

## GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION IN THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY

**Egbonu, John Okwuchukwu, Ph.D**

St.Albert Institute, Fayit Fadan

Kagoma Kaduna State

[okwycares@yahoo.com](mailto:okwycares@yahoo.com)

### **Abstract**

In recent happenings, humanity has suffered religious crises and violence due to poor understanding of religious values in building human existence. On the part of the government, her policies have sometimes been unable to successfully accommodate humanity and the dignity it stands for. Hence, evaluating the effects of these two institutions or bodies becomes imperative and urgent in the service of mankind. Using a critical evaluative method, this work x-rays the significance of both government and religion to the service of humanity. Though in their different ways of promoting humanity, some challenges are noticed but the ability to understand that government and religion serve as two wings for a successful humanity, are the effects we have tried to discuss in this work.

**Keywords:** Government, Religion, Humanity, Service, Collaboration.

### **Introduction**

Reading through this topic, what keeps running through my mind is the role of government and religion in helping and improving humanity. It is even more striking because at this time and point, both government and religion ought to be seen as

two wings that should promote and grow humanity. In fact, humanity is their goal. To support the fact, the definition of democracy, which is a system of government, as government of the people, by the people and for the people, calls quickly the strategic position of man in government and religion. Religion on its own "is the first sense of community, your sense of community occurs by reason of mutual experience with others."<sup>26</sup> In essence, religion builds a community. It promotes the basis upon which respect and value among humanity is recognised. It shows the extent, humanity should be regarded by these two institutions. Then, if humanity is the goal of government and religion, why religious crises, why poor government policies, knowing fully well that humanity well-being is its priority.

Thus, it becomes imperative that for humanity to grow and excel in harmony, effective roles and measures from religion and government should be what these institutions need to sustain collaborative service to humanity. It is also not in doubt that these are the many crises born out of religious fundamentalism and extremism, poor government policies, since according to Hubbard, "it is important to understand that bad conditions do not just happen. The cultural decay we see around us isn't haphazard. It was caused."<sup>27</sup> But that should not water away the real deal religion/government play in promoting humanity. Religious/government activities must not be misplaced because some of these laws or outcomes are not properly managed. Instead, the quest of preserving human dignity, protecting lives and properties and morally equipping people to live in harmony by government and religion will not only encourage collaborative spirit but high sense of consciousness toward the good at all time. In doing this, the symbiotic existing relationship between religion and government is clearly seen. Francis Bebia Abang expresses it thus;

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26 L.Ron Hubbard. "Religious Influence in Society. December, 2014. Retrieved from [www.freedommage.org](http://www.freedommage.org) on the 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.

27 Ibid

The church builds human dignity and solidarity as the first principles of politics. In simpler English; on politics, the church believes, first of all, in the equal dignity and in violability of every human person from conception to natural death. This equal dignity forms the background and very solid foundation of the basic human rights generated by all.<sup>28</sup>

It explains that the church, an outshoot from religion, in line with politics, a governmental activity, unanimously rate all humans as equal. Humanity becomes the basis for all organisations to protect. The superiority, slave master barrier is defeated and a mutual sense and duty to serve each other on humans becomes the goal. Consequently, even with the troubling outcome of religious fights, insurgency, mismanagement of government/public funds, and poor activities of government, humanity must be aware that no religious law or governmental crises should affect the interest of common goal. This common goal breeds unity, oneness and co-existence irrespective of diversity in culture, tribe or religion.

Therefore, this work examines religious effects, as well as government effects to preserve humanity as a step in the right direction. It shows and brings out the interest of both government and religion which is to serve and save humanity. Also, this work helps us to understand that both religion and government are institutions, ran, influenced and controlled by humans. Thus, some of the poor consequences experienced are not because it is what there [religion/government] stand for but because some selfish and personal interest is at play. By doing so, a very wrong approach is taken and the reason for religion or government is under played in principle and norm, government interest and all religious laws ought to promote service to humanity.

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28 Francis Bebia Abang . *A Sacred duty Enugu: Gamechangers Media,Enugu 2019. P55*

### **Definition of Terms**

Definition of terms is necessary to enable easy understanding and the direction upon which words are used. It solves the problem of ambiguity and arbitrary use of terms within a work.

**Government:** this is the body with the powers to make and/ or enforce laws to control a country, land area, people or organization.<sup>29</sup> Thus, government has the legitimate power, to apply force in a given territory. It can also be seen as an institution that has the right to protect and preserve her citizens.

**Religion:** Religion is a fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a group of people. These sets of beliefs concern the cause, nature and purpose of the universe and involve devotional and ritual observances. They also often contain a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.<sup>30</sup> Religion is a way humanity use to satisfy her desire and inclinations for the supernatural being. In Nigeria, three major religions are recognised; Islamic Religion, Christian Religion and African Traditional Religion. Though varying in doctrines and practices, these three religions have one thing in common which is the fear of the Supreme Being or the creator and their doctrines are not against humanity.

**Humanity:** Humanity has to do with human beings collectively. It talks about humankind, the human race, the human species, mankind, man, people, mortals. Humanity deals with mortals,<sup>31</sup> mankind and how they function. According to Wikipedia Encyclopedia, "Humanity is a virtue associated with basic ethics of altruism derived from the human condition."<sup>32</sup>

### **Religion And Government: Expectations**

Human's well-being and development interestingly are the common interest of religion and government. This is because

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<sup>29</sup> This Definition of Government was gotten from online Dictionary to enable Easy Understanding of the Terminology used in this Work.

<sup>30</sup> Retrieved from [www.allaboutreligion/meaning](http://www.allaboutreligion/meaning) of Religion htm. "All about Religion."

<sup>31</sup> Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary.

<sup>32</sup> [www.onlineencyclopedia.com](http://www.onlineencyclopedia.com)

religious activities are geared towards developing the spiritual yearnings of man for his creator and government to safeguard and preserve life. For doing this, co-existence is built and co-operation among men developed. The collaborative spirit of humanity is a step that religion and government laws encourage every day. In fact, it is important of note that no religious laws or governmental policies encourage discord or disunity among members. Both religion and government laws are meant for the common good. Common good for and among humanity should be the interest of religion and government. Common good hence, is a realized and achieved structure that cannot be seen with the eyes but felt by all who exists. In the words of Joseph Ukpo as quoted by Francis Abang common good “is an impersonal and general good, capable of shared simultaneously by all citizens without diminishing.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, both religion and government should strive to give and make humans enjoy the common good as a necessary tool for oneness.

Interestingly too, religion as a set of rules, about a supreme being, is meant to help human kind to acknowledge the humanness in all men and women. Government policies on its own, is expected to provide and make laws bearing in mind that all share in the same oneness as humans. Hence, it behoves on the government and religious laws to always emphasize equality among all men and women. In this measure, justice is given to all who need it. Discrimination problem is handled. In Sabine G. and T. Thomson book, Ethical idea of equality to build harmony and proportional distribution of thing is encouraged as a tool for government or religion to strengthen citizens. Thus, “equality, which knitteth friends to friends, cities to cities, allies to allies, man's laws of nature is equality.”<sup>34</sup> The sense of equality with and amongst members creates a sense of belonging and an opportunity for harmony, unity and societal bond that unifies all as one.

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<sup>33</sup> Francis Bebia Abang, 55.

<sup>34</sup> George H and Thomas L. Thorson. *A History of Political Theory. 4th Edition. New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co.PVT. Ltd. P.39.*

In every bit to encourage collaborative attitude in any given society, the government as well as religious laws must not be in conflicting positions. The two must function in line to provide soft landing for the people whose existence is the cause of their effect. By this, it is clear that humans need and well-being is the nitty-gritty for the creation of government or religious laws and doctrines. Also, without human desire to worship the supreme, religion becomes unnecessary to humans. Government and religious efforts should be able to help humans avoid the fight for superiority of one's religion over another. Religious imperialism should be disabused by her leaders and the real point for religion which is to worship God be taught. Doctrinal teachings at all times must serve and save humanity rather than destroy it. All these are the necessary ways for development and koinonia in a society.

Challenges From Religion And Government Against Humanity  
Counting the numerous religious crises experienced in the world, one would be left with no reason or option to doubt the positive effect of religion in harmonising humans as one. In the northern part of Nigeria, religious violence and sect known as the Boko Haram, fight against other religious groups who do not share the same ideology or belief with them. In Palestine, religious riot is gradually becoming a norm. A religious group known as Islamic state of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), fight often for survival. To them, "it believes all Muslims should unite into a worldwide caliphate."<sup>35</sup> Thus, to achieve this goal, fighting, bombing continuously without considering the harm humanity faces is now part of them. To salvage this situation religion should be seen as a means of acknowledging the creator and protecting human's lives that ought to be first priority of God's people. Fundamental human rights should be the reason for promoting religion.

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<sup>35</sup> [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). It is an Article Written by Becky Pemberton and Patrick Knox  
it true is explain what ISIS stands for.

Government on its own has perpetrated some acts that have defied human rights. It has rather created unintentionally lukewarmness amongst citizens or indifference as against unity. For Kukah, government has had some miscarriage of justice. This miscarriage of justice could be in the abuse of humanitarian rights and future to develop human growth as expected. According to Kukah, "I use the words miscarriage of justice to refer to the cases of those citizens whose guilt or innocence was never really established, those against whom the state rolled out its instruments of coercion"<sup>36</sup>. This expression of Kukah, shows clearly the rob and abuse of human dignity. It portrays the disenchantment and the lack of government rights rules to ensure peace. Adding more, he says; "...we are left with the sad reality that those who were tortured were better off because they lived to tell their stories."<sup>37</sup> Hence, some governmental actions and religious misunderstanding have in so many ways not been able to defend, protect, foster and build up collaborative spirit among men.

In Nigeria, many religious crises have befallen the people. Cases of churches been burnt, lives taken and government silence on many cases of these sorts leave humans with little or no confidence in their belief or policies. In the year 2000, religious fight for the use of Islamic sharia law as standard to judge events in Nigeria, brought about opposition by the Christians who felt marginalized and oppressed. This resulted in religious clash against Christians and Muslims, leaving hundreds of people dead. According to Francis Abang, "2000 saw the adoption of Islamic Sharia law by several northern states in the face of opposition from Christians. As a result of this tension, hundreds of deaths were registered in clashes between Christians and Muslims."<sup>38</sup> It points out the many lives lost due to violence. It shows how selfish interest and intolerance disunite humanity.

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<sup>36</sup> Matthew Hassan kukah . *witness to justice (An Insiders account of Nigeria's that commission)* Ibadan ; bookcraft, 2011;P.379,

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>38</sup> Francis Bebia Abang, *A Sacred Duty*. P.95.

In the month of February 2002, Kaduna state in Nigeria was scheduled to host the Miss World pageantry. This was a welcoming event by Christians, in the hope that it would attract foreign investors and development to the country. Contrary to the Christian's thoughts, the Muslims saw it as a step against their teachings. As a result, riot ensued, 200 people lost their lives to the riot and the pageantry show moved to Great Britain. Consequent upon the move of the event to Britain, the economy of Nigeria that would have appreciated from the investment to be done by the foreign investors, added no value and growth in the economic affairs was made unsuccessful.

In crises areas, right to movement is denied citizens. Everyone is restricted and acts of this kind, hinders development in a country. In the month of May 2004, poor governmental laws resulted into religious clash where 200 Muslims were murdered by Christians in Yelwa. Due to this, Christians in Kano was also attacked by Muslims as revenge to what happened in Plateau state. Things like this end up tearing the unity religion and government should rather build amongst men. In December 24th, 2010, Catholic Church in Nigeria experienced sadness and loss of lives from the bombing of their churches and her worshipers together by the Islamic sect known as Boko Haram, all in the name of rejecting Christianity.

Finally, religious intolerance and poor government ways of handling issues have destroyed lives and properties. It is capable of destroying all religion teaches. This is because one is not free to choose which religion he or she must follow. For instance, Leah Sharibu has not been released by her kidnappers sampling because she has refused to convert in to Islam, even though her colleagues who were abducted alongside, have been released. More so, in Benue State, two catholic priests Rev. Frs. Joseph Gor and Fr. Felix Tyolaha were murdered alongside their parishioners at mass, all in the name of proving religious warnings and signals. Government on her own part, acted poorly towards that. Therefore, cases of these likes are

challenges humanity has faced from poor government management as well as religious crises but, it those not mean religion and government cannot unify and develop humanity.

### **The Impacts Of Religion And Government On Human Service**

Collaborative spirit among humans is necessary first for the society to develop and second for existence to be possible. Where collaborative spirit of service is not possible, the society becomes a place where survival is depended on individual strength and might. Hence, government and religious laws have been able to build humans minds into realizing the importance of fundamental human rights, dignity and sanctity of human life. Both religion and government kick against taking of life. Considerations are seriously followed to judge human actions against the society and each other as either right or wrong. Through it, oneness and togetherness is inculcated. Using Biblical term, each person becomes his neighbour's keeper. As a result, religion and governmental actions are made and guided by obligations, duties and ethical consideration. Ascertaining wrongness and rightness among members of a community to help bond them together in peace, is the success story of religion or government. On the strength of them, government leaders and religious leaders of all kind should be guided by Burke's words for humans to always enjoy oneness. Government and religion offers thus;

Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interest, which interests each must be maintain as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates, but parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation with one interest, that of the whole-where not local prejudice ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You choose a member indeed but when you have chosen him he is not a member Bristol, but he is a member of parliament.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Burke, E. *Speech to the Electors of Bristol in Political Reason of Endowed Burke: F.P. Caravan (Ed) Durham NC, Duke University Press, 1774, p 116.*

Burke's speech is a clear step government and religious laws emphasized. Anyone who is in government or religious leader, is not there for himself or herself not even his/her own intention but for the national interest. The laws of both religion and government are first of all to support national interest. Their rules and doctrines are obligations for her members to live in love, unity and progress. By doing this, effective results are achieved, all members of a state, tribe or group are considered. Marginalization of members and defiling of human rights are punishable and wrong by government or religious laws and standards.

Through the efforts of religion and government, people are aware of their political rights and roles. No one is denied opportunity to government offices or participation due to their awareness based on religious or governmental sensitization. Also, religion and government, teaches equality among humans and equal rights too. All individuals have equal rights and roles of everyone are clear to all. Equal dignity and equal access to all is a possibility that has been made by true teachings of religion and government. On this, Francis observed;

This equal dignity forms the background and the every solid foundation of the basic human rights guaranteed by all. This understanding of human person brings politics and the political order in line with the defence of the poor, the marginalized, the less privileged and the other generally disadvantaged members of society and of the people of God.<sup>40</sup>

Equality and the dignity equally distributed among men, is a sure foundation for collaborative spirit. This again is another interesting part of development in a state. For where there is peace, there is understanding and where understanding is, mutual co-existence remains paramount. Hence, there is no fight or rivalry for who is the greatest or most important. Everyone is

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40 Francis Bebia Abang, *Sacred Duty*. p55.

charged to do his or her quota in achieving the common good. Individual interest is subsumed for the purpose of all. Thus, humanity is promoted and life made easy.

Contrary to other positive effects that support and boast humanity, some religious activities have in some ways affected this bond humanity share. Though religion and government bond us and as well forces our will to conform to what must benefit all. Interreligious disagreement, governmental mismanagement has caused pains, sorrows and above all disinterest among members of state. Religious extremists have sometimes failed to acknowledge other religions and the teachings of other religions different from theirs, as good. To this end, crises ensue. Imperatively, may it be known that no religion encourage or support crime. The ought of all religion and government, is to promote tolerance. If this tolerance is imbibed by members who practice a particular religion, and understanding that all religion is towards a goal which is the supreme, the collaborative interest among humans will not be questioned. As such, government laws defend human rights and religious teachings as well, promote the value of and dignity of peace and cooperation among humans.

### **Conclusion**

The understanding of the effects of any situation in life, does not rule out hurting or sad outcome. It also does not explain only the favourable aspect of such reality. Instead, it enables one to examine properly the pros and the cons and to have a full insight of what is expected in a normal circumstance if things are properly followed, and what is too in reality. In Nigeria for instance, religious plurality, fight for superiority of one's religion over another, poor government policies and the inability of government to administer fairness and justice, have troubled the unity we ought to share as humans. In spite of these threats, this work holds that the driving force and the interest religion and government represent, cannot be destroyed by those who have failed to improve on the tenets of religion and government as system or organisation that represent unity and peace for

humans. It is also significant to point out that no religion or government rejoices in the downfall of humanity it is meant to protect and preserve. This is because humanity is the centre of both government and religion. Disuniting humanity is touching on the crux of both government and religion.

Conclusively, religious chaos experienced is as a result of man's selfishness and personal interest. Religion is practiced because humans exist, government function too because humans live. Opposing the unity of humans distracts and affects the smooth running of government religion. Hence, admits all swaying torrents and waves of religious chaos, poor government policies, we should be firm and always remember that the aim of religion and government is for the good and interest of humanity.

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