

## **Manifest Impacts of the Qur'an on the Nigerian Muslim Ummah and the Challenges**

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**Abstract:** Indeed, this Qur'an guides to the best of ways and gives glad tidings to the believers who perform good deeds that they would have a great reward and that those who do not believe in the Hereafter We have prepared for them a painful punishment. (Qur'an 17: 9-10). Blessed be the One Who revealed the Criterion of right, Wrong, reward and punishment (i.e. the Qur'an) to his servant (Muhammad) so as to be an admonisher to the world of mankind and Jinn (Qur'an 25: 1).

**Keywords:** Impact, Qur'an, Nigerian Muslim, Ummah, Challenges.

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### **I. Introduction**

The place of the Glorious Qur'an in world affairs cannot be overstressed. It is the direct source of guidance to the over 1.6 billion Muslim population worldwide [1] and to many millions of non-Muslims whose lives are positively affected indirectly by the unique, timeless, cross-mate scripture. Nigeria which is the most population country in Africa and the 10th in the world [2] has had a good dose of Qur'an impacts for over twelve centuries [3]. In my earlier work, on the Qur'an and its place in Nigeria, many scholars discussed in details some of the issues at stake [4]. Nevertheless, this study concentrates on the tangible, manifest or palpable impacts of the Qur'an on the Muslim *Ummah* in Nigeria. The word a "manifest" here means that the factors enumerated are real and can be perceived with the mind [5]. They are capable of impacting significantly on the Muslim community in Nigeria, technically called *ummah* in Islam. The Nigerian Muslim *Ummah* referred to connotes all Nigerian Muslims in Nigeria who constitute more than 50% of the entire population of Nigeria [6]. The study also involves millions of Nigeria Muslims in the diaspora. Another aspect treated in this paper is a focus on the challenges confronting the Muslim *Ummah* in Nigeria.

The methodology adopted is historical and scripturally. It is based on the history of Islam in Nigeria and on the Qur'anic provisions (text and exegesis). The study is library-based while the writer is an observer. The study concludes by emphasizing that if the factors discussed are properly harnessed, their positive impacts on the Nigerian Muslim *ummah* would be tremendously beneficial to the whole nation and beyond. When that happens, the great feat of organizing

the Qur'an Recitation Competition (Q.R.C) initiated and carried out by the Centre for Islamic Studies of Usman dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto since 1986 would have succeeded immensely by all standards.

### **II. Manifest Impacts**

This section is the heart of the study, and it treats the tangible impacts of the Qur'an on the Nigerian Muslim *Ummah*. The impacts have added immeasurable values to the Nigerian Muslims and others over several centuries. They are as discussed below.

**1. Al-Tawhid (Islamic Monotheism)** Islamic Monotheism taught by Islam to Nigerians and other nations of the world is clearly different from other types of Monotheism [7]. Though Nigerians had an idea of a supreme deity before Islam, God (Allah) was not clearly defined and introduced as the Lord, Creator and Cherisher of the world. For over 12 centuries now, this knowledge of one, indivisible God has become widespread. This has given Nigerian Muslims an enlightened and superior idea of God (Allah) which the Non-Muslims in Nigeria benefit from as we will explain later.

**2. Oneness of the Universe** The Islamic belief that Allah is one and that He created the Universe with its diverse, wonderful components has opened the eyes of Muslims in Nigeria to know that the Universe is one and is the handiwork of Allah [8]. A Nigerian Muslim therefore, takes all humanity as one, the descendants of Adam and Hawwa'u (AS) (Qur'an 4:1). Consequently, he knows that all ethnic groups, nations and races are

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from the same source- Allah. (Qur'an 49:13). He also knows that our different languages, statures and colors were fashioned as they are by Allah, the Originator, Fashioner and Omniscient. (Qur'an 30:22) Additionally, a Muslim is aware that all the afore-mentioned differences in mankind were made so by Allah so that we recognize and respect one another. He did not create us to despise one another or prove to be superior to other groups. Rather, He wants us to be humble, dutiful and tolerant of one another and to realize ultimately that most honorable of mankind in the sight of Allah is the most righteous (Qur'an 49:13)[9]. Our goal should, therefore to compete genuinely in faith in Allah and righteous deeds. it must be stated that all these Qur'anic provisions have had great influence on tens of millions of Nigerian Muslims nationwide though some falter.

**3. Articles of Faith in Islam** In brief, the articles of faith in islam are six:[10] a. Belief in Allah's oneness, power, knowledge, benevolence, justice,etc. b. Belief in the angels of Allah as his obedient servants He created from light who perform specific assignments given to them by Allah. c. Belief in Allah's Revealed Book to specific community especially the last one sent through the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Man and Jinn. d. Belief in the Prophets and Messengers sent to the various communities of the world by Allah and the one sent to the whole world with Allah's Final Testament (The Quran) i.e. Muhammad (PBUH). e. Belief in the Day of Resurrection i.e. life after death, the time to account for all our deeds in this world and have Allah's reward for righteousness or punishment for evil-doing." [11] f. Belief in divine measurement of free will and destiny by which mankind will ultimately get to their destinations. It should be stressed that beliefs in Allah and The Last Day i.e. the Hereafter are often paired together in the Qur'an to emphasis the importance of accountability in this life and in the hereafter[12].

**4. Excellent human Relations** The Qur'an has repeatedly taught Muslims to do good to their family relations, fellow Muslims and all mankind. Verses on this are quite numerous. (For example, see Quran 2 : 160, 2: 177, 5: 39, 6:48, 2:146, 16:119, 24:5, etc.). In real life, righteous Muslims in Nigeria did not become pious and well-behaved in a void. Rather, they are like that because they obey the dictates of the Qur'an and Sunnah. conversely, iniquitous Muslims are bad because they decided out of their own volition to nominal Muslims who disregard the Word of Allah.

**5. Regular Worship (Salat)** Of the greatest impacts of the Qur'an on Nigerian Muslims is the observance of regular, canonical worship five times daily. This is basically one of hallmarks of being a Muslim. It is a notable mark of complying with the Qur'anic statement,

I did not create the jinn and mankind but for them to worship Me. I do not solicit for sustenance from them nor do I want them to feed Me. Indeed, Allah is the Sustainer, the Omnipotent and the Powerful". (Qur'an 51:56-58).

#### **6. God-Consciousness and Remembrance of God**

This is one of the greatest impacts of the Quran on Muslims in Nigeria. In addition to regular worship, Muslims in Nigeria remember Allah always in compliance with instructions in the Qur'an that Allah should be remembered always through his glorification, repentance, declaration of his oneness, greatness, power and knowledge, and profound appreciation to him for His countless favors. It is only Allah alone Who knows the volume, number and weight of these elements of remembering him which rise to His Mighty presence daily[14].

#### **7. Supplication to Allah for the Solution of Problems**

Of the greatest impacts of the Qur'an on the Muslim *ummah* in Nigeria is the use of Qur'anic verses (ayas) in general supplication to Allah to solve multifarious problems bedeviling the society from individual to family, community, state and federal levels. The prayers have been found to be efficacious even by non-Muslims who eagerly patronize some pious 'Ulama' all over the country[15]. Because of the confidentiality involved in such soliciting of special supplication from the Mallams by Christians, traditionalists and atheists in Nigeria, I will not cite examples. The Qur'anic prayers often used for such efficacious prayers are *Suralul-Fatihah*, *SuratuYasin*, *Syat al-Kursi*, *Suratu-Ikhlas*, *Suratul-Jinn*, *Suratul-Falaq* and *Surat al-Nas*. Other popular ones are last two Ayat of surat al-Baqara (*Arnana al-Rasulu* and the last two ayat of surat at-tauba (*LaqadJāakum*), *Suralul-Rahman*, *Surat Al-Waq'ah*, *Suratul-Mulk* and the recitation of the whole Qur'an and a concluding prayer. The *Rabbana* (Our Lord) and *Rabbi* (My Lord) prayers in the Qur'an are also used. Related to this is the fact that some portions of the Qur'an are written on slates or plates and washed into a bowl and drunk for the solution of diverse problem. They are efficacious[16].

**8. Impact on Notable Nigerian Languages** For centuries, Nigeria have been reciting and memorizing the whole Qur'an. Through this interaction many Qur'anic terms have entered the vocabularies of Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Yoruba, Nupe, Etsako, Igala and Epira languages among others. For example such Qur'anic terms include *Sala* (*Salat*), *Zaka* (*Zakat*), *Alhaji* (*Hajj*), *Alubasa* (*albasal*), *Ida* (*dlddah*) *sadaka* (*Sadaqah*), *Halifa* (*Khalifah*), *sadankata* (*Saddakta*), etc.

#### **9 Translation of the Quran into Yoruba and Hausa**

Related to No 8 is the translation of the Qur'an into Yoruba and Hausa. That exercise naturally brings about cross- fertilization of ideas and further

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enriches the target languages. I am aware of five translations of the Qur'an into Yoruba by Lucas, Ojelade, the Muslim World League, Shaykh Ahmad Busari Ai-Iwo and Professor Y .A Quadri [17] Moreover, ShaykhAbuhakarMahmodGurnmi did a translation of the Qur'an into Hausa in addition to his Concise Arabic commentary (*Tafsir*) on the Quran[18].

### III. The Challenges

The Qur'an is a goldmine of faith in Allah, decency in human relations and moderation in all human endeavours. As has been noted in the proceeding section, compliance with the provisions of the Qur'an will definitely bring about immense positive Qur'anic impacts on the Muslim *Ummah* in Nigeria and by extension, on the whole country, considering the large population of Muslims there in. In view of human frailty, however, a large portion of the Muslim population in Nigeria does not take the Qur'an as seriously as it ought to be. Consequently, there are daunting challenges which the '*Ulama*' and other Muslim leaders must address squarely for necessary progress to be made. These are as follows point:

**1. Weakness of Faith in Allah** The population of the Nigerian followers of African traditional Religion which is polytheistic in form and content (though called i) diffused Polytheism by Bolajildowu) [19] is less than 10% [20]. Yet polytheism is a force to reckon with in religious practices in Nigeria. The fact that many Nigerian traditions harbor polytheism as part of their culture makes it difficult for millions of Nigerian Muslims and Christians to free themselves from the claws of polytheism[21]. On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that the Qur'an and Sunnah are totally against associating partner with Allah, the Pair less, indivisible, Single, and Unique Lord of the Universe. Consequently, subscription to any aspect of culture which contains elements of polytheism vitiates a Muslim's faith in, and worship of Allah.' (Qur'an 4: 48, 4: 116 and 39: 65).

**2. Lack of Faith in the day of Judgment** Millions of Nigerian Muslims pray regularly, fast and perform *hajj* but fail to behave responsibly as a folk who believe in the day of Judgment. Such people behave as if they have lost memory of what they recite in the Qur'an daily regarding Allah's inevitable judgement of all our words and deeds in this life. Needless to state that belief in the hereafter is one of the key articles of faith in Islam without which one's worship is null and void[22].

**3. Materialism** Mankind, by nature, is in need of certain things to survive on earth. These include food, drinks, clothes and shelter. Without these essentials, he may not survive. With the advancement in civilization and sophistication, human beings have developed insatiable hunger for excessive wealth especially when they look up to the advanced section of the world. This

crave for superfluous wealth has blinded many Nigerians, including Muslims, to the call to sanity, reason and moderation made by Allah, the Supreme Sustainer, Provider and Lord of the Universe in the Qur'an. Some of Nigerian Muslims, like others, are very wealthy but squander their riches all over the world and neglect the development of their relations. They thereby create unnecessary socio-political and economic problems for themselves and Nigeria[23].

**4. Hedonism** Hedonism simply means the philosophy of regarding enjoyment and merriment as the goal of life[24]. It is very common in Nigeria and Africa whose hedonistic proclivities suggest wrongly that there is no future to work for. Islam is, however, against the philosophy of hedonism and instructs in the Qur'an and Sunnah that we work more for the I hereafter with a spirit of seriousness, sobriety, moderation and resoluteness. Hedonism is the bedrock of widespread corruption in Nigeria which is a negation of Islam and its principles. Yet, Nigerian Muslims appear on the surface to be very religious while a large section of the *Ummah* does not see anything wrong in joining the corrupt ones to 'enjoy' themselves [25].

**5. Visionlessness** It seems that a large section of Nigerian Muslims behave like others who do not have anything like the Qur'an to guide them. They are, therefore, visionless and mission-less. What I mean by this is that, in spite of the clear guidance of the Qur'an and Sunnah on absolute faith in Allah, decent human relations and the promise of Allah to the righteous, some are blind or have amnesia and do not see the illumination beamed on them to guide them aright by Allah Almighty. Qur'an 20:124-126 says: "Anyone who turns away from My remembrance would have a difficult life and would be raised on the day of Resurrection blind. He would then ask, "My Lord, why have You raised me blind but I had sight on the worldly life" he would reply "That is how Our verses (signs) came to you and you ignored them. Consequently, that is how you have been ignored today".

**6. Disregard of the Golden Rule** The Golden Rule is a divine rule which best guides human relations. It basically means treating others the way you want them to treat you. In other words, it connotes loving for others what you love for yourself. It is recognized in Islam, Christianity, Judaism and African Traditional Religion. But the rule is stronger in Islam as a practical way of life. (Qur'an 2:279, 4:135 and 5:9). The Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) says: "By the One in whose hand is my soul, none of you would be faithful (to God) unless he loves for his brother what he loves for himself." [27]. The brother referred to in the Hadith embraces blood relations, fellow Muslim brothers and sisters as well as fellow human beings in general. Unfortunately, numerous Muslims in Nigeria fail to comply with the Golden Rule as if it does not.

matter. I am aware that the failure is a worldwide phenomenon in politics, economic expansion and social interaction. The Islamic verdict is that a Muslim should not disregard the Golden Rule or copy others in the name of modernity to ignore the rule.

#### IV. The Role of the Qur'an Recitation Competition

This Qur'an Recitation Competition organized by the Centre for Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, has done a great service to the Muslim *Ummah* through its activities. It is no exaggeration or flattering to state that the National Qur'an Recitation Competition is one of the greatest things that had happened to Islam in Nigeria for over 12 centuries?[28] 'The annual exercise has achieved a great deal for which the writer thanks Allah immensely for inspiring the University to plan and execute such a gigantic, progressive and enduring project which makes Nigeria proud in the spiritual realm as well as in the Muslim *Ummah* globally. As explained in details in my earlier work[29], the competition brings together Nigerian Muslim youths in a serene and peaceful atmosphere to raise the Word of Allah. Secondly, Muslim youths work hard in an unprecedented manner to excel in the memorization and recitation of the Qur'an. Thirdly the completion has encouraged the production of *huffaz*(Qur'an Memorisers) nationwide. Fourthly, the competition has created awareness nationwide for Muslims to learn more about Islam. Fifthly, it has led to the production of candidates who excel in the International Qur'anic Recitation Competition wherein Nigerians have won laurels as the best on several occasions[30].

#### V. Conclusion

This study has emphasized the fact that the Glorious Qur'an has had great positive impact in many ways on Nigerian Muslims and, by extension, on Nigeria at large. The identified impacts were enumerated and discussed. In addition, the challenges on less compliance with the provision of the Qur'an and Sunnah were also discussed. This is with a view to working harder to achieve the goals of Islam which are absolute faith in Allah, sincere worship of Allah, eschewing evil-doing and cultivation of excellent human relations. Finally, I state humbly and with a high sense of responsibility that Usmanu Danfodiyo University should be encouraged by the various governments and rich individuals to continue to render this great service to Nigeria. Secondly, the organizers should give prizes to the winning candidates in cash and scholarships to further their education rather than giving cars to the young men and women. By Allah's grace, the Qur'an will continue to have tremendous positive impacts on Nigeria.

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