nonviolence, both on national and international levels, must strive "to root out the causes of war" by addressing the problem of injustice and poverty in the world, and "by creating nonviolent structures which serve humanity and promote life."³⁸ Peace education, therefore, must emphasize justice, equity, tolerance and respect for the fundamental rights of people.

The Practicability of Isaiah's Vision of Peace

Isaiah envisioned a warless world, a world devoid of weapons of war, a world where human and material resources are channeled to promote human wellbeing. It is, however, difficult to imagine a total disarmament as Isaiah had envisioned. A completely arms-free world, as Isaiah had envisioned, is

³⁶ P. Igbo. "Peace as a Precondition for Sustainable Development." *Maryland Studies: An International Journal of Philosophy and African Studies*. Vol. 11. (2014). P.126.

³⁷ J. Dear. *The God of peace, towards a theology of nonviolence*. New York: Orbis. 1994. p.86.

³⁸ J. Dear. *The God of peace, towards a theology of nonviolence*. New York: Orbis. 1994. p.131.

unrealistic. Nations will still need some weapons for security and to maintain law and order. However, that does not in any way mitigate the importance of Isaiah's oracle of nonviolence. It must be stressed that disarmament, even if it involves the removal of weapons of mass destruction, will go a long way in reducing tensions and ensuring peace to a great degree in the world. However, disarmament, does not only mean a reduction or eradication of weapons of war, it also involves putting an end to injustice, oppression, hateful and divisive ideologies that pervade the society.

It is an undeniable fact that true, undisturbed peace is an eschatological reality. Experience shows that the future era of peace which Isaiah foresaw, is in contrast to the prevailing culture of violence and conflicts in some parts of the world in the contemporary times. These notwithstanding, the content of the hope expressed in Isa 2:2-4 is relevant to the present world wracked by violence (*hāmās*) and conflicts. Peace in our world or in any society may not be realized unless there is a change in people's mentality. The new age of peace and international harmonious coexistence which Isaiah envisioned is characterized by moral and spiritual transformation, and international cooperation and nonviolence. As Isaiah envisioned it, people will be so transformed by the *torah* and the word of the Lord (*deḇār-yhwh*) learnt on Mount Zion that they will seek peace and not war. This idea is central in 2:2-4. Instead of war (*milḥāmāh*) and conflicts (*rīḇ*), nations will come together as mutual friends and partners in worship.

The Significance of Isa 2:4 to Global Peace

Isaiah's vision of global peace has inspired some objectives that are actually being pursued as policy goals in our

contemporary world. According to Blenkinsopp (2008), such a dream is not as eschatologically future-idealised as it might seem. R. Westbrook and R. Cohen (2008) corroborate Blenkinsopp's view. According to them, "Isaiah's prophecy of a peaceful, disarmed mankind has inspired Jews and Christians alike." The wish of "a world without war has long been a dominant theme" in international relations. Yet a careful reading of the irenic vision of Isa 2:2-4, reveals that the dream of Isaiah for an arms-free and nonviolent world is quite at odds with the state of things in the world. For the talk of disarmament and outlawing war, the twentieth century, with two world wars was the most barbarous era in human history.³⁹

Isaiah's call for peace is *ad rem* to the contemporary times so full of violence, terrorism, and the threat of war in some parts of the world. Isa 2:4 has inspired some objectives of the UN in its efforts to work for a more peaceful world. In a bid to foster peace among nations, the UN uses Isa 2:4 as a motto.⁴⁰ The influence of Isaiah's doctrine of nonviolence is demonstrated by a textual inscription of the words of Isa 2:4 on a granite wall of the UN building in New York: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any

³⁹ R. Westbrook. And R. Cohen. (Eds). (2008). Vision of peace in biblical and modern international relations. Pelgrave: Macmillan. P.1. Retrieved October 4, 2017 from <https://books.google.com.ng>.

⁴⁰ T. Kemp. (2000). *Verse-by-verse studies of selected eschatological prophecies from the book of Isaiah*. Retrieved July 15 from www.kahlkempteachingministries.com.

more.”⁴¹ Also, in the north garden of the United Nations Headquarters in New York is a statue representing a man beating his sword into a plowshare. The bronze sculpture, titled “Let Us Beat Our Swords into plowshares,” was created by a Soviet artist, Evgeny Vuchetich, and presented by the Government of the then USSR to the United Nations on 4 December 1959.⁴² The statue depicts the figure of a man holding a hammer aloft in one hand and a sword in the other, which he is beating into a plowshare. This sculpture of nonviolence symbolizes “man’s desire to put an end to war and convert the means of destruction into creative tools for the benefit of all mankind.”⁴³ The use of Isa 2:4 as a motto by the UN demonstrates the influence of Isaiah’s oracle of nonviolence on the UN’s drive for global peace. Isaiah’s message of peace continues to provide a tacit impetus for nations today to co-exist in accord and goodwill.

Since its foundation after the Second World War, the UN has continued to speak out against the use of violence, war and nuclear weapons and has called for disarmament and the ban on nuclear weaponry. In spite of this good initiative, the proliferation of small, major and nuclear weapons remains the most pressing problem of today’s world. Reynolds rightly notes that while it is positive that since the Second World War (1939-45) and

⁴¹ T. Kemp. (2000). *Verse-by-verse studies of selected eschatological prophecies from the book of Isaiah*. Retrieved July 15 from www.kahlkemp-teachingministries.com; Reynolds, C. (2017). How might Isaiah 2:1-5 shape political theology today. Retrieved September 20, 2017, from <https://www.academic.edu>.

⁴² Cf. www.wikimedia.org.

⁴³ B. Feid. Swords into plowshares. Retrieved July 30, 2017 from <http://www.offthegridnews.com>.

particularly since the days of the Cold War (1947-91) nations of nuclear capability have agreed to treaties preventing increases in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, there has never been anything resembling the Isaianic will for complete disarmament.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Isaiah's call to nonviolence is hinged on a change of mindset and on global disarmament (Isa 2:4). It may be stated that the realization of a fulsome peace in the world requires divine intervention.⁴⁵ The viability of Isaiah's vision of peace depends on the nations accepting the meaninglessness of continuing to train for war or to continue to stockpile weapons of war. The prophet Isaiah hinges the realization of global peace on disarmament and nonviolent approach to conflict resolution. Dialogue is indispensable to peace among humans. True and wholesome peace can be achieved if all nations put in a straightforward commitment to peace. Commitment to peace always demands a personal and communal commitment to nonviolent action. Though that alone may not stop wars completely, nor would it change the world overnight, but it is a step towards a peaceful world. Although the prophet speaks of a warless society, a wholesome peace is possible in a society where justice is practiced. Nonviolence, as Madu said, does not only suggests that "one acts in a manner that will not harm anyone,"

⁴⁴ Reynolds, C. How might Isaiah 2:1-5 shape political theology today. 2017. 2013. Retrieved on September 20, 2017, from <https://www.academic.edu>.

⁴⁵ M. Kari. Honoring international day of peace. *The Christian science*. 2014. Retrieved on October 30, 2017, from <https://www.questia.com>.

but also that one should strive “to root out injustice in the world.”⁴⁶ The importance of peace to development is an undeniable fact. The world can promote peace by promoting a society where justice is observed. Peacemaking in any society is not an optional commitment; it requires that humans be proactive in standing against anything that engenders conflict in the society, such as injustice, inequity and oppression.

⁴⁶ J. Madu, J. *Understanding peace and conflict studies*. Enugu: Madonna University. 2015. P.32.