PRACTICAL PREPARATIONS OF RELIGIOUS BODIES
TOWARDS PEACEFUL ELECTIONS

BY

YUSUFU TURAKI, Ph.D.; MNIM; mnc
PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL ETHICS
JOS ECWA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ROUNDTABLE ON THE ROLES OF RELIGIOUS BODIES
TOWARDS REDUCING VIOLENCE,
KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG FOUNDATION,
TRANSCORP HILTON, ABUJA
THURSDAY 25TH OF SEPTEMBER, 2014
ABSTRACT

This paper is a roundtable discussion on the roles of Religious Bodies towards reducing violence. However, this specific topic was assigned for discussion: “Practical Preparations of Religious Bodies Toward Peaceful Elections.” This is a very difficult subject for religious Bodies to address. The reasons for this difficulty for the Religious Bodies to take up this assignment are:

1. Religious Bodies have direct contacts only with members of their Faith and Institutions and so they do not have control over social structures and institutions; persons, individuals and people groups that are not theirs.

2. Religious Bodies deal only with beliefs, ideas, values and practices which they have formulated and have only direct influence, engagement, interaction and net-working with their members, for this reason, Religious Bodies can only have indirect influence over the State and the rest of society.

3. The State and Society generate their own beliefs, ideas, values and practices which may be contrary to those produced by the Religious Bodies, which in some cases put some members of Religious Bodies in a difficult situation whether to obey Religion or the State/Society; and in some cases, they have to commit martyrdom if they have to remain faithful to teachings and practices of Religion.

4. Politics and electioneering are in the Public Domain of both the State and Society, which are not controlled by Religion, therefore, Religion has only indirect influence limited to its members and for this reason, only religious members can influence the political system and the election process.

5. Religion has a limited access to the MIND of a human being, and has no control over the social life and the environment of a human being, however, even the MIND depends on how willing and amenable it is to religious beliefs, values and practices; for this reason, religious people can be both loyal or disloyal to religious beliefs, values and practices.

We could mention more reasons why this subject is a difficult task for the Religious Bodies. But there must be a way, by which Religious Bodies can impact the State and Society for good. This paper proposes such ways of impacting the State, Society and human beings which may transform the political culture and practice for peace,
harmony and unity. For this reason, the bulk of the paper is definition of terms and concepts as means of changing and transforming the State, Society and human beings towards peace, harmony and unity. All these are attempts at answering the question, “Does religion have a place or role to play in national politics, social change, development and transformation?” The paper sought to answer this question by addressing the Nigerian social environment that breeds both national politics and social violence that go with it and the role that Religious Bodies could play in reducing socio-political violence and building a peaceful political, democratic and electoral process in Nigeria. In order to address the issue of electoral violence effectively by the Religious Bodies, the paper sought to tackle this problem and challenges by doing the following:

1. Important terms and concepts in our discourse were highlighted, such as, Religion and State; religion and politics; socio-political violence and electoral violence; Nigeria’s Social System and Religious Bodies.

2. Nigeria’s Social System which breeds and generates socio-political violence and how to address the negative aspects of the political culture and practices of Nigerians was examined very carefully;

3. A National Ethic, which is the National Ethical Structure was defined and discussed as a powerful tool for ensuring and engendering national values, ideals and standards that can moderate the attitudes, behaviours and social practices of Nigerians;

4. Proposals on the ways and means of reducing social, religious and political violence in Nigeria were made;

5. The role of Religion and Religious Bodies in formulating a peaceful and harmonious framework as rooted in universal religious values which should transcend the divisive, negative sub-national values, ideals and standards for national social attitudes, behaviours and practices were also proposed.

The paper reflects profoundly, the professional background of its presenter in theology, religion and social ethics, which raises more questions and issues that this paper could not address adequately. This background could be a plus or minus to the subject of our
discussions. This fact was raised during my oral presentation at the Roundtable Discussions. It was my intention not to raise too many issues, but focused what is central to the discussion. Readers can now interact fully with the paper.

I. Terms and Concepts of Discourse

1. Religion

   a. Definition

The definition of religion that is relevant to this paper is that of Professor Clifford Geertz.

Religion is:

(1) a system of symbols which acts to

(2) establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men

(3) by formulating conceptions of general order of existence and

(4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of actuality that

(5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Geertz, 1973:89).

This definition establishes the powerful and dominant role of religion in society. Nigeria is rated to be the most religious nation in the world. For this reason, in our Nigerian context, Religion plays a dominant, powerful and pervasive role.

   b. Functions of Religion

Professor Phil Steyne presents the following broad categories to state the general the functions of religion in human society: Religion,

1. Provides order and cohesion to society through belief in and practice of common values and beliefs.

2. Relates adherents to a source of power beyond themselves and thereby creates a sense of well-being.

3. Provides symbolic solutions to fundamental human problems.
4. Offers access to counter-forces for both the mysterious and other dimensions beyond normal control.

5. Postulates an explanation for vexing human problems.

6. Validates society’s value system.

7. Reduces fear and anxiety and so alleviates the helplessness of the human condition.

8. Provides a source of help for man’s substantive needs.

9. Gives life meaning and quality by steering life to the sacred.

10. Calls people beyond themselves to an ideal.

11. Provides distinctives that establish an identity.


In short, religion deals with the ultimate questions of purpose and meaning in life as rooted in God the Creator. This is in contrast to the type of questions raised in philosophy and metaphysics, which also ask questions of purpose and meaning of life, but not in God the Creator. They deal with issues of life below the sun, that is, without God. Science and nature ask questions about cause and effect or causal relationships of things in this life and sometimes without God. Sometimes, the answers of philosophers and scientists may have nothing to do with God. Herein lies the difference between Religion and Philosophy/Science. The God-principle in life is primary to Religion.

Religion deals with issues of life but points them beyond this ordinary life to their ultimate source, the Creator. For this reason, religious answers and solutions would normally go beyond philosophy, metaphysics and natural science. But on account of Religion, moral and ethical values as derived from Religion are rooted in God the Creator, thus giving them a universality or world-wideness.
2. Religious Bodies

a. Definition

A Religious body is an institution set up by a religious movement which acts as an entity or authority that represents or embodies religious and social values, various individuals who subscribe to its faith, beliefs and practices. Religion has a two track ways: religion as a social movement; and religion as an institution. Both paths are important in understanding the history of Religion. This paper, however defines Religion as an Institution. The Nigerian social environment has three large religious Bodies (Institutions), namely Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR). ATR is the primal indigenous religion, then came Islam in the 10th Century (Kanem-Bornu) and Hausaland in the 13th Century, and later Christianity in the 15th Century (Benin) and 19th Century in Southern Nigeria and in the 20th Century it came to Northern Nigeria. Each religion has its own set of values, morality, ethics and practices which may be similar or dissimilar in some cases. Conflicts among Religious Bodies are common, but they have more than what is common among them than what divides them in view of their common origin as humans and creatures of God the Creator.

b. The Role of a Religious Body

The role of a Religious Body in Nigeria is that of building and maintaining peace and unity of all Nigerians regardless of race, tribe, creed or region. The task that is before all the Religious Bodies in Nigeria is how to build dialogue, consensus, and peaceful and harmonious co-existence. They also have the task of making a positive influence on the nation religiously, socially, economically and politically. A common-ground approach to national issues and having joint projects to advance the cause of unity and peaceful co-existence should guide Religious Bodies in regards to their role within the Nigerian State and society.

The issue of socio-political violence in Nigeria demands that all Religious Bodies should address it forthrightly and squarely. This should be made the social and political common-ground for the Religious Bodies to jointly find lasting solutions from the wealth of their spiritual, moral and social values and ethics. Religious Bodies need to define their roles and relationships with both the Nigerian State and society with the view of making positive impact on both.
3. Nigerian State

a. Definition

Nigeria is a country, state, or nation with its own Sovereign independent government. The Nigerian 1999 Constitution (as amended) states:

“We the People of the Federal Republic of Nigeria:

HAVING firmly and solemnly resolved”

TO LIVE in unity and harmonious one indivisible, indissoluble,

Sovereign Nation under God dedicated to the promotion of

inter-African solidarity, world peace, international cooperation

and understanding:

AND TO PROVIDE for a Constitution for the purpose of promoting

the good government and welfare of all persons in our country on the

principles of Freedom, Equality, and Justice, and for the purpose of

consolidating the Unity of our people” (Constitution of the Federal


Based upon this national preamble of our Constitution, no Religious Body could seek to do less, than the primacy of promoting unity and principles of Freedom, Equality and Justice. Socio-political violence, no matter in what nature and form, cannot be tolerated, nor condoned.

The Nigerian State is under the mandate of creating and ensuring that no structures of inequality exist that can pitch a Nigerian against a Nigerian, or one group against the other. Conflict generating structures should be addressed and re-structured so as to provide for peace and unity in the country. If the Nigerian State should fail to provide structure for peace, unity and harmony, then a nation is set on course for violence, crisis and instability. The Nigerian State should take up its role of ensuring peace, harmony and security for all Nigerians.
4. Church/Mosque and State

Both the Church/Mosque and the State are structured institutions of authority and power based upon the concept of *Law and Order*. Without *Law and Order*, no State or any institution can exist. Human life and social life are governed by *Law and Order*. Violence, chaos, conflict and crisis are rooted in lawlessness. They are a manifestation of the breakdown of *Law and Order*. All human societies are governed by two universal laws: physical laws of nature or creation (science); and moral laws (religious) rooted in the nature, character and being of God. Both the physical and moral aspects of human life are governed by these two universal laws: physical and moral. The State deals mainly with the physical and natural laws, how to set up and manage society, institutions and social life. While the Religious Bodies deal mainly with the moral laws, morality and ethics, which order human life, attitudes, behaviours and social practices.

The State should be concerned with both laws as regards human beings that are members of the State, in terms of their attitudes, behaviours and social practices which do influence immensely the State and society. However, a Religious Body is limited to dealing with only the moral laws and not social, economic and political structures. It can only deal with human beings who subscribe to their religious beliefs and practices. Its measure of influence is limited to human beings who are the adherents of that Religion. Thus, Religion can only influence human beings who in turn can impact social, economic and political structures. Its role within the State and society is that of moral suasion. It is the role of the State to create a viable and conducive environment and social structures suitable for human habitation.

5. Violence

a. Definition of Violence

Elsewhere, I define violence as,

“the use of force to injure or wrong someone else. The violence may be perpetrated by individuals, groups, or institutions, and is not necessarily physical. People are subjected to violence whenever they are treated in a way that denies them justice equality, freedom and human dignity. Such violence often spring from tribalism, colonialism, sexism, and religious bigotry. It can also spring from greed [lust, self-centredness, pride, anxiety and fear]. While individual violence comes from the evil in individual hearts,
institutional violence is the result of structural evil, that is, evil that has penetrated a system, institutions or society.

*Human beings tend to meet violence with violence, sword with sword, and evil with evil. But violence cannot be addressed on its own terms. Violent revolutionaries only succeed in setting up regimes more oppressive than those they have overthrown. By contrast, Jesus calls on us to meet violence with peace (Romans 12:17-21), the sword with forgiveness, evil with good (Luke 6: 27ff.), and wrath with love*” (Turaki, Violence, Africa Bible Commentary, Zondervan, 2006: 1043).

b. Electoral Violence

With the above definition, electoral violence is a breakdown of *Law and Order*. We can understand electoral violence as a combination of individual or group moral evil that springs from both human hearts and structural evil that springs from institutions and society. The combined political culture and practice of the people and the given socio-political environment generate negative socio-political values that lead to violence, conflict and crisis. The best case in point of electoral violence was the Presidential Political Riots of 2011 that plague mainly some Northern States of Nigeria. It involved destruction of human life, property and institutions. The Riots reflected the crude political culture and nascent democracy coupled with the roots of ethno-religious factors. There were accusations of vote rigging, ballot snatching, disruption of electoral process and voting by thugs and hooligans and intra-party and inter-party feuds, wrangling, disputes and court cases. As a result, election results and declarations lacked legitimacy and acceptance. In this case, might is right; the end justifies the means. Rigging and violence are the means of winning elections and court cases are the means of transferring state authority and power to the politicians. When the State fails at its duty of conduction free, fair and credible elections, the onus then falls on the laps of Religious Bodies to ensure violent free elections. But this seems an impossible task given the limited influence of the Religious Bodies and lack of legal authority over political and structural arrangements of the Nigerian society. This fact is so important that we need to devote more time and deliberations on it later.
For fear of dominance, imposition, losing power, marginalization, or loss of relevance and influence, individuals or groups result to violence as means of self-protection and getting what one wants in a hostile and competitive environment like Nigeria.

**Politics**

**a. What is Politics? (Turaki 2010:3)**

Some politicians are in the game of politics without any knowledge of what politics is all about. True politicians are in politics as a means of getting something vital and powerful. Others are in politics for political sports, to them, politics is only a game. Such people only play politics. But politics has two broad definitions: (1) politics is principally about authority; and (2) principally also about power. The words, authority and power are related but quite different. Power refers to the use of authority of some sort. It may be legitimate or not. It is the capacity to act within the bounds of authority or outside of it. The use of power may be authorized or not. The use of authority in politics is that of *political power*. Politics is the search for and use of *political power*. If political power is the end of politics, then in a society with conflict generating structures and values, violence and crisis are inevitable.

**b. Definition of Politics**

Eaton states, “the very essence of politics is the use of power, the power to determine who in a given society gets what, how, when, and where” (in Cothan, p. 13). He further states that politics is “the authoritative allocation of values and resources for all society”. Henry defines politics in terms of its use of power. He states: “Power is the essence of political relationships and whoever controls political power controls the following: (a) political relationships; (b) allocation of resources; (c) allocation of values; and (d) authoritative use of power” (in Cothan, p. 13).

From the foregoing, we can state that the chief end of politics is to get power and use it well and effectively. Thus, politics is the art of authoritative use of power. For this reason, the dynamics and the use of political power must concern ordinary people and not just politicians. It must concern every citizen and not only political leaders. In our evaluation and critique of political authority in Nigeria, we are to do so in the light of the following political variables:
(1) the nature of political relationships between and among the various ethnic and religious groups and classes of people, regional or sectional composition of the peoples of Nigeria;

(2) how national resources are allocated, “who gets what, how much, when due, and where in Nigeria?”

(3) how values, statuses, rewards are allocated among the peoples and regions of Nigeria; and

(4) the authoritative use of political power by various regimes and political leaders.

Not every ethnic or religious group or class of people or individuals is aware that this is the true nature of power play in politics. This power play is simply the authoritative use of power to achieve certain ends, whether good or bad. What this means is that only those who have access to political power through the political process can have authority to reorganize political relationships, to allocate resources, to allocate values and to use political power authoritatively in the Local Governments, or at the State level, or at the Federal level. Nigerian politicians who know and put this definition into practice lose no sleep until they get political power or the state machinery. They take the political process and means very seriously and are never complacent about politics, because to them, politics in essence is the authoritative use of power. When bad or corrupt people get hold of political power, they enforce corruption, or bad leadership or bad governance upon the people. A person who controls the State political machinery is the one who uses political power to achieve the desired ends. To be absent in the political process is to be in want of political power.

In brief, electoral violence and corruption are rooted in the above understanding of the nature of politics as the authoritative use of political power. That is why some people, or groups, or individuals do not want certain people to get political power. They often fear the use of political power upon them, especially by their enemies. Ethnic, religious, or regional groups are usually afraid of allowing political power to slip into the hands of other who may use it against their well-being and interests. If politics can give so much, or by politics one can lose so much, then the authoritative use of power assumes a strong negative value that can lead to rigging, violence and crisis during and after elections. Political parties are the socio-political instruments of acquiring political power and these instruments of power can be used positively or negatively. Can political power
be gotten through legitimate means or through illegitimate means? Here, morality and ethics differ depending upon what national or sub-national values one subscribes to in acquiring political power. If the dominant political culture and practice are “the end justifies the means,” then violence, conflict and crisis are inevitable. But if “the means justifies the end,” then peace and harmony will prevail. The task for all Religious Bodies is to inculcate, cultivate, nurture and groom their followers in the moral arts and maxims of peace, justice, equality and freedom of all peoples and groups regardless where they come from. But we all know that a religion can teach its members to kill, discriminate or marginalize outsiders, or non-believers. And so religion can be used negatively to fan the embers of violence and crisis.

6. The Source, Nature and Role of Religion

“Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the sons of God” (Matthew 5:9).

a. Sources of Religion

Human beings have a various sources of knowledge, such as:

(1) knowledge that comes from human common sense;

(2) counterfeit/false knowledge that comes from Spirit Beings; and

(3) knowledge that comes directly from the revelation of God (Turaki 2013:23-24).

Knowing these sources would help check the excesses of religion, culture, philosophy and science.

(1). Knowledge that comes from Human Common Sense

Any knowledge that is derived by using the five human senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell are common-sense knowledge. All natural and social sciences, philosophies and metaphysics are products of human common sense. Sometimes religion and theology are mere activities of human common sense. Man as a person (soul) has three major faculties with varying roles and functions: (1) volition (will, heart);
mind (intellect, thought, reason); and (3) emotion (affection, desire, feeling, sensing) (Turaki 2008:94). Thus, religion can be created by a human being through the use of human faculties without any reference to anything outside of himself. Human beings are capable of creating religion and its beliefs and practices without any reference to the supernatural or the divine. There is a great danger for humanity, if the source of religion and views about race, ethnicity, society or the State come from human common sense.

(2). **Counterfeit/False Knowledge that Comes from Spirit Beings**

In most cases Satan, demonic and spirit beings do not represent God, but themselves, hence, they usually feed humanity with false or counterfeit knowledge. Sometimes and in certain cases, religions, philosophies and metaphysics are derived from these dangerous and inferior sources.

There is a great danger for humanity if the source of religion and views on race, ethnicity, society or the State comes from Satanic, demonic or spirit beings that do not represent God.

(3). **Knowledge that Comes Directly from the Revelation of God**

This source of knowledge comes only when God reveals Himself to human beings. Apart from His revelation, human beings have no way of knowing Him. But human experience and perception of God are only partial and inconclusive. Unless God himself tells us who he is, we have no way of knowing him fully and truly, except guessing. Even when God reveals himself to us, we receive such a revelation from our human experience and perception and may misrepresent the revelation of God. One thing is certain; all human beings do have an experience and perception of God. Some have theirs as rudimentary, while others as sophisticated. But they are never equivalent to God’s true nature or being, which remains hidden (*Deus obsconditus*). There is a great danger for humanity if human beings falsely claim to speak from God while in actual fact; their source comes from either human common sense or from Satanic, demonic or spirit beings.
Since religions, cultures, philosophies and sciences are so diverse, we recommend that we develop and emphasize what things are common to humanity. The tenets of religion should not contradict the eternal nature of God’s justice and love and human primal ancestry.

**b. Nature and Basis of Religion**

The nature and basis of religion form the foundations of human morality and ethics. This is the moral basis of addressing violence, conflicts and crises. This aspect of religion will be discussed under the following (Turaki 2013:20-24):

*God as Creator*

1. *Creation and Social Order*
2. *Common Primal Ancestry of all Humanity*
3. *A National Ethic*

We need to formulate an ethic that can be used to address all socio-political and economic issues that are generated in a human society or nation. This universal ethic is rooted in both God and Creation.

1. *God as Creator*

Traditionalists, Christians and Muslims all believe that God created the Universe, the Heavens and the Earth and Humanity. This act and fact of creation forms the foundations of human identity, equality and freedom of all human beings. This is the basis of human brotherhood/sisterhood and solidarity, the sacredness, worth and dignity of all human beings. God is the foundation of morality and ethics and this theistic ethics is superior to any developed from human common sense or from Satanic, demonic, or spirit beings. This spells out Man’s responsibility to God as His Creator. Man worships, serves and obeys God solely on the act and fact of creation. A bad religion, culture, science, or philosophy may alienate a human being from worshipping, serving and obeying His Creator. Human practice of morality and ethics must always agree with the morality and ethic of God (theistic ethics). God’s moral and ethical standards based upon creation preceded human development of religion, culture, philosophy and science, which are derived from the sources of human common sense. God’s (Theistic)
morality and ethics are by far superior to the corrupted morality and ethics that come from human religions, cultures, philosophies and sciences. At best all human morality and ethics as found in religions, cultures, philosophies, or sciences are only approximations of the eternal and holy attributes of God. No one has an exhaustive definition of the eternal attributes of God or that he/she practices them completely. God’s justice and love are His Eternal Attributes and therefore, inexhaustible. Human beings who claim to follow this Eternal God have always demonstrated their imperfections and feeble attempts at practicing God’s justice, truth, wisdom, righteousness and love. This moral and ethical understanding of God is what we call Theistic Ethic. And it forms the foundations of morality and ethics. Religious Bodies that seek to make peace and address violence, crisis and conflicts must imbibe, teach and promote this universal Theistic Ethic.

If some human beings do not belief in God, then what is the basis of their morality and ethics? They must be judged by the standards of creation, since they share creation with other creatures.

(2). Creation and Social Order

Creation and social order, that is, land mass, water mass and air mass are God’s gifts to humanity. All human beings are to act responsibly and care for creation as God’s stewards. Man is also a part of God’s creation. He/she shares in the life of creation along with other creatures. For this reason, he/she stands in solidarity with the rest of creation as God’s property. Man relates to the rest of creation on the basis of creation. Man is creationally responsible to creation as well. Man’s responsibility to creation is that of care and stewardship. Creation becomes the second ethical principle to guide humanity. Just as God is the foundations of morality and ethics (theistic) so also is creation as foundational to morality and ethics. This is the foundation of Law and Order. Man’s stewardship and responsibility within God’s creation is the primacy of keeping and maintaining Law and Order. Religion, culture, philosophy and science came after the act and fact of creation. Thus, creatational morality and ethics precedes religion, culture, philosophy and science. Creatational morality and ethics are not as perfect as theistic morality and ethics. But at least it calls for brotherhood/sisterhood of all humanity in terms of human nature, identity, equality and basic human rights.
Lawlessness, chaos, violence, conflict and crisis are all the rejection of Law and Order in creation.

This moral and ethical understanding of creation and creational responsibility is what we call Creational Ethic. And it forms additional foundations of morality and ethics. Those who do not believe in God or theistic ethics may rely on Creational Ethic, or Human Common Sense Ethic or Scientific Humanism.

(3). Common Primal Ancestry of all Humanity

All human beings, races; ethnic, religious and language groups have a common primal ancestry, all were created by God. This very social fact is the most important basic human core value. Indeed it is the foundation of human relations, peace and unity. The lack of recognizing, respecting and embracing this basic human core value by all ethnic or religious groups robs the world and humanity of its basic foundations of peace and unity. As human beings, we all have the same human nature, identity and dignity. For a human being to feel superior to another is based upon false or counterfeit knowledge which may lead to self-centredness and pride. The fact of human common ancestry relativizes all human claims of uniqueness or superiority. The lack of this creational understanding that all human beings have a common primal ancestry often leads to discrimination, prejudice, bias, stereotype, and preferential and differential treatment of people. Violence, discrimination and stereotyping against fellow human beings are a rejection of this Primal Human Ethic. This moral and ethical understanding of the common primal ancestry of all humanity is what we call The Primal Human Ethic. And it forms the foundations of all human morality, ethics and values.

In Summary, the foundations of morality and ethics that can address adequately and effectively the socio-political problems of nation building, violence, conflict and crisis in the Public Arena are: Theistic Ethic; Creational Ethic and Primal Human Ethic.

(4). The Necessity of a National Ethic

Nigeria needs a National Ethical Structure to guide and moderate the attitudes, behaviors and social practices of all Nigerians. Nigeria is One Geo-Political Entity. It is also a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society. Plurality and one geo-
political entity define the context of Nigeria. For this reason, the only morality and ethics that can unite and bring peace and harmony to Nigeria is a National Ethic developed and rooted in the principles of Common-Ground, plurality, diversity and unity. Nigeria needs to develop national values, standards and ideals that transcend, but also unite the plural and diverse nature of Nigeria. The best form of morality and ethics for Nigeria is Common-Ground Ethics. Common-Ground Ethic embraces the ethical principles of *Theistic Ethic; Creational Ethic and Primal Human Ethic*.

Nigeria’s diversity should not be corrupted by religious, cultural or ethnic hegemonic and dominant tendencies and interests. There is ample room for religion, culture and ethnic nationality to thrive in Nigeria, if only we create an equality plural environment for each to thrive within the commonwealth of all the peoples and people groups. But human pride and self-centeredness as it is being exhibited among the various ethnic and religious groups has not foster peace and unity. Nigeria is not a monolithic society where an individual or a people group would want to impose its private and sub-national religious or ethnic values upon the rest of Nigerians. Some people act and behave as if others do not exist or matter in the comity of ethnic and religious groups.

The fact that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society, all Nigerians must adopt a common ground ethic by emphasizing what is common to all of them and de-emphasizing what divides them. Furthermore, as all Nigerians live in one geo-political entity, they must also accept and respect the fact of plurality and diversity, and that they all have one country, in which they should live at peace with one another. These social factors challenge all Nigerians to make sacrifices for one another in becoming peace-makers, bridge builders, patriotic and selfless service. In addition to imbibing the national and social ethic as a tool for dealing with violence, conflict and crisis, there is also the personal ethic as another needed social tool for addressing social issues. A National Ethic without a Personal Ethic, or vice-versa, it only amounts to spiritual, moral and social decadence and indiscipline.

**(5). The Necessity of a Personal Ethic**

By what means do we address the issues of personal morality and ethics? We need to develop a personal ethical tool to deal with human evils of: self-centredness and pride; greed and lust; and anxiety and fear. Some religions have no other way of dealing with
them except through moralizing and modeling the examples of others, or putting up the face of moral discipline that cannot del with the inner personal morality. Asking people to change their personal morality and ethics through copying an example of a religious, cultural, or an ethnic leader is a difficult task. Basing moral change or transformation on a moral example of some leaders is something so difficult to follow or cultivate by individuals or a collective. It is often very difficult for people to follow an example or a model. Models or heroes/heroines are not usually emulated by their followers, but only admired, adored and revered, but at a distance. People hardly follow in their footsteps. For this reason, we need a more effective way of getting rid of the internal human vices, such as human evils of: self-centeredness and pride; greed and lust; and anxiety and fear.

Christianity which I know very well and live by its values and beliefs does not only talk about following an example, but incarnating it, to be delivered and be forgiven. The paths of crucifixion and mortification of the deeds of the flesh/body and soul become the crosses that individuals must carry as the followers of Jesus Christ. Jesus does enjoin His followers to emulate Him, but that each should practically be engaged in carrying his/her own cross. He/she must be baptized and drink the cup of his personal suffering. The Example of Jesus Christ was His crucifixion, laying down His life as an example of sacrifice and self-denial for the sake of humanity and its redemption and deliverance from all human vices and sins. The self of Man which harbors human evils of: self-centeredness and pride; greed and lost; and anxiety and fear must be crucified. The self is only conquered or delivered through crucifixion and death as exemplified in Jesus Christ. The sins and evils of the works of the flesh/body must be mortified or put to death. The Christian principle of death and sacrifice places a human being as the actor who pays the ultimate price for the sake of others. We die not to self but for others. The principle of renunciation of evil and sins also goes beyond mere following an example of as set up by somebody. The example to be followed leads to the path of personal sacrifice, death and even martyrdom.

The practical social and moral implications for humanity in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, is a call for sacrifice, death and mortification of the self that breeds self-centeredness and pride; greed and lust; and anxiety and fear.

A successful and effective handling of violence, conflict and crisis must involve structural engineering (societal) and moral engineering (personal morality). The goal and the task is to transform society and the environment for the good of humanity and as well as
transforming a human being as a moral agent for change, who can create a conducive and viable society and nation for the good of all humanity.

c. The Role of Religion

All those who have been hailed as peace-makers, bridge builders, patriots and of selfless service, have used only religious, cultural and philosophical morality and ethics that transcend their own religion, culture or ethnicity. Religion is supposed to affirm human origins from God and the common primal ancestry of all human beings. The historical roots of crises and conflicts in the world are rooted in our religions, cultures, philosophies and sciences that are man-made. Even for those who have direct revelation from God, they usually have a fussy understanding and interpretations of such. Human personal sins of self-centredness and pride; greed and lust; and anxiety and fear are what usually corrupt human reception, understanding, interpretation and application of God’s revelation.

The morality and ethics of God do not go contrary to His nature and attributes, creation, or humanity, but affirm them. Creational ethics does not go contrary to God, creation, or humanity. Primal human ethics as based upon the act and fact of creation does not contradict theistic or creational ethics. For this reason, we need theistic, creational and primal human ethics to check the excesses of religions, cultures, philosophies and science, human violence and vices. A good social and national ethic governs and moderates the attitudes, behaviours and social practices of human beings and people groups in society. Victory over electoral violence and malpractices cannot be won without these various forms of morality and ethics. And this is what Religious Bodies should offer to all Nigerians.

7. Nigeria’s Social System

a. The Predicament of a Religious Body

The major difficulty I had with the topic of this paper was how a Religious Body could address electoral violence in Nigeria. As stated already, all that a Religious Body could do is to give religious beliefs, values, morality and ethics to its members, but not to establish social structures or social institutions. Thus, a Religious Body is limited socially
and structurally. It can only do moral engineering at the level of abstract ideas, beliefs and values. A religious Body can only deal with a human being at the level of the MIND. It can only primarily impact the MIND of a human being. But a human being is not only a MIND, he is also SOCIAL. And his/her social life is structured by social institutions created by the State. Given the nature of the Nigerian social environment, a religious person may have to be a martyr in order to keep and maintain the religious beliefs, values and practices. Since a Religious Body does not have equivalent institutions and social structures that are friendly to the religious beliefs, values and practices, religious persons may find it very difficult to practice their religion without faulting in a hostile Nigerian social environment.

Politics, political process and elections are what the State, political parties and people can command, but not the Religious Body. The role of a Religious Body is only to command religious beliefs, morality, ethics and religious practices. It only does moral engineering, but not structural engineering. Herein lies the limitations of a Religious Body of having a direct bearing on the political, economic and electoral processes. It can only rely on its adherents as individuals, groups and organizations to impact, change and transform Nigeria. The role of a Religious Body can be done at two levels: the level of individuals who can influence society and the State; and the structural level by addressing, changing and transforming the conflict generating structures of inequality and injustice that can generate violence.

b. The Moral and Ethical State of Nigeria

The state of moral and spiritual decadence, social decay, endemic corruption and uncontrollable social and human indiscipline reflects a lack of a National Ethic, Law and Order and Stability. Nigeria has a crisis of national morality and ethics, corruption, indiscipline and social decay. Violence thrives in Nigeria, killings, vandalism, insurgency, terrorism, militancy, assassinations, etc. It reflects the breakdown of both public and private morality and ethics. Nigeria is a nation bereft of personal practice of social law and order, the practice of social morality and ethics and also the lack of practice of social and national character and ethic. Instead, Nigerians do have some private morality and ethics that are anti-national common values, standards and ideals. Their public and private morality and ethics are governed by ethnocentrism and primordialism, regional and sectional values and sentiments, religious bigotry, ideology
and idolatry and any other sub-national value. But Nigeria, however, has a National Ethical Structure that is governed by the Constitution and enforced by all the Security Agents and Government Machinery. All the Security Agents, the Police, the Armed Forces, the Prisons, the Immigration, the SSS, the FRSC, EFCC, ICPC, the Courts and the Judiciary and many others have the mandate of enforcing the National Ethical Structure. Unfortunately, this Might and Power of the State, has been easily conquered, tamed, subdued and immobilized by Ethnocentrism (ethnicity, tribalism, religion, region) and Primordialism (tradition, culture, ancient values). Nigeria’s National Ethical Structure is only a paper morality and ethics. It has not yet been internalized, appropriated and incarnated in human lives. They are still virtually external and foreign to Nigerians. Nigeria’s Ethical Structure needs to become the National Ethic of every Nigerian. Religious, ethnic, cultural and regional values are indeed sub-national if they are not made coterminous with the National Ethic. They are also yet to transcend their locality, proclivity and parochialism and have become those sub-national values that are against the National Ethic.

We may want to ask:

*Is Peace Achievable in Nigeria? Where are the Peace-Makers?*

*Is Unity Achievable in Nigeria? Where are the Bridge Builders?*

*Is Selfless Service possible in Nigeria? Where are the Servant Leaders?*

*Is Patriotism Possible in Nigeria? Where are the Patriots? (Turaki 2014:19).*

Religion may not be able to do much given the history of the making of Nigeria and its socio-political order as set up by the Empire Builders: the African traditional system, the Sokoto Caliphate, the Sultanate of Kanem-Bornu; the British Colonialisms, Christian Missions, the Nationalists, Politicians and Soldiers. Each one has contributed its quota to the making of Nigeria and the formation of the current Nigeria’s Social Order. If we are to succeed in addressing the question of violence in Nigeria, we need to understand the nature of the Nigeria’s Social System which will be fully explained later.
8. Towards a Conception of a Peaceful and United Nigeria

Nigeria’s challenges and problems are many, but we mention two broad ones: conflict generating social structures and systems (society); and moral and ethical values and beliefs (personal). Both societal and personal values of morality and ethics affect our attitudes, behaviours and social practice and ultimately our national political and social life.

a. Firstly, we need to address our challenges and problems that confront us at the societal level (social morality and ethics)

We need to address the social issues of ethnocentrism (tribalism, ethnicity, regionalism and religious bigotry) and primordialism (traditions and customs); moral decadence and social indiscipline; and social corruption and structural decay in our national life. These external social forces act upon human beings and mold, condition and influence their attitudes, behaviours and social practices. These negative social factors breed and spread violence.

b. Secondly, we also need to address our challenges and problems that confront us at the personal level (personal morality and ethics)

We need to address the personal moral issues of self-centredness and pride; greed and lust; and anxiety and fear. These personal internal moral forces motivate, control, mold, condition and act upon human beings. The most important agent of change and transformation is the human being. Therefore, we need to deal with him/her at these two levels: at the level of society; and at personal level. The social and natural scientists, the politicians, the economists, the engineers and others disciplines and professions engage society with the arts of structural engineering (social change), while the moral and religious people the theologians, metaphysicians and philosophers engage human beings with the arts of personal and communal moral engineering (moral change). Social change and transformation of human society needs these two complementary social factors.

Violence of any kind can only be addressed effectively if confronted at both levels of social structural engineering and personal and communal moral engineering. Both social
structures and institutions, on the one hand, and persons in community and society, on the other, need to be transformed for good.

c. Transforming Society

The societal level consists of these important social variables or components (Turaki 2009: 257-263):

(1) Society as a Public and Social Domain

Society is both a public and social domain. It is a social context created by human beings within which many creational and social variables interact and co-exist. A society is a social system that consists of four basic social variables or components which will be outlined in a Diagram below: (a) social values and beliefs; (b) social structures and institutions; (c) social networks of relationships, interactions and engagements; and (d) individual persons and people groups. These four form the social system. A society consists of individual persons and people groups who have social values and beliefs and have patterns of social network that guide their social interactions and engagements. It is the interactive relationships of these social variables that generate public social change or public social processes that affect the state of social structures, institutions; social values, cultures, beliefs, meanings; and persons in society. What we have said so far needs to be explained in a diagram below. I am using A Theory of Social System which I developed in 1982 for Social Inquiry and Analysis and presently being modified (Turaki 2014).
A THEORY OF SOCIAL SYSTEM

This is how this diagramme works and its value in social research, inquiry and analysis.

A. Four Basic Social Variables in a Social System

1. Values in a Social System
   a. Beliefs
   b. Ideas
   c. Traditions

Copyright: Yusufu Turaki, 1982.
d. Customs

e. Philosophies

f. Theologies, etc.

2. Structures in a Social System
   a. Institutions
   b. Organizations
   c. Forms

3. Networks in a Social System
   a. Interactions
   b. Relationships
   c. Engagements

Persons in a Social System
   a. Individuals
   b. Classes
   c. People Groups

B. The Impact of Values in a Social System

1. values, beliefs, ideas, etc. influence structures, institutions, organizations and forms, vice versa structures, institutions, organizations and forms influence values, beliefs, ideas, etc.

2. values, beliefs, ideas, etc. influence networks, relationships, interactions and engagements, vice versa networks, relationships, interactions and engagements influence values, beliefs, ideas, etc.
3. values, beliefs, ideas, etc. influence persons, individuals, classes and people groups, vice versa, persons, individuals, classes and people groups influence values, beliefs, ideas, etc.

C. The Impact of Structures in a Social System

1. structures, institutions, organizations and forms influence values, beliefs, ideas, etc., vice versa values, beliefs, ideas, etc. influence structures, institutions, organizations and forms

2. structures, institutions, organizations and forms influence networks, relationships, interactions and engagements, vice versa networks, relationships, interactions and engagements influence networks

3. structures, institutions, organizations and forms influence persons, individuals, classes and people groups, vice versa, persons, individuals, classes and people groups influence structures, institutions, organizations and forms

D. The Impact of Networks in the Social System

1. networks, relationships, interactions, and engagements influence values, beliefs, ideas, etc., influence networks, relationships, interactions, and engagements

2. networks, relationships, interactions, and engagements influence structures, institutions, organizations and forms, vice versa structures, institutions, organizations and forms influence networks, relationships, interactions, and engagements

3. networks, relationships, interactions, and engagements influence persons, individuals, classes and people groups, vice versa, persons, individuals, classes and people groups influence networks, relationships, interactions, and engagements
E. The Impact of Persons in a Social System

1. persons, individuals, classes and people groups influence values, beliefs, ideas, etc., vice versa values, beliefs, ideas, etc. influence persons, individuals, classes and people groups

2. persons, individuals, classes and people groups influence structures, institutions, organizations and forms, vice versa structures, institutions, organizations and forms influence persons, individuals, classes and people groups

3. persons, individuals, classes and people groups influence networks, relationships, interactions, and engagements, vice versa networks, relationships, interactions, and engagements influence persons, individuals, classes and people groups

Any drastic change to any social variable can cause a chain reaction of all the social variables that are within the social system. A social change of a belief can affect persons in community, or social structures or social networks. A change in a social structure can also affect social beliefs, social structures, social networks or persons in community. The use of this *Diagramme of A Theory of Social System* is limitless.

From the above, we can see how a certain value if introduced, for example “only a person from our tribe or religion can be elected a President of this country,” can lead to various forms of violence, crisis and conflicts in heating up politics in Nigeria. Or a social structure, such as, a Party Constitution, which had zoned presidency to a particular zone and a Court to rule that it was unconstitutional during a Second Term Elections. Or a Presidential Candidate to choose his running mate from of the same religion. Or one ethnic group in a diverse state has always been the one to produce a Governor against the cries of marginalization.

Change can be introduced at the level of values, such as, the political value of equal participation of all ethnic groups within the state; or training citizens to imbibe the principles of justice, peace, equality and freedom. Change can also be introduced by restructuring a State through a new Constitution that can guide political practice and
networks of relationships. Change can be introduced as well if dialogue is made to define patterns of relationships between Religious Bodies, ethnic groups or regions.

Here we can see how Religious Bodies can be creative, or innovative in initiating and leading national social change and transformation by using the four social variables of the Social System as channels of change. Religious Bodies can perform much better if they can formulate positive and impactful universal moral values and maxims that can promote the well-being of every Nigerian regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or region. Religious Bodies can promote various universal values, such as, Justice, Equality, Freedom, Accountability, Integrity, Hard Work, Humaneness, etc.

(2) *Culture/Religion as a Public Social Tool*

Culture/religion is a public social tool created by human beings. Just like society, it comes after the primacy of creation and the creation of humanity as we have already stated in the previous sections. Both culture and religion have public influence and impact. Leaders and administrators need to examine critically the cultural and religious values of their peoples, societies, or institutions with the view of transforming them for the well-being of all humanity. The greatest challenge for leaders, managers and administrators is in the area of culture, religion, social structure and all their components that exert a very powerful and pervasive influence upon human beings.

All aspects of culture/religion need to be evaluated, assessed, addressed and critiqued in light of the goals of transformation and development and the quest for a peaceful and harmonious existence of all human groups in society. Nigeria, especially Northern Nigeria has had very serious ethno-religious riots. Historically, Religious Bodies in Nigeria are yet to develop an Ethic of Violence. Religious adherents are hardly discipled to be peace makers in preempting violence, crises and conflicts. Peace Ambassadors only usually show up after bloodshed and carnage. Religion if properly defined and utilized as a cultural system and a social tool for change, it can make a very powerful and positive influence upon both society and the State.
Value as a Public Social Tool

A value is a public social tool. Values are not only used privately, but also publicly. A people's view of themselves and the world reflect their values. A value is a conception of that which is desirable or that which has worth. Values are the conceptual social variables which influence the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action by persons in society. This is the root cause of the crises of morality and ethics, on the one hand, and the socio-political issues, on the other.

Political philosophy, beliefs, ideologies and social practice are deeply affected and influenced by these social outcomes: ethnocentrism and primordialism; the state of moral decadence and social indiscipline; and also that of social corruption and structural decay. The challenge before us is how to address and resolve these social issues. Religious Bodies have to be creative and innovative by developing and formulating social values that promote justice, peace and harmony. The old negative traditional values that promote crisis, violence, conflict and instability need to be revised or refined to meet the national context of religious pluralism and cultural relativism. There still some negative and divisive values as imbedded in some cultures and religions that pervade Nigeria. Whatever are our views on the Niger Delta Militants and the Barbaric and Brutal Boko Haram, their social and religious values are below those of modern civilizations. Religious Bodies have not been able to address effectively the excesses and human vices of these sectarian groups in our society. This is simply that Religious Bodies have been able to develop a concrete theology of violence with which to engage their misguided ideology. When ideology takes over faith, the results are nihilism and suicidal in nature.

The Personal Level

Persons in society are the moral agents. People are persons in society with a very powerful public and private impact and influence. They determine the moral and ethical tempo of societies, institutions, nations and social orders. The human factor in public social interactions is another social phenomenon worth examining, especially, “What shapes the attitudes, behaviour and social practices of people in society?”
Political philosophy, beliefs, ideologies and practices are deeply affected and influenced by these negative personal values: self-centredness and pride; greed and lust; and anxiety and fear. Religious Bodies actually deal directly with persons in community. God has given the human MIND to Religion and it is what Religion does with it. The human MIND needs to be renewed, reformed and transformed. Values are the currency of the MIND. And religions have abundance of values. But the question is, “What values does Religion feed the MIND? Herein lies the critical role of Religion of taming the will of man; of enlightening the MIND of man; and seasoning the emotions of man with positive and impactful religious values that can nurture, mold and condition the moral character and spiritual qualities of man. Is it possible for a Religious Body to produce terrorists, rouges, ideologues, suicide bombers, etc.? Yes, when Religion fails at nurturing, cultivating and grooming and impacting religious people positively. Heretical teachings in religions do produce cultic and occultic deviants. If heretical teachings are not nib in the bud, they have the capacity of enleavening and corrupting Religion with adverse consequences as in the case of Taliban and Al Qaeda of Afghanistan, Boko Haram of Nigeria and Islamic State of Syria and Iraq and Al Shabab of Somalia.

9. Conclusion

This paper is in the area of Religion (Institutions) and State relations and the interactions and engagement between religion and politics, and persons in society and community. It sought to answer the question, “Does religion have a place or role to play in national politics, social change, development and transformation?” But more importantly, the paper sought to answer this question by addressing the Nigerian social environment that breeds both national politics and social violence that go with it and the role that Religious Bodies could play in reducing socio-political violence and building a peaceful democratic political process in Nigeria.

Violence is the negative expression of the failure of the State and society in creating a National Ethic/National Ethical Structure to guide and moderate attitudes, behaviours and social practices of human beings. Religious Bodies have a significant role to play in view of the fact that they have free access to the human MIND which could be renewed and transformed for the good of society and the State.
References


