

**Religion, Politics and Integrity:
A Discourse About Fostering Political Participation by the Church
in Nigeria¹**

**Professor Umar Habila Dadem Danfulani (AvH, STINT, Global
Scholar, FAR, NAL)**

Department of Religious Studies & Philosophy,
University of Jos, Jos, Plateau State
+2348033485471 danfulani@gmail.com.

Abstract

This paper examines the role being played by the Church in Nigerian politics. Jesus Christ is presented as the ideal politician, who came with a model political manifesto. Furthermore, the paper examined the areas of strengths and weaknesses of the Church in its role in fostering political unity among Christians in Nigeria today. It states that one key area where this could be achieved is by ‘baptising politics’ as a weapon of development and empowerment of Christians and not treat it as dirt, which to be shunned. The comparative approach is used in this paper. This work, among other things, compared the five models of political participation by the Church supplied by Ernest Munachi Ezeogu (2008). Major research findings show that the Church in Nigeria encourages good Christians to stay away from the murky waters of politics, leaving it for the ‘wicked’, thus making ‘the people to mourn’ rather than for them to ‘rejoice’ when genuine Christians are in power. Among recommendations is the obvious fact that, the Church should play active role in selecting candidates for elective political office. It should play the role of ‘king makers’ with respect to politics and simultaneously be ready to bless and give sabbaticals to pastors that are interested in testing the grounds and tasting the waters of politics. The Church should be active

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in partisan politics because this will get righteous people into the corridors of power, authorize them and galvanize real development (Proverbs 29:2).

Keywords: Politics in Nigeria, Integrity, Political participation by the Nigerian church, Models of political participation

Introduction

The renowned Nigerian social scientist, Professor Jonah Isawa Elaigwu, CEO Institute of Governance and Social Research, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, said the following about Nigerian leaders and he is correct:

Yes, we have reasons to be disappointed with our leaders and ourselves in our 51 years of sojourn as a nation-state. We have reasons to be angry or even mad with ourselves. We could have done better and we can still do much better. My belief is that, staying together as a country for 51 years is an achievement. While we – leaders and followers – have not lived up to expectation... (2012: 34).

Also, a one-time Borno State CAN Chairman, Rev. Daniel Yusuf Mbaya asserted:

I call on you Reverends, pastors and leaders to encourage your members to be actively involved in politics and political activities. Gone are the days when politics is regarded as a dirty game. As Christians, even if politics is truly a dirty game, let's get involved and clean it (Mbaya, 2007, cited in Haruna, 2009: 5).

We are optimistic that there is a sign of hope being initiated by Christians and the Christian clergy in Nigeria towards responding to the call to be involved in active partisan politics. Christians that live by the tenets of Christianity have an immense capacity for injecting the high values of integrity, transparency, organization, and empirical education into the Nigerian body politics, which should naturally lead to the galvanization

of development in all sectors of national life including the economic, social, legal, educational and civic organs, among others.

One cannot but recognize the grave responsibilities awaiting Christian leaders in a time of irritating insecurity, incessant and sustained national violent crises, wearing different togas and shades of colours as the reasons for their instigation. When one looks at the events in contemporary Nigeria, one is tempted to say that Christians have been the most docile group in Nigeria's socio-political and economic history. Many Christians have been too spiritual and only a few of them are earthly (materially) wise and useful. While the church is full of highly educated, politically capable and spiritually vibrant Christian administrative gurus and technocrats, majority of them belong to the timid mass/lot of our society.

Furthermore, the only Christian leaders we have in partisan politics today belong to the older retired military lot, thoroughly trained but retired permanent secretaries, drops outs from our post-primary and tertiary institutions, and/or the experienced but won out and unrecyclable hands that have blazed the trail of the political terrain for decades without mentoring the next generation of Christian leaders for Nigeria. This work addresses quite a number of issues directly associated with the mandate of the Church in Nigeria to provide high quality Christian leadership for the nation.

Clarification of Terms

This section defines important terms that are crucial for the understanding of this work. The clarification of terms explains the context in which each of these terms has been used and should be understood. These include Church, politics, integrity and political participation.

The Church

The term refers to a religious building—a building for public worship, especially in the Christian religion and the service held within its precincts. Furthermore, Church refers to followers of the Christian religion as a group, that is, when they are considered collectively. The

term also denotes Church or religious authority as opposed to the authority of the state. The term church is derived from the Old English *cir(i)ce*, *kirche*, *kryka*, as used in the *Dome Kryka*, the Dome Church or Church of the Dome, popularly associated with the central Swedish State Church in Uppsala, which took one hundred and twenty years to build and remains a current tourist destination in Sweden. The term entered English usage via the Germanic *kuriakon dōmā*, meaning the “house of the Lord” or *Kurios* Lord.

The term Church also emanates from the Greek *ecclesia*, meaning a “gathering” or “assembly” of people. In the ancient Greek this means the gathering of any people, particularly a political gathering of a city, *polis* or state. The term was adopted by writers of the New Testament Gospels and Epistles to mean the assembly of Christians because of its communal connotation. The early Church, therefore, used the term to mean the *assembled gathering of God’s people*.

The Church is a gathering of the followers of Christ, that is, born again Christians, who believe in Him as Lord and Saviour, in a registered local assembly, for the purposes of worship (I Peter 2:9-11), fellowship, instructions, encouragement, edification and guidance (Hebrews 10:23-25). It is made up of Christians scattered within the society as a witness of Christ, who act as salt and light in a world full of *mara*-bitterness and darkness, respectively. The purpose of the Church of Christ is for conversion, proclamation, humanitarian, physical and spiritual service, receiving confession, and the administration of the three-fold baptism [of water, Holy Spirit and Fire]. Genuine Christians enjoy dual citizenship of heaven and earth and so they are bound to run into conflict in matters of law and allegiance to the state from time to time. The Church is God’s channel of operation upon the earth today.

Politics

Politics emanates from the Greek *polilikos* or *polilike*, which means having to do with or relating to citizens. Aristotle, who was the student of Plato and also a politician, opined that politics is the most important of all the practical sciences. This is so, according to him, because politics is the “science of man’s affairs of happiness or good” (Aristotle: Politics:

xvi-xviii, cited in Yamsat 2001a: 8, see also, Yamsat, 2001b;) whose aim “is to discover first in what mode of life man’s happiness consists. Then, by what form of government and what social institution that mode of life can be secured” (*New World Dictionary of American Language*).

Put differently, politics means the science and art of canvassing for votes from the electorate into position of power, strategizing how to capture the interest of the populace and know how to govern them; it has to do with the process of directing people in the path of order, peace, and justice in a way that better their lot; sharing a nation’s resource or wealth and that of decision making. Politics is the craft of state management or statesmanship, the ability, skill, vision and wisdom of managing public or governmental affairs.

Integrity

The term integrity emanates from the fifteenth century Latin *integritas*, which was gotten from the phrase *integer*, meaning whole, wholesome and wholeness. It entered the Germanic vocabulary via the French language. The word refers to a person who possesses or is in possession of firm principles. It is the quality of possession and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles and/or professional standards. The usage of this term in this paper ethically resonates with human character. Thus, a politician that exhibits and stands on sound Christian principles displays a good character, which is cannot be tainted by bribery, corruption and compromise.

The Christian leader and politician ought to develop the five ethical principles that are key to the development of integrity and good ethical leadership. These are made up of respect, service, justice, honesty to others, community building and good governance (Hesselbein, 2013: 2492f; Kamungo and Mendonca, 1996, DuBrin, 2010 and Northouse 2012). The leader should ask and answer the following questions: Is what I am doing the right, just and fair thing to do? Is this what a morally sound person should do? Am I honest, respectful to others? Am I treating others generously? Am I honest towards others? Am I serving my community, organization or institution? Morally good leaders are equally concerned with running their businesses and with their employees, clients, suppliers, communities, shareholders/stakeholders, and the quality of their end

products. Leadership is about mobilizing people to achieve communal goals; ethically sound leadership is achieving team goals in a way that is fair and just to your employees, customers, suppliers, communities, shareholders/stakeholders, institutions and yourself (Hesselbein, 2013: 493; Daft, 2011; Phillips, 2006).

Political Participation

This is the process of canvassing for votes in a democratic setting such as Nigeria. It is the act of standing for elective office and also the process of people voting for their preferred candidates in a free and fair election. This literally refers to rule by the people as opposed to other typologies of government. It is derived from the Greek *dēmokratiā*, which in turn was coined from *dēmos* meaning ‘people’ and *kratos* denoting ‘rule’. This occurred in the middle of the 5th century BCE to describe the representative nature of the political systems existing in some Greek *polis*, City States, notably Athens (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 2009). Mendus (1996: 409) is correct when he observed that though democracy is an imperfect form of governance, it is far better than all others. This led him to conclude rightly that we ought to recognize the benefits of democracy and harness it with our local cultural values, instead of drawing undue attention to its shortcomings.

Democracy refers to majority rule through representation and it distributes power fairly and equitably (Nelson 1996: 359). During the classical period, democracy was paralleled to and different from other forms of government where power in each case lay with a certain section of the population: In aristocracy, it was the *aristoi*, the best; in oligarchy, it was the *oligoi*, the few; in plutocracy, it was the *plutoi*, the rich; in *ochlocracy*, it was the *ochlos*, the mob; in theocracy it was the *theos*, God/gods; in gerontocracy it was the first born of the free-born, and in democracy it was the *demos*, the people/the poor, which translated to ‘the majority’. In modern concept, however, democracy is a form of government in which no restriction is placed upon the governing body, implying that the governing body is identical with the citizenry. Though democracy is the rule of the people [for the people and by the people], in classical theory, the people are identified with a section or part of the population, whereas in modern theory, the people are identified with the

population as a whole (Wollheim, 1996: 383f). Mill (1996: 336) asserts that since democracy is synonymous with representative government, which strives to distribute power through representation, it implies that it is the best form of governance in the world today.

Paradox and Dilemma of the Church in Nigeria: Shying away from the murky waters of Politics

The Church in Nigeria has no strict separation from the State, because there are Christians both in politics that are operating state governance and, of course, there are Christians in the Church. However, the problematic dilemma is located in the attitude of Church dogma and leadership to the state and politics. Yet, taking control of the state apparatus is what you always need to transform the Church for good. The Church has so often opted out of participation in governance of the state, which is left to ‘so-called Christians’, made up of school drop-outs, ordinary Church goers, ‘nominal Christians’ and people who are generally neither serious with Christianity nor are they known to the Church leadership. The Church has shot itself in the foot when they allow the clergy say no to partisan politics. To possess political power is to have participation, representation, delegation, and to have a voice. However, to refuse to be actively interested and participate in politics is to assume the position of powerlessness, and that is the silly poverty-stricken condition the Church has resigned its fate and has consigned the lives of millions of Christians to in Nigeria (Haruna 2009: 6).

For most Nigerians, politics is what takes place in government circles that has to do with stealing, lying, cheating, getting rich quick and engendered by all sorts of dubious dealings during electioneering campaigns. Hence the general public believe that the politician is not to be believed or trusted – which may be true of many politicians in our country. The majority of Christians regrettably shy away from politics and political position because of this typical Nigerian mind set and mentality of the politicians (Haruna 2009: 6). If we go back to the original meaning of *polilike* we find that it possesses utilitarian values that deals with the people’s happiness and well-being in a given state. It deals with the fair

and equitable sharing of power and wealth of the country to all her citizens. Therefore, the Church must not shy away from *polilike*.

In a country where we are at the throat of one another, along the line of ethnic, religious status and the settler vs. indigene, for the Church in Nigeria to prove who she is, the Church must be seen as one “indivisible body of believers”—only then can the Church serve as “Light and salt of the world”. I think I will not be wrong to say, for the Nigerian Church to be ‘Light and salt’, it must encourage as many as are gifted in governance to go into active politics and be card carrying party members without the Church being partisan.

The Political Manifesto of Jesus Christ

1. The Spirit of GOD, the Master, is on me because GOD anointed me. He sent me to preach good news to the poor, heal the heartbroken, announce freedom to all captives, pardon all prisoners. 2. GOD sent me to announce the year of his grace — a celebration of God's destruction of our enemies—and to comfort all who mourn, 3. To care for the needs of all who mourn in Zion, give them bouquets of roses instead of ashes, Messages of joy instead of news of doom, a praising heart instead of a languid spirit. Rename them “Oaks of Righteousness” planted by GOD to display his glory (Isaiah 61:1-3; *The Message Bible*).

Jesus humbled Himself and came to the world as a servant leader. While still in heaven, He created appointments with many people that He met and redeemed while on earth. Such include Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan Woman, Blind Bartimaeus, the Man Born Blind (John 9), and the Man healed at the Sheep Market Pool of Bethesda (John 5), among others.

The extraordinary manifestation of power, signs and wonders, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, prophecy, and high discernment exemplified by Jesus Christ of Nazareth in healing and delivering people with various ailments exhibits his nature, what he came to do and what he is doing even right now in the lives of people through the power of the Holy Ghost. He abandoned his position of glory in heaven and came to

earth with His full anointing to preach the good news, heal the sick, comfort the widows and orphans, free those in bondages and free prisoners both physically and spiritually. Christ gives full holistic freedom to those who seek him. His gospel is full of transformation power, gives celebration for the destruction of all our enemies (physical and spiritual). Only a gigantic personality and political juggernaut, like Jesus, gives such promises and fulfil them, unlike Nigerian politicians who promise you heaven and then give you hell after voting them into office. Unlike Nigerian politicians, Jesus Christ will never partake in vote rigging, vote buying, vote snatching, vote stealing, ballot box snatching, false declarations, delegates buying, delegates kidnapping and delegates hoarding. Rather, he laid down the servant leader empirical blueprint of leadership for his disciples to follow.

Have you not heard? Jesus has given you the power, as creatures created in his image, over every human issue. What is real religion? “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27). The Christianity bequeath to Christians by Jesus Christ is an empirical religion that meets the basic physical and spiritual (holistic) needs of humanity.

A Typology of Models for Political Participation by the Church

Church dogma in Nigeria, both Roman Catholic and Protestant (but not Pentecostal), traditionally prohibits the clergy from participating in active or partisan politics. For instance, a Catholic *Catechism of Church and Politics* published by the Catholic Bishop’s Conference of the Philippines in 1988, bars the clergy from partisan politics. It states inter alia:

What is politics? Politics is also used for partisan politics, the competition to win or retain positions of governmental power. In this last sense clerics and religious are forbidden by Church Law to be involved in [partisan] politics [*Catechism*, para 1]. ...What are the roles of Clergy, religious and laity with regard to ‘partisan politics’? The clergy can teach moral doctrines covering politics but cannot actively involve themselves in partisan politics. In

practice, religious men and women are also included in this participation [*Catechism*, para 21], (Ezeogu, 2008: 55).

This, no doubt agrees with the practice of Roman Catholics universally, and traditionally even encompassing Protestant elements. A more nuanced portrait emerges from the primary sources of Roman Catholic Church's teaching. For instance as the 1983 Code of Canon Law states in:

Can. 285§3: Clerics are forbidden to assume public office whenever it means sharing in the exercise of civil power.
Can. 287§2: They are not to play an active role in political parties or in directing trade unions unless in the judgement of the competent ecclesiastical authority, this is required for the defence of the rights of the Church or to promote the common good.

The position of protestant Churches, such as Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, COCIN, ECWA, ERCC, CRCN, RCCN, NKST, LCCN and Presbyterian, among others aligns with the earlier Roman Catholic conservative position, upheld in the *Catechism of Church and Politics* and certainly avoids the latter more liberal Catholic disposition in the Code of Canon Law.

No matter how good a government may be, I would like to recommend that ordained ministers should distance themselves from partisan politics. My reasoning is simple, politics is not a religion and it's full of intrigues. For the clergy not to bring the name of God into disrepute among unbelievers, the ordained man and woman of God should shy away from partisan politics. In spite of this, where the ordained minister has the calling to join partisan politics then I would recommend that such a man of God should leave pastoral work totally and become full-time politician for the rest of his life. Becoming a full-time active politician will enable him to put his best and bring about the meaningful change required by God and His people. The way of thinking being advanced here is that a full-time politician is not the one who when he losses election he goes back to take up a permanent job in the civil service or, if he is a clergy,

he goes back to the pulpit. Politics to the Christian should be a divine calling as much as is “pastoral calling” (Haruna 2009).

Yamsat is right to say:

If (the politician) is not on the seat of power, he is in his political laboratory researching, getting ready for the next election. Besides, a politician is not only in the business of capturing political power or position but he is also in the business of fixing capable hands in this or that political office, preparing younger hands for politics to take his place in the near future; liberating this or that community from political oppression or bad leadership, and helping those in government from his party to succeed. Thus, politics is not just about grasping power but about making those in power use power for the good of their society (2001:33).

It is clear from the contextual underpinning of the Church’s social teaching on politics that these hard-line positions against clergy involvement in partisan politics were formulated in the light of the gospel values and against the backdrop of experience of politics for centuries in Europe and America. They do not in any way reflect African indigenous political reality. We all know that virtually all European countries had state religions, with France, Italy, Spain and Portugal being Roman Catholic, England was Anglican, while Germany was Lutheran (Ezeogu, 2008; 56). Christianity fought for political control in all Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland) and took over the reins of power from pagan regimes as is exemplified in their histories and the symbols of the cross found on their flags even today. States religions are not available in African countries and especially not in Nigeria (Ezeogu, 2008: 56).

Christian missionary variable was not favourably disposed to Christians participating in politics. This has made most Christians docile and shy away from politics, which they regarded in their teaching as dirty, crooked, un-Christian and out rightly sleazy, possessing all the trappings of sinful lifestyle—cigarette smoking, beer drinking, power drunkenness, womanizing, and extravagant living, among others. But the current state

of things in Africa calls for the Church in Africa to develop and espouse an empirical method in order to discover what best applies to in the African context and what does not (Ezeogu, 2008: 56).

In most African countries, priests/clergy in addition to clerical duties also constitute a part of the social elite and the intelligentsia in urban areas and they very often suffice solely for same in rural areas. They are among the few who read the newspaper; listen to the news transistor radio and on TV and who can analyse political development both locally and internationally. They belong to the frontline of community leaders and stakeholders of thought. It is unfair, questionable and does not add up to human logic to keep such people from contributing to the evolving political culture of the people they are already serving both physically and spiritually.

Today, the question should therefore no longer be “should the clergy participate in partisan politics or not”, but “how should the clergy participate in politics in Nigeria”?

Ezeogu (2008: 57-61) has proposed five different models of political participation. These are:

1. The Traditional Preacher Model

This model places the place and station of the priest in the sanctuary, and not in the marketplace, on the politician’s soap-box or on the streets. This model states that the priests fulfil their leadership duties towards the laity by teaching them their responsibilities to participate in politics for the common good. Priests also teach them their responsibility to resist injustice, but to obey all civil authority. The lack of political awareness among Nigerian Christians is not because priests are not into partisan politics but is because the clergy are not sufficiently teaching them their civic rights and obligations as Christians.

A good example of this category is found in Arch Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, current Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese and former Secretary General emeritus of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria. Before he became Arch Bishop, he was known for his outspoken criticism of government in his many writings and talks. He also served in advisory capacity to the president of Nigeria and was secretary to the

Oputa Panel. He was seen as a good example of priests who do not go beyond dialogue—talking.

2. The Play Director Model

The Clergy according to this model should teach the laity their political responsibilities in the Church as in the traditional preacher model. He should, however, go further to help them plan and carry out their political objectives. The support and blessing of the clergy is essential for the political projects. The clergy in this case is however expected to work from behind the scenes, prompting and directing the political activities of his people, like the director of a play, who does not appear on stage. This drama setting is all too familiar to the Church; it is not a new scene at all to it.

The best example of this model is the charismatic parish priest of Christ the King Catholic Parish and director of Adoration Centre (both in Enugu), the controversial Rev Fr Ejike Mbaka. Fr. Mbaka went beyond traditional pulpit preaching to the exposition of the evils of the federal and state governments, and gives prophetic revelations and declarations concerning political figures, government decisions and high-profile cases involving the government in Nigeria. Working from behind the scenes as Fr Mbaka is doing is not always an effective strategy because though he prophesied and vowed that Governor Chimaroke Nnamani would lose his second term bid, to the extent of even staking his credibility on his prophecy coming true, it never did. This is because Governor Chimaroke Nnamani won his second term bid in office.

3. The Music Conductor Model

This model states that the priests should be in the forefront, leading the people to protest injustice. For this model, it is not enough to merely condemn injustice from the pulpit. For instance, many famous preachers and televangelists in the US denounced racial segregation from the pulpit, but nothing happened until the Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr took the streets in active non-violent acts of civil disobedience. This model states that the priests should lead by example, by walking at the head of non-violent revolutions and civil liberties demonstrations for justice and

human rights. They should however do that as priests, and not as politicians. This was what Martin Luther Jr did and he is one of the examples of how priests can lead a non-violent revolution in society. Another shining example is of a priest conducting active non-violent activities is Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu.

This model is associated with Rev Fr John Odey of Abakiliki diocese. Fr Odey is one of the greatest champions of the Music conductor model, which advocates priestly participation in politics in Nigeria today. He not only condemns corruption in government and in high places from the pulpit, but he also takes to the streets, goes to government house and denounces unjust political leaders to their faces. He was arrested on one occasion by officers of the state security services from Abuja and he requested to be taken to Aso Rock Villa to President Obsanjo so he could give him a piece of his mind after which they could shoot him. He denies politicians known for corruptly enriching themselves through the embezzlement of public funds seats of honour in his Church and he rejects their donations during fundraising events in his Church. His active participation in active non-violence, notwithstanding, Rev Fr John Odey is firmly opposed to the idea of clergy participation in partisan politics.

4. The Priest-Politician Model

The model advocates that clergy that so wish should become active players in the game of politics. It is the opinion of this author that this model provides the best way for clergy to make irreversible impact on the political landscape of Nigeria. This will enable them experience first-hand the daunting task involved in the implantation of some of the teachings and principles of the Church in the rough terrain of Nigerian politics. This way, they would test the burdens they impose on others as Our Lord Jesus warned and criticized the Pharisees and scribes, saying: Woe also to you scholars of the Law! You impose on people burden hard [for you] to carry, but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them [Luke 11: 46].

Empirical involvement of the priest in partisan politics will have a radical spiralling effect in three areas: First, it will give the priests a more balanced understanding of politics based on experience and not only on head, secular or theological theoretical knowledge. Second, when performed correctly, it will provide the laity with a near ideal example to

follow. Politician-priests will become models for how Christian can engage in politics—'without bitterness' and without compromising their faith in Christ. Third, it will certainly introduce new political elements and initiate them into the political culture of Nigeria. This will give birth to a new political class and culture, which like seasoning salt, will transform and sanitise Nigerian politics from within—that is, from the grassroots upwards to the judiciary, legislative and executive arms of government at the top.

In Nigeria this model is represented in the person of Rev Fr Moses Adasu who was a priest of the Diocese of Makurdi. He contested for and won the governorship of Benue State in Nigeria's politics of the second republic. His electioneering campaigns were sponsored through the mobilization of ordinary market women and other petty street traders in Makurdi and some other towns in Benue State.

Adasu requested for a temporary suspension from public ministry as a priest. His tenure as governor of Benue State remains one of the rare instances, in recent Nigerian *erlebnis*, of political sanity of leadership by example. It exhibited the best exemplary of good governance, demonstrating elements of transparency, accountability, consensus oriented, participatory, upholding the rule of law, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, responsiveness. Rev Fr Adasu proved that Church teachings and principles on politics can be practically applied to people's lives, aside from preaching it from the pulpit. He confessed that he entered into the supposedly murky waters of politics to sanitise it (Adasu, *This Day News*, March 31: 2003).

5. The Black Panther Model

This is the last proposed model for priestly participation in politics in Nigeria. This model has been named after the Black Panther Movement, which is an extremist group fighting for the civil liberties of Blacks in the US. Unlike the active non-violent civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr, the Black Panthers believe in fighting for Black civil liberties 'by any means necessary' including armed resistance. They started within the Nation of Islam Black Muslim movement of Prophet Elijah Muhammad, the messenger of Allah. The slogan 'by any means necessary' is credited to Malcolm X, who remains the symbolic character

of this model. This model, however, has not been tried within the context of the Nigerian Church.

The Black Panther Model holds a barred approach. Advocates of this model argue vociferously that an active non-violent revolution would fail dismally in Nigeria. The antecedents of all would-be political reformers in Nigeria that adapted active non-violent resistance show that the pioneers and their movements all ended under the crushing boots of the Nigerian armed forces. Advocates of this approach therefore argue that only an armed revolution stands any chance of success in Nigeria. As such the clergy should be ready to embrace armed resistance if Nigeria is to be saved from the yawning jaws of *kakistocracy* and governance by the most corrupt members of society.

Thus, Christians must endeavour to redefined political activity and the place of religion in the political process and redirect it towards developing new political realities. They must redefine the relationship between Church and State and reach the balanced perspective that the Western view we have inherited is a contextual and cultural anathema to the African continent. Jesus never separated the Church/Synagogue from the State, but rather prescribed a balance approach to the issue and settled the matter by the saying: “*Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s*”. when he said, “*Turn the other check*”, He meant that Christians should expect political, religious, social, judicial and economic persecution in the world.

These statements of Jesus Christ have made several Christians and the Clergy to wonder whether mixing religion with politics is not amounting to a betrayal of the Christian faith. The likes of Rt. Rev. John Onaiyekan, former Catholic Bishop of Ilorin and former National President of CAN, seem “to believe that the key to resolving the crisis is primarily a matter of defining and understanding Christian reaction to the strategies for Islamic expansion in Nigeria” (Kukah 1989:3), while the likes of Rev. Mbaya seem to support the direct involvement of the clergy in politics and that they should play active role in governance at all stages before and after the inauguration into political office (Haruna, 2009: 7).

The Church as Salt and Light to the World

Our Lord Jesus Christ made the declaration that the role of Christians in the world is to be salt and light to world. This is fitting because John the Baptist heralded His coming as the Light which has come into the world, even though the world system has refused to recognize him. The writer of Matthew states that Jesus left Nazareth to Capernaum, which was located by the Lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali to fulfil the prophecy of prophet Isaiah, which said:

15. “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—16 the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” (Matthew 4: 15-16).

Since we were created *imago dei*, in the image of God by the Trinity (Genesis, 1: 26), with Jesus Christ, the Word of God being implicated in our vivifying beingness (John 1:1-3), we are expected to assume the character of Christ in being light to the world. It is for this reason that Jesus made the following assertion:

13 Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.
14 Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. 15 If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. 16 Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven (Matthew 5: 13-17, The Message Bible).

This implies that before the coming of Christ and his commissioning of Christians into the world (Matthew 28: 18-20), the world was a place full of sourness, bitterness and total darkness. In this passage Our Lord Jesus Christ provides a blueprint for the role of His Church that is operating in a sinful world system. Recall in His prayer for His Church in John, he never prayed that the Lord should take His Church out of the world system (17:15), rather, since Christians are supposed to be the preservation seasoning of excellent principles and values for the world system, He prayed that God should keep us out of evil and sanctify us with his truth, even as He has sent us—Christians into the world (17: 16-19) to be salt and light to it. In a sinful world, the eyes “See the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds are near” them, while other people are held bound by the threefold bog-machine of the world system, as John the Beloved describes in his First Epistle:

16 For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man [lust of the flesh], the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does [pride of life]—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:16-17, NIV).

The call to the whole of the Church of Christ to be salt and light to the whole world, therefore, is not found only in the Great Commission of making disciples, but it is located in the thorough education and transformation of the lives of these people from abject poverty into having more than the basic needs of life as implied from the political manifesto of Our Lord Jesus Christ expressed above from Isaiah 61: 1-3.

Church, Leadership, Politics and Governance

The price the Church is paying today for being in this socio-political mess came as a result of the past persistent inaction of Christians in Nigeria. What should be the interest of the Church in politics? Our discussion will dwell on relating faith to the leadership role and challenges facing political leadership. Christians are the true channels for true information needed for socio-political and spiritual liberation.

When Christ our Lord commands us to go into the world and make disciples of all nations, it includes the making of a total man for the society. For any society to be freed from the clutches of manipulations, deceit and intimidation, people must be liberated from ignorance. The people perish for lack of knowledge, even because the clergy rejected knowledge (Hosea 4: 6); they also perish for lack of vision (Proverbs 29; 18): Ignorance is both a disease and a dis-ease.

Representative and Delegative Style of Governance: In Exodus 18:20-23 we read about the kind of governance that was effective and lightens the burden of both the governed and the governor. We read of the advice Jethro gave to his Son-in-law, and about Moses, who arrogated all powers to himself. He was advised not to do so because it could be destructive and burdensome in governance. Moses was advised to choose God fearing men to help him govern Israel. The advice of Jethro the father-in-law of Moses (Exodus 18:10-23) is reinforced in another part of scripture by God who instructed Moses to anoint other leaders to represent him (see Numbers 11: 24-26.)

It is clear from the Bible that God is the author of leadership and He requires that leadership must be widely spread to cover all different sectors or ethnic groups and the representatives of the people must be God-fearing. In Deuteronomy 17:16-17, we read of the type of leadership qualities required of political leaders. They must not be corrupt by acquiring “horses”, wives, silver and gold for personal use. The leader should not think of himself so highly above the people he governs. The leader must not turn away from God and his commandments because God is the one who appointed him. This tells us that if good ethics is not central to good political governance, then the cry for good leadership is just a mirage.

Power Sharing and Sharing of Possessions: The Bible also approves of sharing of power (Acts 1 and 6), and also sharing of possessions. This is the essence of individuals having differences because an individual does not form a Church. Read other reference where Paul lays emphasis on individual's gift for the nourishment of the Church. (1 Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4:1-16, Romans 12:1-8).

Government Authorities: Executive, Legislative and Judicial are Instituted by God: The Bible teaches us that governing authorities are instituted and approved by God to execute justice and punish the bad in the society. In Romans 13:1-6, we read that the ministers of the gospel are referred to as governing authorities and the governing authorities are called “Servants of God” and also “Ministers of God”. It therefore means that only those that are called into politics could be good politicians because in most cases they have been tried, tested, frustrated and even gone to jail for the principle they believed in and not necessarily because of corruption. Therefore, politics is not limited to electoral process only, but also includes all the background manoeuvres.

Citizens Responsibility to Government or Civil Authorities: This Bible truth of leadership is also true in the running of state affairs. Every citizen has a role to play in governance. Rom 13:1-6 tells us that every Christian has a contribution to make in ensuring the smooth running of the state. This they do by either actively seeking elective office, paying taxes, obeying or respecting those in authority, and, above all, praying for those occupying those positions. This describes a situation of harmony between the Church and the State (see Romans 13:2-7; Hebrew 13:17 and 1 Peter 2:13-17).

Added to these are the dividends of democratic governance, due process and the rule of law for the Church, which are in most cases grossly lacking. In Biblical times, it was possible for Paul to appeal to Caesar when he felt there was injustice in his trial, hence his appeal was granted. Democratic governance has granted religious freedom in Nigeria, making it possible for the propagation of religion, which enables the Church to preach the gospel without hindrance. It therefore means, like in the days of the early Church, democracy would enable the Church today to move anywhere and when it wants to proclaim the gospel message of salvation to whoever the Holy Spirit directs. It will also give us the right to speak against any bill that is contrary to biblical injunctions. In Nigeria, however, religious freedom for sundry all is a misnomer because Christians are not allowed freedom everywhere in the North, this is aside from extreme persecution experienced in the same area. The same region has experienced extreme religiously motivated crisis resulting in

the killing, annihilation and attempted ethnic cleansing out of Christians in certain areas by Muslims.

There is also the issue of the appropriation of other freedoms guaranteed by the constitution. Democratic freedom gives us the right to seek redress constitutionally by taking the right step to stop the National Assembly or any power from enacting a law that would marginalize a certain group of people on the ground of creed or ethnicity.

In another vein, education is regarded, globally, as a potent instrument for introducing and sustaining social change in human societies, as well as shaping its destiny (Ifenkwe, 2013). Apart from serving as a vehicle for enhancing upward social and economic mobility, education is regarded as a key to social reconstruction (Ukeje, 1978:9), and an instrument for conserving, transmitting and renewing culture (Erder, 1966). Education concerns itself with the comprehensive and dynamic development of the individual and society. It is the act of systematic development and training of the mind, capabilities and/or character through instruction/study.

Education liberates people from the shackles of fear, prejudice, ignorance, and superstition, replacing it with a free, independent and responsible citizenry. It galvanizes change through knowledge, attitude and skills, which constitute construction blocks for human capacity building. It is a life-long socialization/interaction process by which social norms and values are learned, shared and transmitted from across generations (Igbo 2003; Schaefer, 2007; and Arisi, 2013, 247).

Education provides social norms as guidelines that define acceptable and appropriate conduct/behaviour (such as learning etiquette, safety regulations, hygiene, and dress code), while values define what is good and desirable, as well as what is important, worthwhile and worth striving for (such as achievement, honesty, and morality), (Haralambos and Heald, 2006). Education is a process that helps develop the total person physically, mentally, morally and technologically, enabling them to function effectively in society, thus becoming more productive, self-fulfilling and attain self-actualization (Tawari, 1986; Aluede, Aluede and Ufah, 2004). Education provides the Christian with a holistic character of

organizational capabilities and capacities that are devoid of compromise, a high-level disciplined and skilled human resource and an insatiable arsenal of integrity.

Recommendations

Christian Leaders ought to comment on National Issues: Some of you may feel that as spiritual fathers, you are not to venture into making comments about national issues which affect the corporate existence of our nation. Yet, to some, it is this kind of silence that contributes to our confusion regarding the place of religion in national integration. For that reason, there is the need for a new perspective in our theological training. You need to reconstruct your training to address the political and socio-economic challenges that face the church today. Significant effort should be directed towards transforming theological education that can be relevant and effective to the society's development without compromising Biblical truths. Only then would the teaching on Church, State and political activity be redefined correctly as a means of dealing with the new political realities (Haruna, 2009: 32).

The Church is to denounce bad, wicked and Satanic governance: To establish order and peace in a thoroughly organized society, the Church should always be seen to stand against any bad or wicked government. Consider the example for the fight against apartheid in South Africa. Those in the forefront are the likes of Bishop Desmond Tutu. The Church in Nigeria seems to either keep silent in times of bad governance or support such governments blindly or cowardly. Where the Church is courageous in most cases it only ends up making mere press conferences and press releases. In Deuteronomy 1:16-18, a good leader is not a coward and is not intimidated by the face of man.

The Church must also Commend Good Governance: Let the Church's voice not be heard only when things are bad or gone sour. The Church's role in good governance is also to give the necessary support in terms of commendation, encouragement and participation directly or indirectly where necessary. One way the Church can do this is by recommending gifted Christians, even carefully screened and selected or nominated clergy, forwarded by consensus by the Church to take up jobs in

government and join political parties. While some Christians as already observed above will quickly underline the word Christians, that is, by implication excluding clergy (Haruna, 2009), I will recommend that Politician Clergies, chosen along the Rev Fr Moses Adasu model should add their voices.

If good people run away from politics, the bad ones will have a field day. The Church has a significant function to play in governance. This role can be seen in terms of the following: *Prophetic Role*: For the Church to be light and salt in our age and before any government, this prophetic function is a must in every nation that the Church finds itself. *Commending good Governance*: The Church's role in good governance is to give the necessary support in terms of commendation, encouragement and participation, directly or indirectly where necessary. *Denouncing bad governance* as God leads at all times and at all costs: Although God requires submission of the individual person to governing authorities (Romans 13:1, 5), it is not right for the Church as an institution to submit to any government.

The prophetic role of the Church: If the Church is to be worth its salt in any age and before any government, this prophetic function is a must in every nation that the Church finds itself. It therefore means that the formation of a net-work of prayer cells for the nation is necessary, where current local and national issues are discussed and prayed for. Given that the Church must be the vanguard of any governing authority, then it must play the prophetic function of ensuring that the governing authorities do the correct thing. The question here is, how does the Church do this? I would like to suggest that the Church must have what you may wish to call a *Think-Tank*, that is, a well-organised research body or group of individuals to obtain accurate information on what goes on in the government. This body or individuals must be people sufficiently knowledgeable about religion and politics and at the same time sufficiently detached from it to be able to give an objective assessment of its role in the task of nation building. The contributions of this group will assist the Church and the clergy to make informed pronouncement that will foster good governance, in a non-partisan manner, since the church is a father and conscience of the nation.

Avoid Unnecessary Criticism, Grumbling-Develop a New Culture of Patriotism: “Let us not allow ourselves to be drowned in the vortex of cynicism. Let us not sit down as grumbletonians – grumbling about everything but doing nothing. We must stop playing the whining children wallowing in self-pity. We must get up and put our acts together and take our destiny in our hands. The fault is not in our stars but with us... Let us learn from the experiences of the United Kingdom, India and Malaysia. I believe that while the ship of the Nigerian nation-state may be battered severally on the high seas, with discipline, hard work, selflessness, patriotism [stollsein] and dedication, the Nigerian ship will safely anchor and be renewed to the surprise of everyone in the world. I am passionate about my commitment to a single and indivisible Nigeria and I have no apologies for it or for my views on the necessity for a rebirth of my country. However, I shall try not to allow my passion to overwhelm my intellectual objectivity (Elaigwu, 2012: 34). Grumbling, murmuring, and complaining led to rebellion of Israel on the way to Canaan—The Promised Land and the land flowing with milk and honey.

Combating Sanitation and Climate Change: Personal, family, community and environmental hygiene including sanitation, fight on climate change, green economy and the environment. Getting rid of leather bags, plastic containers and others through clean ups and recycling

Corporate Christianity or Corporate Christian Responsibility: Holistic Development and Empowerment and Progressive Pentecostalism. Christians must participate actively in the Dialogue of Life. There are many thoroughly trained, highly educated, politically well-connected, experienced, and established Christian leaders in Nigeria that have been in partisan politics for decades, but when you take a look around them, you ‘cannot see a forest’ of younger Christian youths they have trained or are training to take over from them. The game of politics can only become sweat with mentors that make it their deliberate business to mentor younger mentees. The example set by the likes of Sir Ahmadu Bello, The Sardauna of Sokoto, Aminu Kano of the PRP fame, Maitama Sule-Dan Masanin Kano, Abubakar Rimi, Ibrahim Waziri [with the slogan ‘politics without bitterness’] of the GNPP heydays, Barrister Solomon Daushep Lars-the political father of Plateau State, Tinubu, must

be emulated by veteran Christian politicians. Why has Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the *Jagaban* become so politically influential and famous in Nigerian politics and the APC political strong man today? This lies in his mentoring skills. He is a rare political gem who mentored both Muslim and Christian mentees [Fashola, Prof Yemi Osinbajo (SAN), Akinwumi Ambode, Babajide Sanwo-Olu].

The qualifications

How should the Church handle the choice of candidates without being partisan as in the case of political parties? As a body of believers, Christians remain part of the society. They therefore need to be interested in who becomes their leader. Although the choice of the candidates is the business of the political parties, I believe the Church can lay a foundation long before the parties start their manoeuvres. When the Church is able to do this, it will be clear to the Church who the right candidate is to fit into a political office by the time they are qualified to vote and to be voted for.

Qualification(s) of a candidate seeking for political office: The qualifications to a political office are many. The constitution is very clear on what is required of a candidate seeking elective office. However, the Church should insist on clearly written down Christian principles: Romans 13:1-6, 1Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:3-10 enumerate the requirements of a Church leader. The qualifications mentioned in 1Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:7-10 are not meant for the clergy alone but for all those who aspire to occupy places of authority (public and spiritual) since their calling originates from God. In the Army before one is promoted to the rank of a general, one must be a good manager of his family.

The qualities Christians should look out for in aspiring political leaders are: Practical Christian standard of life, that is, exemplary character since the work of a leader requires him to be a person of Integrity, dignity and honour in all his ways. A life profile that is worth emulating and commendable by others as a person known for and consistently being an excellent role model or mentor to the youth groups, elders, women organizations, etc. A person who will not compromise his Christian principle or corruptly enrich him/herself by the manipulation political

office for advance fee fraud, embezzlement, money laundering, receiving kick-backs, etc.

1Timothy 2:1-2, says: First of all, then, I urge that supplication, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all men, *for Kings and all who are in high positions that they may lead a quiet and peaceful life, godly and respectful in every way.*

To fulfil this command of 1Timothy 2:1-2, genuine Christians, our own people must be among the rank and file of politicians, especially vibrant spirit filled Christians who deserve to offer such prayers for them and are seen dully seen, regarded and received as “Ministers of God and Servants of God” with all the dignity they deserve as ministers. They must be those who see to it that God’s will reigns in our society. Since the devil will not bother an inch by the prayers of those who called on the name of the Lord but do not obey his commands then we need believing, professing believers to seek for an elective office. I know the question bothering some of you is the belief that it is for the political parties to make choices of their candidates and not the Church. The answer here is simple! Yes, but the Church and the community must have a say in the choice of candidates.

Conclusion

The call to Christians to be salt and light and be proactively involved in politics concerns a call for Christians to adopt a holistic life style. Christians live in this world even though they are not of this world—being aliens of this world and citizens of heaven. Since they live and function in the world system, they must endeavour to be involved in the affairs of the world, but as ‘born again Christians’ who live a life devoid of sin and compromise. Christians should live in line with the vision of Global Scholar, which reads: Strengthening Christians values in campuses for higher education throughout the world. Christians are called upon to create a proactive and collective leadership that will comprehensively address the issues of governance, justice, rule of law, civil society and equity..

A united Christian body will harness and nurture contextual theologies that speak to and interpret the rich African expressions of

Christianity. Christian education systems at all levels should interrogate issues of national development, leadership, governance and entrepreneurial industrialisation through family/small scale businesses at all levels. So, Christians should formulate and introduce Church friendly capacity building strategies for Christians interested in engaging themselves in public service and politics to the highest level. Younger Christian leaders should make sure that they are exposed to issues concerning integrity, transparency, good governance, and kingdom financing paradigms as models for their entire society.

The Christian clergy on the other hand should be well informed about national and international politics, economics, religion, human geography, climate change and follow the current transformation rapidly changing the way things are done globally, especially through ICT and other high-tech areas, including “the internet of things”. A general knowledge about the country, including her current affairs, natural and human resources, the mysteries of her history, geography, religions, spiritual and psychological nature all form a part of wisdom and understanding. Our clergy should be very much aware of national policies, languages and cultures, the workings of national power and its control and the strategies for restoring high level patriotism to the country. They should not be ignorant of the true value of the capability and capacity of Nigeria in all areas of national life.

The Christian clergy should avoid mediocrity and imbibe meritocracy, and since Christ is the best that God gave to the Church, only the best is good enough for Church work. They should avoid corruption and imbibe integrity, because a person of integrity is bound by his/her words and s/he is dependable. The clergy should watch the integrity of God (Numbers 23: 19-20), avoid eye and lip service, slothfulness, and imbibe the Christian virtues of commitment and performance. S/he should develop a mentality of resourcefulness, creativity, initiative, and innovation. The Christian clergy should avoid “a limited supply” mindset that usually “ties the hands of God”, while ethnocentrism and tribalism, should be thrown out the window, leaving behind a detribalized person. They should exhibit genuine Christian values that are both Bible and God-centred. Involvement in diabolical activities never yields the desired results, but amounts to merely mixing water with oil or Baalism with Yahwism!

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