Stories of Peace
Volume II
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Volume II:

Creating and Sustaining Peace through Social Responsibility and Education

Edited by
Mary Gloria C. Njoku
and Christian C. Anieke

Cambridge Scholars Publishing
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Stories of Peace II is a collection of stories and essays written by people from different backgrounds and exposures in an effort to communicate their individual understandings of peace. Most of the stories are based on the real life experiences of the authors in their struggle to understand and shape their world. Also, the essays draw from the opportunities and associations of the writers with matters of peace and peace building. It is impressive that the stories and essays have been scripted in lucid and easily readable language. Indeed, the storylines are quite engaging.

Nigeria is a beautiful country; a true attraction of many nations. However, the need for true peace in Nigeria is undeniable, as various rumbles in the land need to be consciously addressed and doused. The effective opening of all the veritable channels of communication, enthroning justice and fair play in governance, as well as appreciating the exquisite beauty in Nigeria’s diversity, are inevitable drivers for sustainable peace in the nation. To institutionalize sustainable peace, the education of the people is a sine qua non. Consequently, Stories of Peace II aptly recommends itself as an important partner and reading for all peace-loving and peace-promoting people as Nigeria needs true peace to develop to be the great and ecstatic nation of our dream.

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6th March 2015
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INTRODUCTION

MARY GLORIA C. NJOKU
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Traditional definitions identify peace as the absence of war or other violence. Over the past half-century, observers have come to see peace as a much broader concept. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2304) fits this later model, holding that peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is "the tranquility of order". Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity. Injustice, excessive economic or social inequalities, envy, distrust, and pride raging among men, women and nations constantly threaten peace and cause wars (CCH).

Peace is required for the survival of the human race and therefore is relevant for the continual existence of the human world. We believe that if we can vanquish the disorders of envy, distrust, greed, and their like, and if we support social and economic justice and come together in charity, we can intentionally install peace in our lives, homes, institutions, communities, etc. If we are socially responsible, we shall indeed work together for social justice and thus create and sustain peace.

It is our belief in the human capacity to learn that has continued to inspire our interest in the peace conference and stories of peace. The loud and deferring voices of conflicts, wars, and terrorism must continue to be drowned out by strong voices of peace. As part of the effort to make peace heard in order to match the voices and stories of war and terrorism, we have collected these stories of peace. The authors, peace scholars and young people, came together to further dialogue on the involvement of youths in peace initiatives. These scholars and young people have contributed their own stories of peace for humanity.
This second volume of *Stories of Peace* continues to share the beliefs and attitudes of the previous volume,

- recognizing that peace is a global need.
- exploring peace from varied perspectives.
- acknowledging the challenges associated with working for peace.
- being a medium for communicating the stories of those who are working for peace.
- being current and speaking to the needs of our time, providing legitimate authority in peace matters and yet remaining readable for its audience: young people, teachers, students, professionals, political rulers, and parents.
CHAPTER ONE

WAR AND PEACE
TOWARDS MAN’S LIBERATION

JOACHIM I. OFORCHUKWU

Introduction

War and peace are two of the oldest philosophical, political, and religious experiences in our society. Their earliest recognition is manifested in ancient approaches. The notions of war and peace change with the trends of society. War is a strong and powerful instrument that has been used to partition our society into many segments. From time immemorial, both the state and the Church have been champions of war and peace programs. Christians look to Jesus Christ, the architect of peace, as their ideal. Christians’ view of war and peace has no boundaries. This extends to the entire people of God: Jews and Gentiles, Free and Slaves, Circumcised and Uncircumcised. Every idea of peace is based upon the teachings of the Church as handed down by Jesus Christ, our founder. However, the primary purpose of Christian involvement in the issue of war and peace will not be ignored. Every action of Christians on the issue is aimed at liberation and the restoration of peace and justice. In this discussion, the writer will limit his consideration to Christian perspectives. He will also investigate what causes war, explore some measures that will help to prevent the problems of war and finally, make an attempt to give his own reflections on this issue as related to the Nigerian situation.

The Christian Perspective

When dealing with war and peace programs, Christians are not claiming to be experts in the issue. They are, rather, approaching it as moralists, teachers, and followers of Jesus Christ. They are neither sociologists, politicians, psychologists, nor technicians. They are only trying to live up to Christ’s teachings.
The Catholic Church aims to prepare the people of God for the salvation which she gives. In view of this, the Church incorporates the teachings of Jesus Christ in order to prepare man for the place where he will enjoy everlasting joy, happiness, and peace. The Holy Catholic Church, in trying to sanctify souls, does not do it in isolation from the bodily needs of her faithful. This is why the Church and Christians always look upon Christ as their model. Christ, on different occasions, had compassion for the hungry crowd. He never ignored the needs of the poor when he could do something to better their conditions. Christ, in order to display his heart-felt compassion, miraculously multiplied bread for the needy and hungry. In doing this, Christ laid a foundation as well as posed a challenge to those who follow him.

Realising this, Christians try to implement Christ’s mandate. The Church has been the architect and bearer of charity, justice, and peace to mankind. She endeavours to defend and restore individual rights where they are being abused or violated by the state. However, in trying to live up to these principles, the Church has run into conflicts with the state and government.

The traditional understanding of the idea of peace is rooted in the Jewish culture. This idea is indispensable in Christianity. The Jewish tradition has a positive understanding of peace. For Jews, Shalom is gratuitous; it is a gift from God. People cannot achieve peace through warfare without the help of Yahweh. It is a Jewish understanding of Shalom that Christians try to follow. Jews believe that peace is not in our own making. It cannot be attained by force and power. It emanates from God. It is in light of this that the Vatican Council II (1975) writes:

Peace is more than the absence of war. It cannot be reduced to the maintenance of a balance of power between opposing forces nor does it arise out of despotic dominion, but it is appropriately called the effect of righteousness. It is the fruit of that right ordering of things with which divine founder has invested human society and which must be actualised by man thirsting after an ever more reign of justice.

The above extract inspires the notion that, though peace is beyond human achievement, human beings have a role to play in realising peace on earth. People must be conscious of the evils in the world. This is one of the ways to attain peace. While making efforts to establish peace on earth, Christians must direct their attentions towards satisfying human needs, which make men and women what they are. Without doubt, these human
needs include freedom, the love of one’s neighbours, and ownership of private property.

It is because of the injustice in the world that Pope Leo XIII (1891), in his Social Encyclical Letter Rerum Novarum, spoke out against the ills that plagued the people of his time. In his day, there was unending injustice against workers, children, and women. Economic and social goods were insufficient. This shortage of goods was to the detriment of workers and women, who were poverty stricken. The rich got richer as the poor got poorer. The masses of working people laboured in very acute conditions, where wages were insufficient for the necessities of life. Many workers died of hunger. It was in view of this that the Holy Father Pope Leo XIII (1891) called for the reorganisation of society in order to preserve the dignity of humankind. The increase in unemployment was tremendous. He feared that this trend might eventually lead to dangers to health, moral delinquency, and the deterioration of religious faith. He proclaimed a social message based on the requirements of human nature. His social teachings are rooted in the precepts of the Gospel. According to Pope Leo XIII: “We approach the subject with confidence and in the exercise of the rights that belong to us. For no satisfactory solution of this question will ever be found without the assistance of religion and the Church.”

The Pontiff added a powerful voice to the rising cry for reform. He redefined the stand of the Catholic Church on private property. He seriously attacked Socialist theories. As far as he was concerned, under Socialism, human freedom is excessively suppressed. He went on to say that the private ownership of commodities assists the safeguarding and development of family life.

The Supreme Pontiff asked the state to be very sensitive while dealing with the rights of individuals. It is the duty of the state to protect the rights of all citizens, but it should pay attention to the rights of workers and women. It should endeavour to improve the working and living conditions of workers. He advised that labour agreements should be entered into. This was done in order to respect the dignity of human beings. Every action of labour and the relationship of workers and employers was to be dependent on the laws of justice and equity. Pope Leo XIII believed that if these principles were strictly followed, there would never be class struggles, revolution, or war in society; rather, prosperity, justice, happiness, and peace would be ensured.
The Social Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XIII is today equated to the Magna Charta because of its emphasis on the reconstruction of the economic and social order. The state and Christians, directly or indirectly, follow the principles he outlined. In short, much has been achieved. There has been development of systems for social insurance, the introduction of social security, the restoration of rights, and educational improvement. The followers of Christ today implement the same principles in order to promote peace and justice in the world.

Christians are aware of the crisis in the world. Life is not secure. The threat and reality of war in the world make it impossible to be at peace. War exists due to the sins in the world. Some people in society seek to exterminate either the entire world or some ethnic minority with atomic bombs. The Vatican Council II recognises this and openly condemns the idea as irrational and unchristian.

The Council Fathers believe that there is hope of restoring peace, in spite of the difficulties, only if the Gospel message is strictly followed. Christ, the Prince of Peace, teaches that those who love peace and maintain it shall be called the sons of God. Peace can only emanate from those who love to care for their neighbours. This shows that fraternal love is the foundation of peace. Injustice will prevail if there is no peace either in the family or outside it. Love is what shall govern us. According to the Council Fathers (1975):

> A firm determination to respect the dignity of other men and other peoples along with the deliberate practice of fraternal love is absolutely necessary for the achievement of peace. Accordingly, peace is also the fruit of love, for love goes beyond what justice can ensure.

Injustice, for Christians, is the basic cause of war in our world today. Injustice takes a variety of forms. The concept of inequality based on racism, the thirst for power, and the dominion of some nations over others are, no doubt, some of the factors that inevitably lead to disagreement and war. Hitler, in his own day, was a man intoxicated with worldly power. His attempt to get the entire world under his dominion resulted in World War II. The aftermath of the war was harshly felt by everybody because of the economic downturn that emanated from it. Racism has caused more harm than good. Zimbabwe and South Africa, both in the African continent, are examples of countries where racial profiling created unending problems. Blacks in these countries were treated like second-class citizens, and their rights were denied because of their colour. They
were regarded as people who were good for nothing. They were only thought to be able to serve others; as such, they had no right to freedom. In situations such as this, it is impossible to achieve justice, equity, fairness, or peace. There is always strife and revolution for emancipation. People found in this territory live in fear and insecurity. This attitude is contrary to Christian teachings. It is worth mentioning here that both Zimbabwe and South Africa have attained self-determination. The Council realises that pride is one of the things that leads to war. It emphatically stresses that if peace and justice are to reign in the world, people should desist from engaging in what causes injustice. The Council Fathers (1975) say:

If peace is to be established, the first condition is to root out the causes of discord among men which leads to war, in the first place, injustice. Not a few of these causes arise out of excessive economic inequalities and out of hesitation to moderate necessary correctives. Some are due to the desire for power, and contempt for people and at a deeper level to envy, distrust, pride and other selfish passions.

Christians, however, by being mindful of the teachings of Christ, are not totally or entirely pacifists while seeking eternal peace. They recognise that the state has a duty to protect and defend its citizens. Peace should be the primary aim and should always be sought, but, where it fails, the state is obliged to defend its citizens in view of restoring peace. Soldiers have an obligation to fight in order to defend the state. But while they fight, they should bear in mind that it is a war of love and charity. They should focus their intentions on restoring peace and justice. The Council Fathers (1975) write:

All those who enter the military service in loyalty to their country should look upon themselves as the custodians of the security and freedom of their fellow countrymen, and when they carry out their duty properly, they are contributing to the maintenance of peace.

Christians are often pessimistic about attaining peace through warfare. They believe that any peace achieved through warfare is destructive both to nature and human beings. In view of this, the Council Fathers came up with a new method of securing peace. This depends on the readiness of all countries to cooperate with one another. The Council Fathers see a need for the world to form national and international political organisations and international economic organisations for the common interest. These organisations should aim at promoting peace as their primary priority. People are social-political animals who need the cooperation of others to realise themselves. Likewise the state, which seeks to satisfy its citizens’
interests, could not achieve this without the help of other nations. Some nations, in the third world for instance, are still developing and therefore need help. They could barely meet their demands without developed countries coming to their aid. This means that if a genuine cordial relationship and peace is to be established, the great powers should not hesitate to help the less affluent countries. They should endeavour to see that people get the basic needs of life in order to alleviate their present problems. If this demand were met, there would be no friction from any parties. Peace would then reign. People would live in a safe environment. In essence, there would be neither war nor injustice. The Church therefore calls on all nations to participate in this program in order to build an eternal peace here on earth.

It is also pertinent that the followers of Christ recognise that the world is full of injustice. Tension, no doubt, exists while struggling to build a peaceful society. It is in the midst of this tension that Christians address the problems of war. They are aware that the superpowers have designed nuclear weapons which threaten the destruction of human race. Nuclear weapons exist in our midst today because of the thirst for power, which is not used appropriately. The desire to be the world’s main superpower characterises the nature of sin in the world.

Christians call on all people of God to reduce their desire and thirst for power. Thirst for power is considered to be the root of injustice. They realise that the quest for armament is increasing daily, but, unfortunately, this quest for armament is not pertinent to peace. It is rather the source of injustice. Leaders of the world should be conscious of the problem of the arms race in the world. Real and genuine peace will not be attained if the arms race is not opposed and reduced. The idea will prove abortive if all countries remain passive.

Christian leaders also call on Christian communities to educate people on war and peace programs. This will help them to understand the dilemma of war. Education will also help to liberate people’s minds, until they are free from prejudice. As Christians, we are expected to pray, fast, and do penance to attain peace in the world. This is one of the ways to attain it with the help of God.
Reflections

Having considered the Christian’s view of war and peace, it is pertinent for the writer to express his own view on the issue of the dilemma. In fact, war and peace are strong driving forces in Nigerian society. War, no doubt, has done more harm than good. The experience of the Nigerian-Biafran war is a good example of what the writer is indicating. Whatever the cause of the Nigerian-Biafran Civil War, it is immaterial. What the author is saying is: look at the impact the war had on the people.

Emmanuel Obinna said it well during the radio broadcast of Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu, the leader of the fateful 1966 coup. He said: “Our enemies are the political profiteers, swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten percent, those who seek to keep the country permanently divided so that they can remain in office as ministers and VIP’s of waste, the tribalists, the nepotists.” When one critically examines Nigerian society today, one may be convinced that events have not changed so much as Major Nzeogwu saw in his own time. Tribalism still exists in Nigeria, this is true. There is speculation that the northern oligarchy thinks that it is their divine right to rule Nigeria. The northerners are suspected, at least based on what is going on today, to be disallowing anyone from the South East to taste the seat of presidency.

The cancellation of the 1993 June election was intended to allow northerners to rule Nigeria, since it was clear that a southerner was about to win the election. The issue of the annulment of the election is subject to different interpretations. Some see it as a judicial decision; thus, the head of State, General Sani Abacha says: “It was the judicial itself that ruled that the elections should not be held. Despite that ruling, still the election held. The High Court ruled that the processing of the election should stop. And that was when that problem started” (Vanguard, Thursday April 20, 1995, Vol. II No 2282, p.1). However, the writer maintains that the election was cancelled because the northerners did not want southerners to experience the seat of presidency. One is free to criticise this view. The question then is: what prompted the issue of rotatory presidency to become entrenched in the Nigerian Constitution? Or rather, why are some of the northern royal fathers and prominent politicians speaking against the principle of rotatory presidency?

Nigerian politics are still unclear to the writer. We are still waiting for the thoughts of Odumegwu Ojukwu about confederation to be adopted. That is
to say, again, that until Nigeria gets leaders who are detribalised, Nigeria’s problems will not change. Truth is bitter, but it must be said. This is the only way to save Nigeria. We are still looking forward to when justice will reign. We look forward to seeing when job opportunities will be offered to Nigerians on merit and not on a tribal basis. If this is not done, it will not be an overstatement to say that injustice will continue to menace Nigerian society. Unless our people learn to accept others as human beings, irrespective of colour, ethnicity, religion and/or tribe, things will not change. Tribalism, which is one of the manifestations of injustice, is still strong in Nigerian society. It creates for chaos in our society today. Injustice will continue menacing our society unless people learn to accept others as human beings. Friction and class struggles are what cause anarchy. It is, then, not surprising that peace does not exist in this type of environment. For peace to be attained, self-consciousness, acceptance, and the recognition of others as human beings should be encouraged in Nigeria.

Humility is what characterises peace and justice. Unfortunately, this quality is lacking in some people. Pride is what reigns today. It is hard for our leaders and nations to accept their limitations before others. To do this means belittling their prestige. Pride, in this sense, has led to uncountable injustices and wars. But this idea is contrary to Christ’s teaching. Christ humbly accepted his cross in order to redeem humanity. He had the resources to defend himself but he rejected them. Out of love, he disarmed Peter. For Jesus, non-violent action is what brings peace and justice. This is a challenge to our leaders. Humility is what will help the world to enter into agreement, and make disarmaments possible. Humility is what will help us to build genuine peace.

People, as social beings, need the companionship of others. States should be able to assist each other. This will help to encourage large-scale production. This method will make exchange of goods possible. The less affluent states will be supported by those who have more. The money used to equip and purchase expensive arms will now be invested in economic industry. Industries will be encouraged. World hunger will be alleviated. Unemployment problems will be reduced. International friendship and peace will be cultivated. The world will be at peace. Justice will flow like a stream. There will no longer be fear among people and nations. Peace will prevail.
It is obvious that if the points raised here were followed, peace would be advanced in Nigerian society. Christians are optimistic that a just Nigerian society can be attained with people who are willing to cooperate. In spite of the injustice and sin in the world, Christians proclaim a message of hope. But this is based on the need for human beings to trust in God. Peace does not depend on force. With the aid of God, peace will reign in families, communities, and society, both in Nigeria and the entire world.

References


Our world today is infested with hatred and violence. Over 60 years ago, in 1948, in the last century and shortly after the second world war, the United Nations declared the universal and fundamental rights of any and all members of the human family thus: “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world... Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” (www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/#atop). That this declaration appears to be a distant and farfetched dream is the great evil of our time. Life, liberty and security are today virtually impossible and most elusive. Our world is terror-stricken. Conflicting ideologies and ambitious agendas have reduced the notions of life, liberty and security to mere fancies. As life, liberty and security are in turn inextricably and inalienably linked, the strands of these three provided the warp and weft of the fabric of civilized and wholesome human existence. A lack or breach in any of these strands weakens the wholeness of the fabric of humanity in its entirety. Of the three ideals of freedom, justice, and peace, peace is primal and foundational. And yet peace is absent and frustratingly elusive in the world we inhabit. Instead of peace, we are confronted by many wars, killings, deaths, and bloodshed. The very right to life itself has died at the hands of hatred, bigotry, fanaticism and related violence. The human person today is frightened and shattered, desperately in need of peace, which is lacking both internally and externally. Human civilization is today a self-contradictory phrase, as suicide bombers not only roam our streets but have also taken to our skies, in our places and all our other modes of transportation, habitation, and even our most sacred spaces of worship. We are neither human nor civilized; rather we have become an insane and barbaric two-legged species. It is more accurate to say that we no longer have a quest for peace,
since we do not have any idea of peace; we simply do not know its meaning.

I would like to draw attention to an observation of the thinker Hanna Arendt on the banality of evil disclosed in the trial of Eichmann at the close of the Second World War, one which is simple, profound, and enlightening. I will uphold Spinoza’s notion of peace and examine it with Arendt’s Socratic self understanding of philosophy as the activity of thinking, with Karl Jasper’s border situations, using it to investigate the clear relationship between evil and the faculty of thinking.

On the 24th day of May, 1960, Israeli secret agents in Argentina captured the notorious Nazi henchman Otto Adolf Eichmann, a Gestapo officer under Himmler’s command. It was he who almost single-handedly organized and coordinated Hitler’s annihilation of the Jews. Otto was extradited to Israel, and after the United Nations decided on its legality, his trial commenced in Jerusalem on April 15th the following year. The distinguished philosopher Hanna Arendt persuaded the New Yorker’s director, William Shaw, to assign her to cover this case. Her complete coverage of this is found in Eichmann in Jerusalem. Here, Arendt records her initial reaction to Eichmann:

“The man in the glass booth” was nicht einmal unheimlich—“not even sinister” (Arendt). “The deeds were monstrous, but the doer…was quite ordinary, commonplace, and neither demonic nor monstrous.”

Arendt’s perception that Eichmann seemed to be a common man was evidenced in the unaccounted evil committed by him in organizing the deportation of millions of Jews to concentration camps. “Eichmann’s ordinariness implied an incapacity for independent critical thought: … the only specific characteristic one could detect in his past as well as in his behavior during the trial and the preceding police examination was entirely negative: it was not stupidity but a curious, quite authentic inability to think. When confronted with situations for which such routine procedures did not exist, he [Eichmann] was helpless, and his cliché-ridden language produced on the stand, as it had evidently done in his official life, a kind of macabre comedy. Clichés, stock phrases, adherence to conventional, standardized codes of expression and conduct have the socially recognized function of protecting us against reality, that is, against the claim on our thinking attention that all events and facts make by virtue of their existence.”
In drawing attention to the terrible normality of the bureaucratic mass, who were able to commit the greatest atrocities that the world had ever seen, Arendt not only addressed the question of the banality of evil but also “accentuated the whole relationship among the faculty of thinking, the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, the faculty of judgment, and their moral implications...”. “Could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining and reflecting upon whatever happens to come to pass, regardless of specific content and quite independent of results, could this activity be of such nature that it conditions men against evil-doing?” Karl Jaspers coined the phrase “border situations” to refer to indeterminable possibilities that might arise. Arendt takes over this phrase to describe incalculable and unforeseeable situations in which a person is forced to think and to deploy thinking to examine the clear relationship between the problem of evil and the faculty of thinking. In other words, does the faculty of thinking, by its intrinsic nature and attributes, involve the possibility of avoiding evil-doing? On the one hand, this seems to contradict and call into question traditional theories about evil, while, on the other hand, it underlines the connection between evil and the faculty of thinking.

Arendt introduces the notion that the banality of evil has “no roots”. Banality means rootless, no demonic forces. Of Eichmann, Arendt says: “I was struck by a manifest shallowness in the doer that made it impossible to trace the incontestable evil of his deeds to any deeper level of roots or motives.” Also, this notion that evil has no roots is connected with the understanding that only the faculty of thinking can reach the depths and, consequently, reach the roots. Evil is a surface phenomenon; instead of being radical, it is merely extreme. We resist evil by not being swept away by the surface of things, by stopping ourselves and beginning to think; that is, by reaching another dimension than the horizon of everyday life. In other words, the more superficial someone is, the more likely she will be to yield to evil. An indication of such superficiality is the use of clichés, and Eichmann was a perfect example. The violence of evil spreads “like a fungus on the surface”, mainly because there is no depth, and solely stopping and starting to think can reach the depths.

“Thinking is the only activity that needs nothing but itself for its exercise.” Philosophy, which is another name for thinking, is not only an academic inquiry or an intellectual discipline; it is also an approach, an outlook, and a way of life. There are two sides to philosophy: a theoretical side and a practical or applied side. From its very inception, philosophy has always
striven for a sort of code of conduct, an ethics for the individual and for society. When a philosopher considers reality or being, she tries to interpret each and every phenomenon rationally, methodically, and systematically. She does so in search of not facts, but rather values. The philosopher’s conscious longing is for an entity named Truth, although unconsciously, the search is for a balance, a harmony, an order, a discipline, a purpose, and a guiding principle. Philosophy arises from spiritual disquiet at the existing order of things. Philosophy always targets the status quo. It aims at an enlightened life with foresight and insight. This perennial task Pythagoras gave the appellation *Philosophia*, meaning the love of wisdom. Wisdom is a value and not a fact. Philosophy is essentially a practice and not, as Marx’s eleventh thesis on Feuerbach would have us believe, devoid of practice (“Philosophers have hitherto interpreted the world in various ways but have not changed the world”).

However, philosophy never cuts wisdom off from facts. True philosophy, though rational in nature, pays proper attention to observation and experimentation, and thus paves the way for the natural sciences. As such, over its long history, the traditional areas and domains of studies opened up by philosophy have one by one been taken over, for instance by the domains of physics, psychology etc. Philosophy, though itself not a science apart from its systematic approach, gives birth to all the sciences. By this, I do not mean that philosophy’s role is thereby redundant or superfluous. Since the sciences explore facts and do so more competently, philosophy’s role is the exploration of the world of values. In our world today, the role of philosophy is primarily hitched to axiology. Axiology is the shaping and re-shaping of values. Often this includes the rediscovery of values lost, as well as the reconstruction of values destroyed.

In our contemporary context which is devoid of peace, and against the backdrop of the banality of evil, it is not the case that the role of philosophy is optional; it is rather mandatory and binding, a responsibility to rebuild broken humanity by offering it internal peace and devastated society by restoring and promoting external peace. The pursuit of peace is the first and foremost duty of philosophy. In this sense, it may become the medicine for the soul. This is the best mission philosophy may select for itself and the best role it can perform. Philosophy in the future should familiarize people with this vanished and long forgotten concept.

There is to this end an array of definitions of peace by equally numerous and illustrious minds, but the finest definition so far is that of Baruch
Espinoza: “peace is not the absence of war; it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition of benevolence, trust and justice.”

The relationship of philosophy with peace is as old as philosophy itself. Internal peace has always remained the first and foremost aim of philosophy. Philosophy has desperately struggled to overcome inner turmoil, disquiet, anxiety, and unrest, which existence necessarily entails. Traditionally, philosophers have always yearned for a specific tranquility, calmness, composure, and poise in the face of the troubles and torments of an indifferent and at times hostile outside world. This trend and bend of mind is probably rather more pronounced and visible in the Oriental philosophical tradition as compared with the Occidental. At times, this desire for peace has, in Oriental thought, been linked to religion and become escapism and withdrawal too, but I think such instances are rare.

Like the eastern philosophical tradition, western philosophy is full of the longing for peace. A major difference between these two traditions is noticeably evident. Eastern thinkers are more introverted; the internal world is more significant to them. To have personal harmony and quiet is a cherished ideal for an Asian sage who seeks peace in seclusion and solitude. The philosophies of this part of the world are subjective and individual-oriented, whereas western thinkers are, for the most part, extroverts and, as such, objective and socially oriented. Western thinkers look for peace within the community of people and fraternity of nations. They are more interested in external harmony, accord, and synchronization among citizens, institutions, and countries. This difference in outlook is rooted in specific backgrounds and perspectives and has far-reaching consequences, but is beyond the scope of this article. This is a matter, surely, to be reserved for some other occasion.

Among western thinkers, one finds a great diversity of opinions. There are cogent and passionate arguments in favor of war, as there are in opposition to peace. These have proffered different interpretations of peace. The most prominent of them have been sensitive to the political situations of their respective epochs. At the age of seventy-one, Immanuel Kant, for instance, wrote a treatise called Perpetual Peace. Here, Kant advocates a federation of free states, bound by a covenant which proscribes war. For Kant, reason utterly condemns war, which may be prevented only through international government. According to him, the civil constitution of the component states should be republican, meaning that executive and legislative powers are separated. Einstein also independently proposed a similar solution to
ensuring world peace. He too favored an international legislative and judicial body.

Bertrand Russell pursued the cause of peace in both a theoretical and practical matter, remaining throughout his life an ardent adherent of peace, and describing his philosophy as a service in the cause for peace. Half a century since Russell, the world today is in the grip of violence, hatred, terror, and bloodshed. The clash of civilizations (Samuel Huntington) or conflict of ideologies has become the greatest threat to the survival of the human race. How are these destructive tendencies of the human race to be overcome or minimized to some extent? Who can play an active or decisive role in a non-partisan, fair, objective, impartial, and dispassionate manner?

The UNESCO charter, adopted on Nov. 16th 1945, says:

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed: That the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races. That a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.

Alas, Russell’s great and terrible war has not ended. Rather, it is being fought with more ferocity, viciousness, and rage. And this war may never be won by anyone merely with the help of weapons and improvised apparatus of death and destruction. The only solution to the current catastrophic situation is mutual understanding, sympathy, empathy, compassion, kindness, and consideration. Only these values and virtues may ensure durable and lasting peace in this conflict-riddled world. How can these be inculcated in humankind, and who can fulfill this task? The answer lies in the statement of the last quoted clause itself: “The peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.” The common and most familiar name of this “intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind” is none other than philosophy. Reason and intellect are the strongest bonds which may unite humankind; this is not a paradox, but the saying of Spinoza, with whose definition of peace we started this exposition. Spinoza, in his ethics,