

## **Isaiah's Message of Nonviolence in Isaiah 2:1-4: Implications to the Societal Wellbeing**

Philip Igbo, CMF  
[Philigbo@yahoo.com](mailto:Philigbo@yahoo.com)

### **Abstract**

Peace is one of the values that humans yearn for, yet violence and conflicts are among the problems confronting the world. The problem of 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. The wellbeing of humans will be engendered if the ingenuity and resources used in fomenting and sustaining armed conflicts are redirected to peaceful purposes. This is the main thrust of Isaiah's oracle of peace in Isa 2:1-4. A fulsome peace can be achieved if there is a change of mindset among humans. The change of mindset, as Isaiah had envisioned it, will be when people submit themselves to the direction of YHWH's Torah. True and wholesome peace can be achieved if all nations put in a straightforward commitment to peace.

**Keywords:** peace, violence, conflicts, nonviolence, conflict resolution.

### **0. 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 and other parts of Africa, 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 warfare and armed conflicts is not limited to Nigeria, or even to the

African continent, it is a global problem. The problem of 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 embrace peace. This paper presents Isaiah's message of non-violence<sup>1</sup> as a panacea to the problem of armed conflicts, insecurity and underdevelopment in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. An immediate look at this Isaianic pericopé would suggest that it is specifically concerned with disarmament and the submission of the nations to the God of Israel. But a deeper look into the passage reveals that it is also concerned with the wellbeing of the society and the people in it.

### 1. Analysis of Isaiah 2:1-4

Isaiah 2:1-5 constitutes Isaiah's theory of peace and non-violence. The superscription in 2:1a identifies the material which follows as "the word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw". This superscription presents a rather unusual construction; it tells us that Isaiah saw (*hāzāh*) the word (*haddāḥār*). *Hāzāh* is a verb of sight and is often connected to prophetic activity. The noun *ḥāzôn* (vision) often refers to prophetic vision, something other than or beyond ordinary vision.<sup>2</sup> The two terms, *ḥāzôn* ("vision") and *dāḥār* ("word"), are interchangeable in the prophetic literature. The word, *haddāḥār*, commonly signifies "prophecy" or "vision". In Isa 2:1a, the word *haddāḥār* carries the broader meaning of "event". Thus, what Isaiah saw, refers to an event that will take place in an undetermined or undated future. Thus, we may interpret the whole of Isa 2:1-4 as being concerned with God's Will or desire for Israel and the

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<sup>1</sup> Isa 2:1-5.

<sup>2</sup> F. Landy, "Vision and voice in Isaiah", *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 88 (2000), 19-36; P. Igbo, *Isaiah's Vision of Peace (Isa 2:1-5): From the Perspective of Eschatology* (Awka: Unizik. 2018, Unpublished), 61.

nations,<sup>3</sup> though v.1b identifies the immediate referents of this oracle as Judah and Jerusalem.

### 1.1 Context of Isa 2:1-4

When Isaiah delivered this oracle of peace at the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., the northern kingdom of Israel had been lost, deported by the Assyrian conqueror, Sargon II, and the southern kingdom of Israel was under the threat of invasion by the Assyrian forces under the Assyrian monarch, Sennacherib (ca. 701 B.C.E.). Amidst all the confusions and uncertainties in 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. Isaiah envisioned a time when people will reject the arbitrament of war and embrace peace.

### 1.2 Zion: The Centre of World-wide Attraction (v. 2)

Isaiah 2:2a speaks of what will happen to the “mountain of the house of the Lord” (*harbêt-yhwh*) “in days to come” (*be’ahărît hayyāmîm*). The noun feminine construct, *’ahărît*, means “afterwards”. Scholars like J. Blenkinsopp, J. A. Motyer, A. Groenewald, A. S. Herbert, G. M. Tucker, and E. Lipinski, agree that the phrase “in days to come” in Isa 2:1a points to an unspecific future.<sup>4</sup> The NRSV renders *be’ahărît hayyāmîm* as “in days to come”, and the RSV translates it as “In the latter days”, thus

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<sup>3</sup> J. D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, Word Biblical Commentary 24 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1985), 28; G. Gerleman, “*ḡāḇār*”, in I. E. Jenni & C. Westermann (eds.), *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1997), 325-332 (331); W. H. Schmidt, *ḡāḇār*, in G. J. Botterweck & H. Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 84-125 (100).

<sup>4</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, The Anchor Bible, 1 (Doubleday: The Anchor Bible, 2000), 190; J.A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 54; Alphonso 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. Available from <http://www.scielo.org.za> (Accessed 15 December, 2016); A. S. Herbert, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, 1-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1973), 35; Gene M. Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*, in L. E. Keck (ed.), *New Interpreter’s Bible* 6 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 67; Edward Lipinski, “*be’ahărît hayyāmîm* Dans Les Textes Preexiliques”, *Vetus Testamentum* 20 (1970), 447-450.

suggesting an indefinite future time within history, but not necessarily the end of time as the LXX suggests.

The future, which Isaiah foresaw, is one characterized by peace, international cooperation and harmonious co-existence among nations. Isaiah presents his theory in a puzzling manner. He speaks of a time when Mount Zion shall be established as the highest of the mountains and raised above the hills. When Isaiah speaks of mount Zion being raised above the mountains, what is intended is not geographical elevation. In reality, Mount Zion is not a high mountain compared with other mountains and hills in Palestine. What elevates Mount Zion to prominence is not its height, but the fact that YHWH's Temple is situated on it.

Verse 2 ends with a poignant statement: "all the nations (*kol-haggôyîm*) shall flow to it". 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.<sup>5</sup> Isaiah employs this river imagery to paint the picture of the movement of the nations to mount Zion.<sup>6</sup> Normally, streams flow down the mountain slopes; here the nations are literally viewed as flowing like water uphill to Mount Zion. The imagery of the nations flowing upwards to Mount Zion, according to J. A. Motyer, is intentional. It underlines a supernatural magnetism at work.<sup>7</sup> The phrase, "all the nations shall flow to it", provides a vivid imagery of Zion's importance. Purely because YHWH is there, Zion attracts the nations. In this way, Isaiah portrays Zion as a place of the peaceful gathering of the nations, the focal point of humankind.

### 1.3 Motive of the Up-ward Flow to Zion (v. 3)

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<sup>5</sup> H. J. Fabry, "nāhār", in G. J. Botterweck (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 9 (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 261-270 (263); H. Wildberger, "Die Völkerwallfahrt Zum Zion, Jes ii, 1-5", in *Vetus Testamentum* 7 (1957) 62-81; J. J. M. Roberts, "Isaiah in Old Testament Theology", *Interpretation* 34, no.2 (1982), 130-143; E. A. Martens, "Impulses to Mission in Isaiah: An Intertextual Exploration", *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, 17/2 (2007), 215-239.

<sup>6</sup> Isa 2:2; cf. Mic 4:1.

<sup>7</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 54.

Verse 3 addresses the purpose of the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion. Note that the nations admonish themselves as they go up to Zion: "Come, let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord" ('*el bêt-yhwh*) and to the "house of the God of Jacob" ('*el bêt-’ēlōhêya ‘ăqōḇ*). Here, the phrase, "mountain of the Lord" (*har-yhwh*), is in apposition to "house of the God of Jacob" (*bêt-’ēlōhêya ‘ăqōḇ*). Here, YHWH is referred to as the "God of Jacob" ('*ēlōhêya ‘ăqōḇ*).

The conjunction particle *kî* (that) in v. 3e introduces the motive of the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion. The purpose of the journey to Zion is expressed in parallel structure: "That he may teach us his ways" (*weyōrēnûmid derākāyw*); "and that we may walk in his paths" (*wenēl kâhbe’ ōrḥōtāyw*). The nations (*haggôyîm*) stream up to Zion to learn the *ṭôrāh* and to hear the word of the Lord. The Torah here denotes the ways or conduct which YHWH prescribes and approves.<sup>8</sup> It is also portrayed as the way of righteousness, the secret of peace and the clue to the new world order. The nations let themselves be schooled in YHWH's *torah* that they may "walk" in YHWH's ways. The term "his Way" (*derākāy*) metaphorically denotes a lifestyle of faith that one is expected to obey and walk in.<sup>9</sup> Walking in God's paths means conducting one's life in accordance with God's *ṭôrāh* (instruction). The desire for peace suggests that the nations can no longer endure the desperate condition in which they live.

As the Isaian text implies, the divine way is taught by YHWH himself. By turning to Zion and accepting YHWH's *torah* as the secret of peace, the nations, as Van Winkle<sup>10</sup> and J. A. Motyer<sup>11</sup> remarked, acknowledge the universal sovereignty of Zion's God and thereby submit themselves to his authority. It must be noted here that the primacy of Zion is first of all spiritual, not political. However, the spiritual significance of Zion, according to Musija, has social and political effects as well.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> G. B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah I-XXVII*, 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark. 1975), 46.

<sup>9</sup> cf. Exod. 16:4; Isa. 30:20; 42:24; Jer. 9:12; 26:4; 32:23; 44:10, 23; Zech 7:12.

<sup>10</sup> D. W. VanWinkle, "The relationship of the nations to Yahweh and to Israel in Isaiah XI-Lv 1", *Vetus Testamentum* XXXV 4 (1985), 446-458.

<sup>11</sup> Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 55.

## 1.4 Torah-YHWH as the Secret of Peace

In the OT, the term *ṭôrāh* means more than the Mosaic Legislation. The word can be translated as “instruction”.<sup>13</sup> It may also be understood as God’s word, mediated by a prophet (Isa 1:2, 10, 20).<sup>14</sup> In the context of Isa 2:3, the *ṭôrāh* has the general sense of “instruction” or “teaching” of God which provides guidance to humans.<sup>15</sup> In Isa 2:3, the two terms, *ṭôrāh* and “word of the Lord” (*ḏebār-yhwh*), are used synonymously for the same teaching. The *Torah* refers to God’s instruction, and the word of God is the vehicle for the divine will.<sup>16</sup> In this sense, the phrase “*ṭôrāh* from Zion” (*ṭôrāh missiyyôn*) and the “word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (*ḏebār-yhwh mîrûšālāim*) in v. 3c are used as synonymous terms expressing YHWH’s will for the people, both religious and civil.<sup>17</sup>

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

<sup>13</sup> L. Koehler & W. Baumgartner, *ṭôrāh* in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill. 2001) CD-ROM Edition.

<sup>14</sup> C. J. Fantuzzo, *Torah in servant-form: Torah, servant, and disciples in the book of Isaiah*, 2012. [eprints.glos.ac.uk](http://eprints.glos.ac.uk). (Accessed 30 January, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah, volume 1, 1-39* (Louisville: Westminster, 1998), 25; cf. W. Brueggemann, *Peace: Living toward a vision*, 2014. <https://thevlaueofspawrows.com> (Accessed 24 July, 2017); W. J. Harrelson, *Torah*, G. A. Buttrick (ed.), IDB 4 (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 673; K. Gutbrod, *Nomos*, in G. Kittel (ed.), TDNT 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 1038.

<sup>16</sup> Gerleman, “*ḏāḇār*”, in I. E. Jenni & C. Westermann (eds.), *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1997), 325-332 (331); W. H. Schmidt, “*ḏāḇār*,” in G. J. Botterweck & H. Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 84-125 (100); A. C. Myers, “Word”, in *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 1064-1065; J. L. McKenzie, “Law”, in *Dictionary of the Bible* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2002), 495-501 (498).

<sup>17</sup> F. L. Moriarty, “Isaiah 1-39”, R. E. Brown, et al (eds.), *Jerome Biblical Commentary* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 265-282 (268); G. Liedke & C. Petersen, “*ṭôrāh*”, in I. E. Jenni & C. Westermann (eds.), *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* 3

The *tôrāh* directs one to do what is right and gives guidance to humans for right living. Isaiah portrays YHWH's *tôrāh* as the source of righteousness (*ṣedāqāh*), the foundation of justice or right judgment (*mišpāt*) and the secret of peace (*šālôm*) and the anchor of a world order characterized by non-violence and fraternal co-existence. The *torah* functions here as the rule of life, a light that guides humans to walk in the right path and the secret of peace.<sup>18</sup>

### 1.5 Isaiah's call to Disarmament (v. 4)

The *torah* that goes forth from Zion has an effect on the people who imbibe it. It can bring about a change in mentality. As the Isaianic text suggests, as a result of the torah-education, the nations are motivated to reverse their warring tendencies into a desire for peace. In v.4b, Isaiah uses two sets of parallel statements to describe the worldwide peace:

they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;

nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

The nations will be so much transformed by embracing YHWH's *torah* that they will be moved to beat their swords (*ḥarḇôṭām*, from *hereb*) into *ploughshares* (*'ittîm*) and their spears (*ḥăṇîṭîm* pl. of *ḥăṇîṭ*) into *pruning hooks* (*mazmērôṭ*). "Sword" and "spear" together represent the entire military arsenal. The transformation of weapons of war into implements of agriculture and human wellbeing serves as synecdoches for the whole of the disarmament process and a return to the era of peace. The result of the torah education of the nations is the embrace of peace and non-violence: "nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore". Since nations will no longer be afraid of being attacked by their neighbours, they will no longer see any need to stockpile weapons of war nor will there be any more need to train for war (*miḥāmāh*). "Learning war" will be replaced by practicing peace. The

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(Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1997), 1415-1422 (1420).

<sup>18</sup> P. Igbo, "Peace as a Precondition for Sustainable Development", *Maryland Studies: An International Journal of Philosophy and African Studies*11 (2014), 119-136 (126-127).

peace will be so encompassing that the weapons of war will be reshaped so that they can be utilized in peaceful pursuits. Such a voluntary disarmament can only happen when a complete change of mindset has taken place. As the text suggests, the encounter with the God of Jacob (*'ēlōhēya 'āqōb*) can effect a lasting change of mind-set.

## 2. Disruptive Effects of Armed Conflicts

Armed conflicts, no matter the magnitude, have adverse effects on the people, the land, and the wellbeing of people within the conflict zones. Warfare is one of the chief causes of human impoverishment and degradation. War and armed violence undermine development, as the resources which would have been invested to promote human welfare are used to finance wars.<sup>19</sup> Today, the nations of the world spend billions of dollars annually on the upkeep of the military. Paradoxically, a greater percentage of the world population lives below poverty line. War generates far-reaching social and economic costs. The awesome proportion of scarce resources dedicated to weapons and the financing of conflicts and wars increase the risk of poverty and starvation among warring nations.<sup>20</sup> The table below reveals that a significant percentage of Nigeria's annual budget is spent on the security and the upkeep of the military, from 2010 to 2019.

### Nigeria's Military (Defence) Budget for the Period 2010-2019

Year	Amount in US Dollars	Percentage in Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
2010	1.99	0.54%
2011	2.38	0.58%
2012	2.32	0.50%
2013	2.42	0.47%
2014	2.36	0.41%

<sup>19</sup> Unknown Author, "Global Poverty and International Development", Issue 5, October 2008, [www.worldsavvy.org](http://www.worldsavvy.org) (Accessed 3 March, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> J. Sobrino, "Unjust and Violent Poverty in Latin America", H. Küng and J. Moltmann (eds.), *Concilium: A Council for Peace*, vol.195 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988) 55-60 (55).



2015	2.07	0.42%
2016	1.72	0.43%
2017	1.62	0.43%
2018	2.04	0.51%
2019	2.15	0.53%

The data above reveals Nigeria's budgetary allocations for military purposes from 2010 – 2019.<sup>21</sup> It is evident, as the data shows that, considering the strength of Nigeria economy and the low level of infrastructural development in most parts of Nigeria, such budgetary allocations for military purposes deplete the budget that would have been allocated to other sectors of the economy, like health, education, and agriculture. Regrettably, while such huge budgetary allocations are set aside for security, aimed at decimating the activities of Boko Haram terrorists in the northeast and curtailing the problem of insecurity in other parts of Nigeria, the security situation in Nigeria is gradually getting out of hand.<sup>22</sup>

The living standard of Nigerians will be improved if the huge amount appropriated for military purposes are utilized for human and infrastructural development. Indeed, the world can be transformed, and human living conditions bettered if the resources and the ingenuity used in warfare are channelled towards the development of agriculture and social infrastructure.<sup>23</sup> This is, perhaps, the main thrust of Isaiah's oracle in Isa 2:2-4.

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<sup>21</sup> Source: Central Bank of Nigeria; T. F. Abiodun; A. A. Asaolu, & A. I. Ndubuisi, "Defense Budget and Military Spending on War Against Terror and Insecurity in Nigeria: Implications for State Politics, Economy, and National Security, *International Journal of Advanced Academic Research (Social and Management Sciences)* Vol. 6, Issue 7 (2020) 12-34 (22).

<sup>22</sup> Abiodun, Asaolu, and Ndubuisi, "Defense Budget and Military Spending", 22. researchgate.net (Accessed 25 February, 2021).

<sup>23</sup> L. S. Cahill, "Christian Just War Tradition: Tensions and Development", M. P. Aquina and D. Meith(eds.), *Concilium: The Return of the Just War*, vol. 2 (London: SCM, 2001), 74-82 (81).

Reflecting on the socio-economic situation of Nigeria and other African countries, one is shocked by the level of underdevelopment and poverty in most parts of the continent. Although massively endowed with mineral deposits, Africa is still plagued by a scourge of poverty and underdevelopment. Yet an enormous amount of money which could have been invested in infrastructural development is spent on weapons of war and to finance armed conflicts. If the enormous volume of resources used in financing wars and conflicts are utilized in funding infrastructural development in Nigeria and other parts of Africa, there will be a considerable reduction of poverty. And if the problem of poverty and social inequalities is tackled, many of the situations that exacerbate conflict in the society will be avoided.

Today, there is an ever-increasing spate of violence and armed conflicts in many parts of Nigeria and the African region. This is due, among other factors, to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). The indiscriminate use of such weapons by hoodlums and terror-minded persons contribute not only to the destabilization of conflicts 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, 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 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 the land and human wellbeing. 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.

### **3. Nonviolence as a Way to Peace**

One of the ways to peace is the application of the nonviolent approach to conflict resolution among humans. This is the thrust of Isaiah’s oracle of

peace.<sup>24</sup> Isaiah calls on the nations to reject the arbitrament of war and embrace a peaceful and nonviolent approach to conflict resolution. 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". War, depending on the kind of weapon used, affects the land and the people who live within conflict zones. It is true that "war may put a halt to a conflict in the short run by inflicting an unacceptable level of pain on an enemy" until he/she surrenders. Jeden, however, recognizes that the arbitrament of war is not a good way of resolving conflicts.<sup>25</sup> The peace enforced by war is not a true peace but an enforced peace.

Armed conflicts have destructive effects on the land and the people. 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".<sup>26</sup> Violent conflicts are among the factors that perpetuate misery and underdevelopment in the society. The culture of peace, on the other hand, engenders development in any society.

Peace is founded on justice. When justice becomes a stranger in the land, the community becomes susceptible to chaos and disorder. In his *Quadragesimo Anno*, Pius XII insists that "justice alone can, if faithfully observed, remove the causes of social conflict".<sup>27</sup> 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,

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<sup>24</sup> Isa 2:1-4.

<sup>25</sup> M. E. Jeden, *Just Peace Maker: An Introduction to Peace and Justice* (New York: Paulist, 2006), 57.

<sup>26</sup> O. E. Ekpenyong, "Peace and justice as a religious panacea for national development in Nigeria", *American Journal of Social Issues and Humanities* Vol. 1, no. 2 (2011), 95-106 (96-97). <http://www.ajsih.org>. (Accessed Retrieved 3 March, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> Pius XII, *Quadragesimo Anno* (Vaticana: Libreria Editrice, 1931), no.137.

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”.<sup>28</sup>

#### **4. 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 channelled to promote human wellbeing. We may ask: how practicable is Isaiah’s vision of peace? Is it not merely utopic and unrealizable? It is, indeed, difficult to imagine a total disarmament. A completely arms-free world, as Isaiah had envisioned, is 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, on a global level, will go a long way in reducing tensions and ensuring peace to a great degree in the world. On the national or local level, the reduction in the flow of small arms into the country can help reduce armed violence in Nigeria. 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. This notwithstanding, the content of the hope expressed in Isa 2:1-4 is relevant to the present world that is wracked by violence (*ḥāmās*) and conflicts. Peace in our world or in any society may not be realized unless there is a change in people’s mentality. That is why Isaiah hinges the new age of peace, which he envisioned, on moral and spiritual transformation, international cooperation, and nonviolent approach to conflict resolution.

#### **5. The Significance of Isa 2:4 to Global Peace**

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<sup>28</sup> 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 (Owerri: Grand-Heritage Global Communications, 2017), 215-232 (215).

Isaiah's dream of a warless, peaceful world, though may sound utopian and eschatological, has inspired many since after World War II. In fact, the wish of "a world without war has long been a dominant theme" in international relations. Isaiah 2:4 has inspired some objectives of the UN in its drive for a more peaceful world. In a bid to foster peace among nations, the UN uses Isa 2:4 as a motto. The influence of Isaiah's doctrine of non-violence 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 ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more".<sup>29</sup> Also, in the north garden of the United Nations Headquarters in New York is a statue representing a man beating his sword into a ploughshare. This bronze sculpture, titled "Let Us Beat Our Swords into Ploughshares", 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.<sup>30</sup> 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 ploughshare. This sculpture of non-violence symbolizes human desire to put an end to war and convert the means of destruction into creative tools for the benefit of humankind.<sup>31</sup> The use of Isa 2:4 as a motto by the UN demonstrates the influence of Isaiah's oracle of non-violence on the UN's drive for global peace and human wellbeing.

## **6. Peace Education: A Panacea to Conflicts in Nigeria**

One of the ways a society can eradicate violence and armed conflicts in Nigeria is through peace education. Isaiah puts the emphasis on learning. Isaiah 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. As

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<sup>29</sup> T. Kemp, "Verse-by-verse studies of selected eschatological prophecies from the book of Isaiah", 2000. [www.kahlkempteachingministries.com](http://www.kahlkempteachingministries.com). (Accessed on July 15, 2018). Cf. C. Reynolds, "How might Isaiah 2:1-5 shape Political Theology Today", 2017. <https://www.academic.edu>. (Accessed on 20 September, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Unknown Author, "Let Us Beat Our Swords into Ploughshares", [www.wikimedia.org](http://www.wikimedia.org). (Accessed on 20 September, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> B. Feid, "Swords into Ploughshares", Retrieved July 30, 2017, from <http://www.offthegridnews.com>. (Accessed on 30 July, 2017).

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

This paper proposes peace-education as a solution to the problem of conflicts and violence in Nigeria. The aim of peace education is to enlighten people on how they can prevent conflicts and contribute to building a just society. Peace-education is a deliberate attempt to educate children and adults in the dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peace. Peace-education can lead to a change in mentality in people. It can help in changing the culture of violence and aggression that we find in our present-day society, by emphasizing on values of non-violence and the need for harmonious coexistence. The early acquisition of peace education can help in suppressing acts that are violent in nature and encouraging peaceful acts.<sup>32</sup>

Peace education, therefore, must emphasize justice, equity, tolerance, and respect for the fundamental rights of people. It should also emphasize the non-violent approach to conflict resolution, dialogue and cooperation among peoples. Any sincere commitment to nonviolence, must strive “to root out the causes of war” by addressing the problem of injustice and poverty, and “by creating nonviolent structures which serve humanity and promote life”.<sup>33</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

It may be stated that the realization of a fulsome peace in the world requires divine intervention.<sup>34</sup> Isaiah does not lose sight of that. He also hinges the realization of global peace on disarmament and nonviolent approach to conflict resolution. True and wholesome peace can be achieved if all nations put in a straightforward commitment to peace. Commitment to peace demands a personal and communal commitment to non-violent action. Though that alone may not stop wars completely,

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<sup>32</sup> Anthony-Orji & Ezeme, “Theory and Practice of Peace Education”, 216-217.

<sup>33</sup> J. Dear. *The God of Peace: Towards a Theology of Nonviolence* (New York: Orbis. 1994), 131.

<sup>34</sup> M. Kari, “Honouring international day of peace” in *The Christian Science*. 2014. <https://www.questia.com>. (Accessed 30 October, 2017).

nor would it change the world overnight, but it is a step towards a peaceful world. The world can promote peace by promoting a society where justice is observed. Peace-making 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.