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International Digital Organization for Scientific Research

ISSN: 2579-0757

IDOSR JOURNAL OF CURRENT ISSUES IN ARTS AND HUMANITIES 2(1): 106-112, 2016.

Jean Bodin's Religious Theory: A Possible Solution To Nigeria's Religious/Political Crisis

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INTRODUCTION

It is very obvious that religious political crisis among the two religion dominant in Nigeria are caused by political abnegation and intolerance among religious leaders. In a nation bound with vast geographic, ethnic and religious differences, these religious differences aid conflict which is a basis for showing religious biases and prejudices with the adherents being too fundamentalistic and extremistic in nature. Naturally, man shows himself as genetically selfish, fighting for his own interest alone. However, this does not necessarily explain or construe the religious nature of man. But how rational or how plausible is it for two notable religions to fight against each other, killing and giving a psychological aftermath or psycho-negative effect since God can neither be described as a Christian nor a Muslim? The underlying principle for religious conflict is not purely religious but also political as we have seen in the last six years with the encounter with the Islamic fundamentalist known as Boko Haram. The episodes of mass killing structured or engineered by this extremism is enormous. However, Jean Bodin advises that no matter what Religion one tends to believe in, it is good to be tolerant with each since all Religion call upon one true God who is all powerful. This God answers everyone who comes to him with true heart without discrimination or particular Religious background.

Jean Bodin's Religious Theory

Religion during the time of Jean Bodin was in factions and conflicts over the group that would be in charge of the other. These factions Bodin mentioned includes: those followers of the so-called Reformed Religion, "United" Catholics or the "Union of Catholics," and the "associated" Catholics. The associated Catholics comprised the Duke of Montmorency and other supporters of François-Hercule, the current Duke of Anjou and Alençon, as well as the Catholics who had signed the *Act of Association* in 1575 with a party of moderate Huguenots. The United Catholics was an association of Catholic nobles that allied with Duke Henry of Guise, advocated the reunification of the faith, and strove towards religious concord in France. Associations formed on both sides of the religious and political range creates divisions. A huge diverse religious belief were unveiled beyond the walls of Christendom, and the question of knowing which religion was the true religion or which God should humanity follow?, gave Bodin insight to write a book called: the *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*. Plato.stanford.edu. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy *first published Fri Mar 25, 2005*: "In the *Colloquium Heptaplomeres* Bodin used dialogue between seven men of different religions or convictions that have gathered in the home of Coronaeus, a Catholic living in Venice, Italy to drive home his point that tolerance is the best solution to religious diversity. The participants are Salomon, a Jew, Octavius, a convert from Catholicism to Islam, Toralba, a natural philosopher, Senamus a skeptic, Fridericus, a Lutheran, and Curtius a Calvinist. The story told by Octavius states that: "a ship leaves the port of Alexandria as gentle winds blow, but an intensive tempest soon arises. The ship's captain, terrified by the situation, is forced to drop the anchors, and urges everyone to pray to God. The crewmen, being from many different places and of various confessions, all pray for the one God that they have faith in. The storm calms down eventually and the ship is brought safely to port. When Octavius had finished his story, Coronaeus asked the following question: "Finally, with such a variety of religions represented on the ship, whose prayers God heeded in bringing the ship safely to port?" The answer nobody in that ship was able to answer. Bodin held the following religious stands:

1) True religion, Bodin holds, is tolerant of all religions, and accepts different ways to approach God. The same opinion is expressed in the *Démonomanie*. Plato.stanford.edu. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy *first published Fri Mar 25, 2005*:

"Bodin's letter to one Jean Bautru des Matras, an advocate working in Paris. In the latter, Bodin writes that "different opinions concerning religion must not lead you astray, as long as you understand that true religion is nothing else than the turning of a purged soul toward true God".

2) People should be brought up publicly in one religion. In other words, Uniformity of worship must be enforced within the commonwealth/state. This he considered as an indispensable element in the cohesiveness of the state. Religious unity should be preserved, and religion should not be debated, since disputations damage religion and cast doubt upon it. When writing the *République*, Bodin's main concern was the political stability of the French state. He considered religion to provide the unity of the state. Furthermore, religion strengthened the subjects' obedience toward their sovereign prince and their respect for the execution of laws. Uniformity of worship must be enforced within the commonwealth when it is possible, but tolerance should become the norm when religious minorities become influential enough to no longer be repressed. The point seems to be, however, that regardless of Bodin's approval or disapproval of the religious views represented in the dialogue, he constantly stresses the need for toleration of all religions".

3) May be no law so sacred and divine that could better reinforce the social ties of the city than a common and identical education for all children. Even in spiritual matters, it enables the realization of the most perfect harmony of convictions between all citizens. However, if the role of religious leaders is to ensure that the true religion is not stained by superstition or impiety, it is also the role of the magistrates, who hold the reins of the State, to ensure that the youth do not forsake the one, unchanging religion to follow other, diverse beliefs. One education for all citizens and one religion for all the faithful were Bodin's conditions for civil agreement and cooperation within a State. Cultural and religious diversity were to be avoided. Religious concord, in this case "forced" concord, represented the highest priority for the lawmakers. There are two sorts of religious edicts that alternate during the wars: edicts of pacification and provisional tolerance, and edicts of concord and union. In the "edicts of pacification," Bodin believed were the best means to avoid war, temporary tolerance takes precedence while final peace is delayed until a time when "God will grant us the grace to unite the nation in the same fold. "Edicts of Union" or "Uniformity" imposed peace through force and thereby implied that war could begin again. Bodin wanted to see an end to the religious wars. He was totally convinced of the need for religious concord (forceful subjugation of all Religion into one Religion) in order to facilitate political unification, which he illustrated in dialogue on how he refused to succumb to religious gang-up during his time. Plato.stanford.edu. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy *First published Fri Mar 25, 2005*:

"he was willing to accept temporary measures of toleration until religious reunification could be achieved through the meeting of "a national or general council to resolve matters of religion" which was slated to be held "two years later".

Bodin refrained from all commentary on the doctrine of the sacraments and dogma. Instead he considered the religion of Christ, to which he himself believed as accessible to all men of good will. Bodin possessed an expansive view of religion and a sincere belief in an all-powerful God.

Sovereignty, Absolutism and Limitations Relative to Bodin Religion

Sovereignty, according to [1], is an impact upon both the internal affairs and external affairs, of the State. Sovereignty is the most high, absolute, and perpetual power over the citizens and subjects in a Commonwealth. Sovereignty for Bodin is absolute and the princes' should exercise absolute sovereignty. Considering *tyrannicide*, (killing of a tyrant) he states that there are instances when *tyrannicide* is justified. It is only justified if the tyrant prince goes against the *Natural Laws or Divine Laws*. Apart from that, killing a prince presumed to be a tyrant is forbidden, if the prince is an absolute sovereign. If the prince is an absolute sovereign, it is in no circumstances

permissible either by any of their subjects in particular, or in general, to attempt anything against the life and honour of the prince, either by process of law or force of arms, even though he has committed all the evil like lacking reverence, cruel and deeds imaginable. He supported the right of resistance in general, but he opposed the right "to take up arms." Armed resistance was a tactic that the "Huguenots" during his time preferred.

1) Bodin claimed that a sovereign is "not bound" by the civil or positive laws which he or his predecessors had promulgated (established) which have force only as long as their maker is alive, unless ratified by the new ruler, nor by his own laws. He is not free to do as he pleases, for all earthly princes have the obligation to follow the law of God and of nature. Absolute power is power to override ordinary law, but all earthly princes are subject to divine and natural laws. According to www.iep.utm.edu/Bodin,Jean/internet encyclopedia of philosophy,

"To contravene the laws of God, "under the greatness of whom all monarchs of the world ought to bear the yoke, and to bow their heads in all fear and reverence, and of nature, mean treason and rebellion".

Nevertheless a sovereign is always bound to natural law and divine law. Sovereignty, according to Bodin, is as supreme as one wishes, but is also limited by natural law and divine law. The Kings of France for instance, were glorious because their sovereignty was limited by divine and natural laws. He expressed great concern for any policy of forcing men's consciences, and declared that under such a threat a man is justified in concealing his convictions or taking actions.

2) Bodin noted another thing that limits the prince absoluteness - besides the laws of God and of nature that limit the sovereign prince's authority, the prince's contracts with his subjects and foreign princes, (property rights of the citizens, and constitutional laws of the realm) also does. Regarding the difference between contracts and laws, Bodin writes that the sovereign prince is subject to the just and reasonable contracts that he has made, and in the observation of which his subjects have an interest, whilst laws obligate all subjects but not the prince. A contract between a sovereign prince and his subjects is mutually binding and it obligates both parties reciprocally. The prince, therefore, has no advantage over the subject on this matter. The prince must honour his contracts for three reasons: (1) *Natural equity, which requires that agreements and promises be kept;* (2) *The prince's honour and his good faith, since there is no more detestable crime in a prince, than to be false of his oath and promise;* and (3) *The prince is the guarantor of the conventions and obligations that his subjects have with each other - it is therefore all the more important that the sovereign prince should render justice for his own act.*

The Forms of State and the Forms of Government

Bodin differentiated between the forms of State and the forms of government; monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. For instance he defined a monarchy as the rule of one; aristocracy as the rule of a few; and democracy as the rule by all people. Yet monarchies might still be democracies according to him, if the prince allows all of the people to have access to magistracies and State offices without regard for nobility, wealth, or virtue. Otherwise, a monarchy can be a form of aristocracy if the prince bestows State responsibilities only to the most noble, the richest, or the most virtuous. The same observations hold true for aristocratic and popular regimes. He created also distinctions between the forms of State and the forms of government: royal monarchies, despotic monarchies (acting as tyrant), and tyrannical monarchies. The last two are easily confused. He gave an illustration of the last two thus: There is nothing bad in a prince who has defeated his enemies in a good and just war, assuming an absolute right to their possessions and their persons under the laws of war, and thereafter governing them as his slaves; just as the head of a household is the master of his slaves and their goods, and disposes of them as he thinks fit, under the law of nations. But the prince who by an unjust war or any other means, enslaves a free people and seizes their property is not a despot but a tyrant. The difference between despotism and tyranny is crucial. Despotism is legitimate and sometimes legal. Tyranny, on the other hand, is always illegitimate, illegal, and contrary to natural and divine laws. Therefore Bodin demonstrates that he is in process of constructing his theory of sovereignty not that of despotism.

Natural Philosophy

It is through contemplation that humans come to know God and the way operates. Bodin in one of his book, "Theatrum" explained that the true narration of things, are three kinds: human, natural, and divine. The first concerns man; the second, nature; the third, the Father of nature (God). Man know God from thinking first about ourselves, then about our family, then about our society we are led to examine nature and finally to the true history of Immortal God, that is, to contemplation. [www.iep.utm.edu/Bodin,Jean/internet encyclopedia of philosophy](http://www.iep.utm.edu/Bodin,Jean/internet%20encyclopedia%20of%20philosophy), Bodin turns to the study of nature in order to better know God:

"And indeed the Theatre of Nature is nothing other than the contemplation of those things founded by the immortal God as if a certain tablet were placed under the eyes of every single one so that we may embrace and love the majesty of that very author, his goodness, wisdom, and remarkable care in the greatest matters, in moderate affairs, in matters of the least importance".

[2] concluded that the French civil wars then were occasioned, partly, by God's dissatisfaction with the French people. God was punishing the French for their growing irreligious sentiment. Meaning, God punishes anybody or princes that go against either his laws or the natural laws, by allowing external or internal disruption. God is the author of all existing things, and the contemplation of nature brings us closer to Him. Furthermore, contemplating nature makes us love God for the care and goodness that he shows us. The Theatrum are to prove that there is only one principle in nature, that is, God, and, that it is Him who has created this world and He who governs it.

Causes of Religious Political Crisis in Nigeria

Religious political crisis in Nigeria is prevalent, because of the under listed reasons. The Jos Crisis, Boko- Haram terrorist attacks are examples of the various religious crises that have plagued the country in recent times. It is often argued that religious crisis is more political than religious, because people tend to believe what a pastor or an imam said than what God said. The politicians use these religious leaders to perpetuate their evil intentions. This is why we always hear people say, "my pastor said or imam said". The question becomes why is it so? The best answers one can get are as follows:

1. Intolerance: This is the most problematic to religious factions in the country. The Christians had this belief that Muslims are worshiping idol, and Christianity is the only true religion that worship the true God. Muslims in the other sees their religion as a religious outfit that connects man to one true God. Because there are always misunderstanding on, whose religion serves the one true God? Muslims and Christians clash everyday in other to established supremacy over the other religion. Intolerance had made both the Muslims and Christians to fill uncomfortable the two religious factions gather at a place.

2. Poverty/Uneducated/Mass Unemployment: The high rate of poverty is a common cause of religious crisis. Poor people have little or no access to proper education. Poor youths are taken advantage of by both the politicians and the religious leaders to cause chaos in the country. They are taught doctrines that are based on violence and murder all in the name of religion. Since the poor are not really exposed, they accept any ideology throne at them. For example, Boko-Haram was explained to be "fight against western education". Youths are made suicide bombers after being enticed with money for their families and assured of a heavenly reward. This is predominant in the Northern part of the country. Most Muslim believers' idle educated youths are also used as tools to wreak havoc. Idleness exposes them to bad doctrines. They become easy to be bribed and bought over. Idle unemployed youths are normally subjugated to mental and physical challenges.

4. Fear of Domination: Religious crisis can also come about when it seems the dominant religious group in a particular area is afraid of domination by other religious group. This can be due to an increase in the population of the other religious group. Example is the Jos crisis

between Christians and Muslims. The Muslims and the Christianity sees each other as dominate. Hence, none wants the other to have more domination.

5. Division Between Indigenes And Settlers: Indigenes of a particular place prefer settlers that are of the same religion to settlers of a different religion. In the event that has mist religious settlers practising a different religion from that of the indigenes, there is usually conflict between the two religious factions.

6. Poor Security: This happens when the security system of the country is so porous and disorganized. The inability of the security agents to curtail conflicts when they arise, have been a serious issue in Nigeria.

7. Religious Hypocrisy: Religion is perceived to be the most effective way to control the minds of the people. In fact, religion, whether it is Christianity or Islam has a way of affecting the psyche and ways of thoughts of many people. In Nigeria, religion plays a prominent role in every aspect of our national life. The most terrible Nigerian professes to be an adherent of a particular religion. Most national, State and Local Government events in the country are heralded with prayers to hypocritically commit things into the hands of God even when the outcome of such events have been pre-determined by men whose intentions are far from being godly. It is not out of place to hear statements like "my Pastor/Imam said this is how we should do things". The church/mosque is infected with hypocrisy, with religious leaders being hypocritical characters that are corrupt, greedy and immoral as shown. Politicians create millionaire pastors and imams using them to exploit the ignorance of the most vulnerable members of the society. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that the current trend in the country is where some political and religious leaders collaborate to extend the sufferings of the masses.

How Nigeria's Religious/ Political Crisis Can Be Resolved Using Bodin's View

The question of how the application of Jean Bodin Religious Theory can solve the Nigerian Religious Political crisis are answered in the following Bodin's views of peaceful and perfect religion state:

1. Tolerance: According to [3], true religion is tolerant of all religions, and accepts different ways to approach God. In order to avoid the Religious political crisis in Nigeria, the two religions in the country should learn how to tolerate each other at all times. Religious unity should be preserved, and should not be debated, since disputations damage religion and cast doubt upon it. Religion should provide the unity of the state, and strengthened the subjects' obedience toward their sovereign ruler and their respect for the execution of laws. Uniformity of worship, that is a law of no intrusion, must be enforced within the country when it is possible, but when it is not possible, tolerance should become the norm when religious minorities become influential enough to no longer be repressed. The point seems to be, however, that regardless of Bodin's approval or disapproval of the religious views represented in the dialogue stated above, he constantly stressed the need for toleration of all religions.

2. One Education and One Religion: Let the law be one for both the Christians and the Muslims; equality before the law. Bodin praises humanism and calls for it to be taught in the public schools. If humanism were included in the cultural education the youth received, the political and religious harmony of the State would be strengthened. He maintained that there may be no law so sacred and divine that could better reinforce the social ties of the city than a common and identical education for all children. Even in spiritual matters, it enables the realization of the most perfect harmony of convictions between all citizens. However, if the ecclesiastical leaders ensure that the true religion is not stained by superstition, falsehood or impiety (lack of respect), the organs of Government, who hold the reins of the State would ensure that the one respectable law abiding religions in the state are followed without diversity, then unity would be assured. In this manner the semblance of a State may be conserve. To attain a civil agreement and cooperation within a State, Bodin suggested one education for all citizens and one religion for all the faithful. Cultural and religious diversity were to be avoided. Although Bodin's suggestion of one Religion was under probability of, if it is possible let there be a uniformity of Religion in a state but if the uniformity was not possible, there should be tolerance of religion.

3. **Dialogue:** Most books by Bodin were written in pseudo-dialogue form. According to my understanding in Bodin's view, any state that has religions factions without uniformity should always call for dialogue, even if the intention for the dialogue is pseudo (dubious). It may go along way to create unity between the religions factions. He presented this augment thus: "a ship leaves the port of Alexandria as gentle winds blow, but an intensive tempest soon arises. The ship's captain, terrified by the situation, is forced to drop the anchors, and urges everyone to pray to God. The crewmen, being from many different places and of various confessions, all pray for the one God that they have faith in. The storm calms down eventually and the ship is brought safely to port. When Octavius had finished his story, Coronaeus asked the following question: "Finally, with such a variety of religions represented on the ship, whose prayers God heeded in bringing the ship safely to port?" The dialogue was intended to pass a message across that if there are diverse religious factions in a state and conflicts had taken over the state, there is need for dialogue. Through dialogue hiding things would be made clearer and tolerance would establish.

In all, to move this country forward Religious group and settlers should always resort to dialogue, tolerate and educate one another with mediation if any issue arises between such groups. This will prevent crisis and unwanted religious violence in Nigeria. So, application of Bodin's religious theory would help to unify the religions factions in the state. Other areas to be considered are: sacredness of life, improvement of governmental organs, job creation, and truthful cohabitation. All religion should always preach about the sanctity of life. God is not to be portrayed as a God who delights in the death of his creation. The government should work more on improving the security system of the country. [4] This is to ensure adequate protection of lives and property. An idle man is a devil's workshop. This increases creativity and engages the youths. The government can also work on avenues to create more jobs. This should be done with a view of reducing the poverty rate. [5]

Bodin's suggestion are perfectly suited in Nigeria contest except his idea on one religion would never stand in Nigerian contest. For instance, he said: one education for all citizens and one religion for all the faithful for civil agreement and cooperation within a State. Cultural and religious diversity were to be avoided. The idea of one religion can only work in a geographical area where the people have one ideology, language, culture, norms etc. Nigerian has more than one hundred languages, three religions Islam, Christianity, and Traditionalist. And, forceful implementation of one religion would amount to breakdown on natural and divine laws, and emergence of serious disruption of peace and order.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria is a nation suffering from many woes. Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsman in clashes with Christian farmers, famine-like conditions in the North East, drought and a refugee crisis quickly add up to make Nigeria a very troublesome country. Unless practical and widely accepted adjustments are made, at best, implementation of the Jean Bodin's Religious solution, subjugation of all religion into one if possible or tolerance of religion, things would continue to be worst. The refusal of the Nigerian government to remove the cattle herdsman, who are predominantly Muslims, from the villages and farmlands belonging to predominantly Christians has added to the religious hatred and claims that the Muslims have the backing of the government to grab lands belonging to Christians; to wipe out both the ethnic tribes and Christianity as a religion and spread Islam. Meaning that, one religion is favoured under Nigerian government. Hypocritical in national matters, and religious matters. Saying one thing and doing another. If the religious leaders and politicians would accept that true religion is tolerant of all religions, and accepts different ways to approach God and work together to maintain peace in all ramification then the country would be a safer place. Uniformity of worship, that is a law of no intrusion, must be enforced within the country when it is possible, but when it is not possible, tolerance should become the norm when religious minorities become influential enough to no longer be repressed.

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