

## **Religion and Social Justice as tools for National Development**

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### **Abstract**

Religion and Social Justice remain veritable instruments for coordinated capacity and infrastructural development. These structures hinge on the sense of equity. They are disinterested in the stratification of the Society, but interested in the building of harmonious society. This paper deriving its inferences from related literatures, journal materials, independent study of contemporary religious and social upheavals concludes that; (a) religion and Social Justice are inseparable, (c) both are some how losing admiration, (d) anti religious and Social ills are celebrated than being condemned (e) Heinous crimes are trivialized and (e) the pursuit of wrong values and concepts reduce our overall National developmental pace. This research suggests that our religious leaders and social activists should redefine their roles with the sole aim of raising God fearing leaders and the enthronement of equity which in turn will engender ramifying national developmental pace and harmonious co-existence.

### **Key words**

Religion, Social Justice, and National Development

### **Introduction**

Religion and Social Justice remain veritable instruments for coordinated capacity and infrastructural development. These structures hinge on the sense of equity. They are disinterested in the stratification of the Society, but interested in the building of harmonious society. It is also a matter of fact that National development is a multifarious concept that encapsulates numerous values like infrastructural, social, political, educational, economic and other life enhancement factors of a particular environment. Umoke (2005) extends national development to mean the capacity of a national economy...the generation and sustaining of annual increase in gross national product... (GDP) (222), ploughed back for the common good of the society. Human persons that inhabit a geo-physical and political entity called State is the target of national development. In other words it could be seen as the conscious and co-ordinated effort made, or system set to add

utility to all welfare factors, both existent and new social amenities of the community. National development could be classified into political, economical, sociological, technological developments and so on. National developments presuppose the introduction of those factors that make life worthwhile as against religious fundamentalism, politics of bitterness, youth restiveness, tribalism, community conflicts and social injustice to mention but a few. However, the focus of this paper is the place of religion and social justice in national development. In this thought flow we shall be concerned with those characteristics of religion and social justice that can make for national development in man and materials.

### **Religion**

It is an obvious fact that there are many definitions of religion as there are Scholars in the field. Because of the numerous nature of such definitions Ukoma (2004) opines that it is difficult drawing in line round so that one can distinguish what comes within the boundary from what lies outside it”(3). Yet, for the purpose of elucidation this paper views religion as Encarta (2009) refers to it as people's beliefs and opinions concerning the existence, nature, and worship of a deity or deities, and divine involvement in the universe and human life (Microsoft Encarta) and in addition as man's spontaneous response to forces outside him. These forces manifesting severally and variously are attributed to the handiwork of the Ontological Reality who controls all things. This experience is common with all men. Under God's divine providence all men are considered equitably from the perspective of the natural law. These forces and their related sources attract man's worship or deep reverence. The same factor makes man to be God centred, which produces “God factor” in man as the propelling force for positive social and political, co-ordinated infrastructural and national capacity developments. In Ukoma's view “Religion has a common source” (11) to which there is no unanimity, yet it

... is a crucial factor wherever people define, initiate, adopt, oppose or circumvent development processes. In virtue of this, development activities and the responses to them are like a dialogue carried on in code. To learn how and why religion plays its varied roles, to understand the discourse, to become sensitive to the human dimension in social transformation, cultural anthropology and the sociology of development...join forces. Centrally religion is the touchstone, to measure and understand...cultural and symbolic aspects of development or of the resistance to development- and religion as an all-encompassing category under which even the idea of development, the organizational efforts clustering upon this idea and the specific activities undertaken in the name of development, can be subsumed (Binsbergen [http://www.shikanda.net/Afric\\_religion/index.htm](http://www.shikanda.net/Afric_religion/index.htm)).

It is the duty of religion to help man see the world as God/gods would want it to be seen. The world is a place that needs to be developed for enjoyment though it may be temporary. Christian catechism states that the essence of worshipping God is to enjoy his creation which is the world. The same world demands man's co-ordinated natural, physical and man power development for the benefit of man. It is the duty of religion to emphasize on justice that recognizes that all men are equal and that what is good for the goose is also good for the gander, and to convince the people that all shall give account of what man did on Earth to God. Religion as it were, is not just set of beliefs and rituals but ethical code of conduct providing guide for the constituents of the society. It teaches the old and young on what is good for the society hence the positive contributions for the advancement and preservation of the society. Religion according to Hejun (2011)

...play a unique role to help government in building a harmonious society. In the course of (world's) long history, the religions ...have become part of the (world) tradition, thinking and culture. Various religions all advocate serving the society and promoting people's well being, such as the Buddhist's "honouring the country and benefiting the people, the Catholics, Protestant's, Pentecostals, and Traditionalists "Glorifying God and benefiting the people, the Taoist's "Being benevolent, peaceful and harmonious, saving the world and benefiting the people", and the Islam's "Praying Allah to give great reward in this world and hereafter" (1).

### **Social Justice**

Birch (1991) traces the etymology of the word "justice" to the Hebrew word "mišpal"...usually translated as "justice" or "judgement" but also indicates a law statue (in plural it indicates a body of laws and or judgements). The noun (form) is derived from the verbal root of "špt", which means "to judge" or "to render a judgement" (155). On the other hand "justice" as a legal word means impartiality, fairness, even-headedness, honesty. (Mott: 1991) describes it as "the order God seeks to re-establish in His creation where all people receive the benefits of life with Him". Segun (1967) in his contribution says Justice is "that virtue which impels one to give every man his fair due, irrespective of his racial or tribal identity" (7). It is further described as social morality which must be practiced in view of the fact that God is the God of justice, who treats all men on equal bases. Justice is paying and receiving one's reward for activities or inactivity that may enhance or cause inadvertent injury on a lesser party due to one's privileged and vantage position. This is a way of making sure that offender never escaped and the good people received their positive strokes. Justice necessitates equal treatment, which is the panacea for peace, ramifying and even sustainable national development. Justice necessitates equal treatment, which is the panacea for peace, ramifying and even sustainable national development. Justice according to Achebe

(1983) it is the direct opposite of injustice, which brings underdevelopment. This, he illustrated hypothetically thus, the case of two candidates A and B applying for a job. A has the requisite qualifications, but belongs to the wrong tribe, while B with less qualification belongs to the right tribe and gets the job (21).

From the foregoing inference justice could be regarded as God's original intent for all men (i.e. to treat all men equally or giving back to them whatever seed they sowed). Justice is the levelling of all men with the same measuring reed. Indeed "the Lord (God) of host is exulted in justice" (Isaiah 5:16). God is guided by his inherent attribute of impartial love for the world (John 3:16). His actions are not moderated by man and he respects no man. According to Birch, (1991), He "seeks to embody that right in structures of faithful community. Thus, the context for apprehending the activity of God is in justice, as justice is in the wider covenant community and not merely the structures of the judicial system". Justice is the central order in the Old Testament while love is emphasized in the New Testament. Mott says that "the frequency of justice is sometimes missed by the reader due to a failure to realize that the wide range of the Hebrew word *mishpat*, particularly in passages that deal with the material and social necessities of life", which is all about social justice ( 155-156). Cox (1981) discussing 'justice' under role equality implies that it is the "fair distribution of opportunities and restrictions without regard to gender" (204). Where there is justice presumption of peace prevails, though not without the existence of a few disgruntled elements that may engender conflict, because justice could not favour them. This is, however part of life. But the truth is that justice cannot favour all men all the times.

The prefixing of the word "Social" to "justice" is an added degree of legal terminology that takes root in equity and hinges on the sense of equality in the rescheduling of human scarce resource and in the dispensing of legal functions or common oath. "...It involves finding the optimum balance between our joint responsibilities as a society and our responsibilities as individuals to contribute to a just society" (Occasional Paper #1(2011) [www.nationalprobono.org.au](http://www.nationalprobono.org.au)). Social Justice relates to "human rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent covenants that have provided an internationally agreed set of principles and standards by which to assess and redress inequality. Conversely, a just society is one that understands and values human rights and the dignity of all human beings" (Occasional Paper #1(2011) [www.nationalprobono.org.au](http://www.nationalprobono.org.au)).

Rawls (2011) opines that Social justice refers to

"the idea of creating a society or institution that is based on the principles of equality and solidarity, that understands and values human rights, and that recognizes the dignity of every human being...Social justice as a secular concept, distinct from religious teachings, emerged mainly in the late twentieth century (Rawls, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_justice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice)).

And in other words it is

...the virtue which guides the society in creating those organized human interactions called institutions... Social institutions, when justly organized, provide man with access to what is good for the person, both individually and in our associations with others. Social justice also imposes on each of us a personal responsibility to work with others to design and continually perfect our institutions as tools for personal and social development (The Centre for Economic and Social Justice - [www.cesj.org](http://www.cesj.org)).

Social Justice implies the acknowledgement of the fact that men and women stand on equal pedestal with each other before God's perfect judgement. In this approach there is no stratification of human Society. Rather all beings are lumped together in one class. In essence, social justice is concerned with equal justice, not just in the courts, but in all aspects of society. "This concept demands that people have equal rights and opportunities; everyone, from the poorest person on the margins of society to the wealthiest, deserves an even playing field" (Ellis-Christensen, 23 May 2011).

Impliedly Oji (2001) defines social justice as "the absence of tribalism, discrimination, ethnic oppression and segregation in the society as the opposite is the force of social injustice" (47). This could further be understood in terms of proportionality or equilibrium or equality or balance. It could be deduced from definitive contributions that social justice is social judicial equilibrium (treating two persons in the same offence with the same yardstick). It could be summed up as being antonymic to social injustice. It is against the evil of allowing people to live in the Ghettoes, slums and shanty, while few others squander our scarce resources without recourse to any sense of moral justification for their selfish actions. This disparity between the wealthy class and the masses constitute the climax of "social injustice" and "mass vexation". For Okwueze (2003), "social justice" is a condition of wholeness and shalom, harmony, peace, justice, righteousness, of healing and salvation, of freedom and prosperity and well being", as against injustice, oppression, racism, sexes, conflict and war" (164).

Social justice though a distinct secular concept from religious teachings, can not be separated from religious tenets today as the prophets like Amos and others fought for in the Old Testament. God's sense of justice is founded by his desire for equality of all men and the creation of a society where might, wealth and human wickedness do not determine the plight of the less privileged and a society where the rich does not use the head of the poor as a foot stool or the mighty strangle the weak at will.

Social justice is based on the concepts of human rights and equality and involves a greater degree of economic egalitarianism (believing in equality) through progressive taxation, income redistribution, or even property redistribution. These policies aim to achieve what developmental economists refer to as more equality of opportunity than may currently exist in some societies, and to manufacture

equality of outcome in cases where incidental inequalities appear in a procedurally just system. The Constitution of the International Labour Organization affirms that "universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice." And the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action treat social justice as a purpose of the human rights education (Rawls, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_justice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice)).

The combination of the two words social and justice gives an added value to justice and places it within a setting (i.e. the society). Social justice is expressed within the society where the prevailing situation seems to go ultra verse man given to his way. "Justice" from the view of ancient Prophets can be treated under several headings that include socio-political, justice and righteousness, economic issues, cultic issues, and special concern for the vulnerable. One can see in the world of the ancient prophets a gross societal ill targeted on the vulnerable as of designed strategy to make the poor and the vulnerable of no consequence in the divine economy of the Ultimate. This situation preserved no hope for the less privileged in the social order and in the cultic setting. The political class cultured a "must have it all attitude" and of course had it all. The religious that was to manifest the holiness of the Ultimate Reality led in opposite direction. There was no fair play rather as Segun (1967) described the result of the situation graphically, "success begat luxury, luxury begat intemperance, and intemperance vice" (6). The merchants built their ivory towers, the princess their palaces, the winter and snow houses with expensive furniture while the masses lived in penury and squalor. The wealthy women or the wives of the wealthy in the society did not think for the good of the society but were concerned with self and pleasurable exhibition to the detriment of the poor and vulnerable. The society was not by any means close to any thing balanced. In this light social justice, which would demand equality for the creation of God was lacking in its totality. The religious content of the society was void of salt as though it was not meant to take dressing from the Ultimate.

Birch agrees that social justice,

is apparently... the principle of justice... (i.e.) "to each according to his merit" or "to each according to his societal contribution" or similar treatment for similar cases not being adequate. Justice must be capable of exemption of responsiveness to individual needs, of an estimate worth based on the simple existence of a person (269).

### **Religion and Social Justice**

Right from of old religion with different holy writs tells man the mind of God. All religious concepts have always stressed on the need for equity. This is buttressed in Liberation theology as derived from the teachings of Jesus Christ in the gospel. It has been described by Ferguson (1973) as "an interpretation of Christian faith through the poor's suffering in their struggle and hope for equal portioning of God's providence" (387). By this teaching the church sees the society with the same lenses with which God saw it when he extended an open invitation to all to come and buy

without money (Isaiah 55:1). Liberation theology arose principally as a moral reaction to poverty caused by social injustice precipitating from human neglect of God's directives in His word and nature. Severally the Qur'an which is the Muslims' base for faith stipulates equal treatment for all in justice. Budism and Hiduism also stress on Social justice a like. The Igbo religious world view places the burden of brotherhood and equality on every one hence each man has to maintain "Ofọ na Ogu"- an insignia of equity and justice. For the African religionist he is always careful not to suppress others as the ancestors are watching each person. Religion and social justice are intertwined in several ways for the purpose of harmonious co-existence of human beings.

The need, value and inevitability of social justice can not be over emphasized in African Culture and traditional religion as in other major religions of the world which could not have trivialized it from the cradle.

The early Church did not just promulgate social theories but followed them up with social actions in the provision of social amenities in the rural communities they found themselves like hospitals, schools and agricultural settlements to enhance the socio-economic status of the people. The act of Social gospel spoke more eloquently to our rural populace than the books that contained the actions of the missionaries.

### **Religion, Social Justice and National Development**

Having created enough space for the definition of Religion and Social Justice, it is pertinent at this juncture to consider the meaning of national development before relating them. In Mezieobi (1992), definition national development "refers to a process of systematic transformation of the overall social economic, political, scientific and technological life of a nation through reflective thinking, sound decision-making, effective planning, active participation of the citizens and their attitudinal will to give such reconstruction a chance" (2). Eme (2001) quoting Bukola extends national development to mean a process of improving the quality of human life in the community (38). Umoke (2005) adds that it is the capacity of a national economy...the generation and sustaining of annual increase in the gross national product (GDP)" (222), with which the common good of the society is kept afloat. National development, apart from abstract values, involves provision of "infrastructures such as roads, hospitals, airports, dams, schools, etc. as well as development in its peoples, such as educational (capacity building) and health, even sports and the like (<http://answers.yahoo.com/>).

It is, on the other hand, the duty of religion and "religious leaders...as influential agents of change to motivate grassroots into the kind of productive action that is (capable of increasing annual income) needed to transform it into the era of modernization" (<http://www.guyanachronicle.com/>). Of course, it should be noted that where religion and Social Justice kiss each other, and religious leaders play their part well, the product is usually peace which engenders harmonious environment favourable for the sustenance of national development. The infrastructures or social amenities arising from such careful planning and executions would need, however, to be protected and sustained by means of the moral demands

(basic canon for the determination of rule of conduct as it relates to right and wrong,) of the society which religion provides. Ukoma and Nnachi (2009) in their contribution describe religion as social agent that express basic moral canons and itemized the functions thus; (a) behaviour and character modification of people, (b) discouragement of negative behaviours adjudged as being inimical for the functioning and survival of the society, and (c) provision of social cultural structure that works towards the maintenance of social order (62-63).

These functions of religion so listed serve to induce members of each society; first, to think of what is good for them and; secondly, they are compelled by the same functions to fashion out durable material structures and capacity building that enhances the society. These structures where provided are guided from destruction by the compelling functions of religion which outlaws wanton destruction of social amenities. Religion inculcates in the citizen the obligation to subscribe to and maintain sustainable national development. It also outlaws any introduction of acts inimical to national development by its ethical provisions. On the other hand social justice insists on realizable common good for the community and even national development. It follows also that even distribution of scarce resources eliminates grudges and disaffection which are the factors that cause riotous living in any society. By the combination of these structures the actualization of even spread of scarce resources national development is attained and sustained.

Furthermore Christian religious world view agrees that only the upright in heart can approach God's court hence the Psalmist question of "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in his holy place?" But "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully" (Psalm 24:4). While Amos' in his prophesy condemned the evils of his time thus;

Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that *are* in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink. The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.(Amos 4:1-2 KJV)

The Apostle Paul happing on social justice in the New Testament condemned classism in thee words, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:28-29 KJV). He reiterated this in Col 3:11 (KJV) "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor un-circumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all". Paul's social philosophy levelled all men before God.

The "Church" by the instrumentality of the Catholic Church adopted social justice by the 1800s and it (social justice) had appeared regularly in history. The term "social justice" based on the work of St. Thomas Aquinas who wrote extensively in his journal *Civiltà Cattolica* was adopted by the Jesuit Luigi Taparelli in the 1840s.

Pope Leo XIII, who studied under Taparelli, published in 1891 the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of the Working Classes), rejected both socialism and capitalism while defending labour unions and private property. He stated that society should be based on cooperation and not class conflict and competition. In this document, Leo set out the Catholic Church's response to the social instability and labour conflict that had arisen in the wake of industrialization and had led to the rise of socialism. The Pope advocated that the role of the State was to promote social justice through the protection of rights, while the Church must speak out on social issues in order to teach correct social principles and ensure class harmony ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_justice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice)). By this singular act the Pope had agreed that the church was not doing much on social issues. This as it were would remain a major defect if the church pays no attention to this all important matter. By example and precept John the Baptizer upbraided soldiers against corruption (Luke 3:14). Jesus Christ did not glose over social concerns in his earthly Ministry as he attended wedding at Galilee (John 2:1), home reception with Zaccheus (Luke 19:2-9), and gave food to the hungry (Luke 9:10ff). The full text and analysis of his manifesto in Luke 4: 18ff,

The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave *it* again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears

challenges the church to redefine her role in a world increasingly bedevilled by class distinction, oppression, injustice and under development. The same is true of all religions as outlined by Rawls who compared four religious idealisms.

In the contemporary church and the society the reverse is the case. The church is not operating a classless system where all men are equal. Indeed the church which is the pillar of truth now paints false pictures which intent, content and purpose is to deceive the poor masses.

But, whether we appreciate it or not Rawls maintains the opinion that all societies have a basic structure of social, economic, and political institutions, both formal and informal. In testing how well these elements fit and work together, Rawls based a key test of legitimacy on the theories of social contract. To determine whether any particular system of collectively enforced social arrangements is legitimate, he argued that one must look for agreement by the people who are subject to it, but not necessarily to an objective notion of justice based on coherent ideological grounding. Obviously, not every citizen can be asked to participate in a poll to determine his or her consent to

every proposal in which some degree of coercion is involved, so one has to assume that all citizens are reasonable ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_justice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice)).

If all are reasonable then all ought to be treated with equity. With this concept of equality our politicians who are either Christians, Muslims, traditional religionists owe it as divine and legal responsibilities to provide even development for all and sundry. The citizens in reciprocal manner have the obligation to protect all social amenities to sustain durable and dynamic development. By this progression national development is not only assured but speedily enhances with little efforts. Where this is lacking there is usually chaos. Where there is quietness in the midst of social injustice there is prevalent ignorance, illiteracy or frightful tyranny. Rawls construct of an argument for a two-stage process to determine a citizen's hypothetical agreement states that; (a) The citizenry agrees to be represented by X for certain purposes, and, to that extent, X holds these powers as a trustee for the citizenry and that they must account for, and (b) X agrees that enforcement in a particular social context is legitimate. The citizenry, therefore, is bound by this decision because it is the function of the trustee to represent the citizen in this way. But where the populace so represented find decisions to be socially injurious they reserve the right to object to the enforcement thereto ( [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_justice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice)). This applies to one person who represents a small group (e.g., the organiser of a social event setting a dress code) as equally as it does to national governments, which are ultimate trustees, holding representative powers for the benefit of all citizens within their territorial boundaries. Governments that fail to provide for the welfare of their citizens according to the principles of justice are not legitimate. To emphasise the general principle that justice should rise from the people and not be dictated by the law-making powers of governments, Rawls asserts that,

there is...a general presumption against imposing legal and other restrictions on conduct without sufficient reason. But this presumption creates no special priority for any particular liberty." This is support for an unranked set of liberties that reasonable citizens in all states should respect and uphold - to some extent, the list proposed by Rawls matches the normative human rights that have international recognition and direct enforcement in some nation states where the citizens need encouragement to act in a way that fixes a greater degree of equality ... ( [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_justice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice))

### **Religious Leaders as Social Catalysts**

A study of Guyanese (2003) modern socio-religious thought flow which is a common world view shows that religious leaders are not only social catalysts but real prime movers in national development. They are;

... increasingly identified in our society as influential agents of change, as people who can motivate grassroots ... productive action that ... needs to transform ... into the era of modernization. Happily, religious leaders recognize the clout they have with many or most of their congregations and have given notice of their intention to play a pro-active role in propelling national development. Whether or not arguments about their partisan interests held true a decade or so ago, today's religious leaders say they no longer subscribe to a label that dilutes the role of religion as an embodiment of spiritual values in... (<http://www.guyanachronicle.com/>).

It is very obvious that people are the same everywhere, hence the need for religious leaders to sit up and take their prime of place in the society. Speak out and bear the consequences of national development for the preservation of posterity as the labours today shall never be in vain. Where religion recognizes Justice as it should, all citizens enjoy equal treatment and even development. The citizens on the other hand volitionally pay for and protect the provided amenities without any grudge. In such symbiotic relationship more developments are sustained. Nothing actually moves forward where the citizens are hungry, angry and frustrated by the system they trust. **Recommendations**

Based on the facts so far enunciate we recommend that,

- i. Religion should see themselves as the organizing factor for national development based on social justice insisting that their adherents bring in God and the good ethics of their religion to bear on all policies of Government that;
- ii. Those in authority who are the Ambassadors of the various religions of the world should show the spirit of fairness in their dealings with those who are not privileged to be where they had found themselves by the sheer grace of the Ultimate Reality.
- iii. Religious leaders should deemphasize divisive utterances and teachings which have continued to cause fanatics to vent uncalled anger to the magnitude we are witnessing all over the world. Like Religions of the world should preach unity.
- iv. Muslim, Christian and Traditional religious leaders should come together to involved in pro-national developmental activities by creating space for regular inter-religious dialogue not fire bridge approaches at the face of uprising.
- v. Religious leaders should devise and implement passionate ways to stimulate positive thinking in young people who need to recognize the importance of human value, dignity and worth, and their capabilities in order to realize their God-given potentials that can enhance national development.
- vi. Value Education in which Nigerians will be taught to think first as Nigerians before thinking as adherents of religions should be made

- compulsory as part of citizen education. This encourage the need to value life and making it sacrosanct than religious extremism and suicide bombing.
- vii. Policy making bodies of the nation should evolve a deliberate scheme crafted for the manning and plugging of all Boarder loop holes to stop infiltrators and unauthorised foreigners whose stock in trade is to weaken the internal security of Nigeria to their own religious and political aggrandizement.
  - viii. The phobia of possible division of Nigeria should not stop Government from exposing the politicians who hid under the cloak of religion to perpetrate heinous crimes and destabilize our sovereignty; after all there will be no other war more than the current blood shedding.
  - ix. Government at all levels should equitably distribute social amenities to all zones of the country to prevent prejudice.

### **Conclusion**

“Religion” being man’s spontaneous response to the supernatural manifestations of forces out him is the handiwork of the Ontological Reality who controls all things. These manifestations are no respecter of individuals once they are schemed and implemented by the Ultimate Being. We had established the fact that “justice” is a legal word which means impartiality, fairness, even-headedness, honesty or “the order God seeks to re-establish in His creation where all people receive the benefits of life with Him” (Mott). We have further noted that Social Justice generally refers to the idea of creating a society or institution that is based on the principles of equality and solidarity. Religion, should rather, help to turn things around for the world. Hopefully, then, our religious leaders will speak out and act up as the spiritual and moral conscience of our nation - and play a sterling role in transforming our nation through peace and sustainable national development.

From our survey of different religions it is obvious that religion is made manifest through social justice. This inference is drawn from the fact that social justice challenges us of the existence of an impartial God. It reminds us that human beings are created to receive on equal bases God’s provision. It makes any religion that practice injustice and class distinction bestial and corrupt. We have also noted that there can never be any lasting peace and sustainable national development where there is no justice and fair play. Classism and discrimination must be ex-chewed for any society, be it, religious or secular to thrive amidst durable development. Whoever claims to be religious must be mindful of the fact that religion cannot be divorced from justice, because we are of the same father – the creator of the universe. By implication religion and social justice or acts must take cognisance of God’s position as the impartial judge.

It is more pertinent today that we challenge ourselves with the fact that religion is inseparable from social justice. But the type of experience we have shows that religious system is failing the society. As no society can boast of anarchy and

lopsidedness which social injustice creates, both religious institutions and the society cannot afford to trivialize the place of religion and social justice in our contemporary struggle to reach the millennial global goal of even development. Finally we opine that the trivializing of religious virtues and emphasis on divisive tendencies, politicizing of religion along tribal lines leading to a crisis of confidence among Nigerians. The result has been socio-cultural woes: a surge in crime, suicides, ethnic cleavage, racial animosity, family discord, truancy, delinquency and many forms of corruption.

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