

THE ROLES OF RELIGIOUS ADHERENTS ON POLITICAL MATTERS IN WEST AFRICA

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ABSTRACT: The political situation in African nations is at a deplorable state and needs urgent and serious attention. Politicians and government officials often prioritize their own interests over those of the masses, failing to fulfill their campaign promises. To salvage the deplorable state of the nation, religious adherents should participate actively in politics and political matters to bring about lasting solutions in African politics. The following ways have been identified as possible curative approaches to bad governance: Anti-corruption campaign; Christians becoming Godly Mediators, Practical enhancement, Education and training for persons that wish to contest for any political position in their specified post of interest, Dialogue and positive advice to Government officials, and Becoming agents of positive change. Few West African nations are discussed, and more emphasis is given to Christians in this write-up.

Keywords: *Religion, Politics, African Situations, Religious Adherents' Roles.*

Introduction

In the past, some religious adherents developed a nonchalant attitude towards political matters. Some are of the opinion

that politics is a dirty game. This, they say, is based on the unethical attitudes of some politicians who will go to any length to ensure that they win elections by any means. The winning of elections by all means by politicians was demonstrated and reported by media personnel during Nigeria's last general elections in February and March 2023. Thus, some individuals who might excel in the political arena tend to shy away from participating in it. Also, a few Christians who ventured into politics in the past and were elected into office messed up their Christian profession, soiled their integrity, and brought reproach to the body of Christ. Thus, others truly believe that there is something in power that corrupts good people and politics.

Furthermore, important matters that affect religious adherents are discussed and decisions taken without them having fair representation during the discussion and decision-making sessions. It is when educated, passionate, selfless, and God-fearing individuals take up their responsibilities as committed and patriotic citizens of the nation that good governance can be achieved. This write-up aims to sensitize and persuade religious adherents to possible and workable solutions to the deplorable state of politics in Africa. In this study, the following subtopics were discussed: Overview of religion; Concept of politics; Political situations of West African nations; Views of different scholars on political participation and the Roles religious adherents could play to make politics better, safer, and good Governance a reality.

Biblical Perspective to Politics

Closson (2015, 1-2) opined that the gospel is a holistic message with implications for all areas of life, including how religious adherents could engage in political processes. The Scriptures discuss about civil government and provide examples of those who faithfully engaged in it. Joseph in the Old Testament served in the government, exerting influence to further the flourishing of the nation of Egypt. Joseph according to the Scriptures feared God and kept himself from doing any wicked thing against God and man (Genesis 37:2; 39:9; 42:18), He served faithfully in Potiphar's house and in the prison (Genesis 39:1-6, 21-23). Joseph gave wise political counsel that saved many lives and countries from death during years of famine (Genesis 41:28-38). Genesis 41:41-45 also recorded that Joseph got involved in governance as the second in command to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt and the

world in extension, because Egypt was the world power ruler then (Genesis 42:2, 5-6, 45:8-9).

Cashion (2021, 3) noted that the Scriptures have lists of 'political' individuals like Nehemiah, Esther, Mordecai and Daniel who influenced their world politically. Nehemiah in Nehemiah 2:7-18 went to Jerusalem as political appointee by King Xerxes to rebuild the broken wall of Jerusalem. As a Jewish faithful, Mordecai should not have allowed Esther to get involved in governance by becoming the King's wife in a strange land. Yet, it was for the deliverance of the Jewish people that God orchestrated Esther's 'Queenship' (Esther 2:15-17; 4:14; 8:1-27). Mordecai Queen Esther's uncle later became the second in command to King Xerxes, and his political reign was great that the full accounts of his greatness was written in the book of the annals of the Kings of Media and Persia (Esther 10:1-3, 9:29-32). Daniel on the other hand, had the privilege of being a top political administrator for four different world rulers while he was in exile in the land of Babylon, and his three friends were appointed chief ministers as being recorded in the Scriptures (Daniel 2:46-49, 5:29; 6:1-3, 10:1).

Furthermore, Daniel purported in his heart not to defile himself in political arena, and he was not a corrupt politician nor did he compromised his faith (Daniel 1:8, 6:4). Likewise, Joseph of Arimathea a top political ruler in the New Testament went to Pilate and requested for Jesus' body and buried Him (Matthew 27:57-60; John 19:38-40). Sometimes, it takes a fellow high profile political personnel to talk to another to get needed results Religious adherents must understand this fact and be motivated to play active roles in politics. If people like Joseph, Daniel, Mordecai, Esther got involved in political matters and excelled, any God-fearing person can get involved political matters without playing dirty games as did these noble God-fearing men in the Bible

Overview of Religion

Religion is a complex phenomenon that till date has some difficult ideas, concepts and beliefs that one cannot fully understand or explain. Africans generally believed in the existence of a Supreme Being. There are different religious groups in African

countries. They include among others; Christians, Muslims, African Traditional Religion and others. But more emphasis will be given to Christianity in this paper because most of the books and articles consulted are written by Christians. Only a few addressed Muslims and ATR. This writer also as a Christian has lesser knowledge on how the other religious group functions.

Abbink (2014, 3) defined religion as peoples' belief in the existence and workings of spiritual beings or divine forces, and the recognition of an invisible order or reality that affects humans and their behaviour. This order has always been seen as supernatural, supra-dimension and deals with discerned ancestor spirits, forces greater than human or a being regarded as the creator. Religion in this case is value-neutral and often seen as a fact of being in the world. Eleagu (2018, 1) stated that religion is one of the contending and vexation issue all over the world because of the power inherent in it. Religion was described as cultural phenomena that comprises of social societies, traditions of practices, literatures, sacred places and folktales, which conveys meaning and identity. This implies that religion is one of the core reason for human existence on earth, and the authority vested upon religious leaders and its adherents makes it a much talked about phenomena.

The earliest account of Christianity in Africa is found in Acts 8:30-39, where the disciple Philip preached and the Ethiopian eunuch was converted and baptized in the River Jordan. Many people presumed that the Ethiopian eunuch took religion to Africa and sowed the first seed of Christianity. History Ville (2022, 1) opined that the spread of Christianity in Africa is attributed to Mark the Evangelist, who was said to have brought Christianity to Alexandria, in Egypt. In Africa Study Bible (2019, 3), it was also found that from 1420 to 1800, Portuguese politicians and Christian missionaries from Portugal and Spain dominated most of coastal Africa. Slave traders and missionaries fought each other for the souls of Africans. Portuguese missionary efforts made a significant and lasting impact on African soils. Although the result made by them was only minimum Christianity in most places they influenced.

School Software (2022, 1-2) stated that missionary activities moved to Nigeria and started in Benin clan in 1515. Some Catholic missionaries set up a school in the

Oba's palace for his sons and the sons of his chiefs who were converted to Christianity and it spread across the land. The Catholics, through the influence of the Portuguese traders, were the first missionaries to set foot on Nigerian soil. The primary objective of the early foreign Christian missionaries who came to African nations was to convert the pagans or the abstruse African to Christianity through education and medical treatment.

Additionally, School Software (2022, 2) submitted that the second missionary movement in the history of Nigerian nation was announced by the arrival of the first English-speaking Christian missionaries in Badagry in September 1842. As a child in the elementary school we were taught that Bishop Ajayi Crowder a missionary helped foreign missionaries like Mary Slessor and others to propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ under the umbrella of Christian Missionary Society (CMS). Their missionary activities gave birth to Church of Nigerian Anglican Communion which was first established in Western Nigerian.

Concept of Politics in Governance

The desire to rule or govern is innate in man. The world is maintained by various rules and regulations made by those entrusted with leadership positions. Even in the family which is the smallest unit of the society, the father is the political leader. He makes the rules and regulations, often assisted by his wife in the decision-making and monitoring of how the rules are being obeyed. Politics can be said to be any approach or methodology being employed by those in leadership position to run the affairs of the society or nation.

Otiyele, (1990, 45-46) stated that politics is an essential and unavoidable endeavor that almost all humans are involved in at different levels and in varied degrees. The extent and manner an individual participates in politics depends on the person's understanding of the meaning, depth and significance of the term politics. Political leaders are usually vested with the authority to enforce adherence to law and order in society. Political leaders are also charged with the responsibility of carefully allocating the nation's valuable resources, which are in short supply, adequately to the masses. It is worth noting that politics is conducted within the confines of human

society. Yusuf (2012, 43) noted that politics is the art and science of governing the masses. Anyone who plays an active part in political matters is called a politician. In one way or the other, every living being is a political animal.

Chioke (2023, 3) observed that politics is the acquisition of power and its use for governance. It is not a unilateral action plan; thus, decision-making in the political arena that affects the masses must be one that represents the views of almost everyone and include all relevant organizations of the general public. But the writer wants to state that this is not usually the case nowadays. Political leaders make decisions that affect the masses without considering whether these decisions will have a positive or negative impact on them. On the other hand, Boswell (2019, p. 2) opined that people's participation in political contests is driven by their desire to seek cultural identity and recognition. It equally has to do with the desire to see that material resources allocated by those in governance is done fairly. The desire to understand some political disappointments that are caused by the gap that exists between what is referred to as "transactional view and the messier reality", is another reason people participate in politics.

Political Situation of Nigeria

In the past, other countries came to Nigeria and collected some of our Agricultural products like palm fruits, banana, cashew, and planted them in their nations. With these great investments from God, Nigeria is meant to be one of the world's wealthiest nations in terms of natural resources and agriculture. However, nowadays, some of the nations that took our crops to their lands like Malaysia, export what they took from us back to us to buy. What an irony of life and a bad change of situation. Olajide (2017, 124) affirmed that Nigeria now depends on importation of crude oil when they were blessed with natural resources despite Nigeria's soil being endowed with many natural resources. At the same time, the soil is great for different foods and crops productions, yet, rice, sugar and some vegetable (soya bean oil and palm oil due to suitable climate) are imported from outside the nation.

Otiyele (1990, 46) claimed that the Colonia era politics was characterized by Utilitarian. The Colonia leaders were more concerned with the maintenance of law

and order in the land as long as it aids them to accomplish “imperialistic objectives”. This they did by forcing authority on the citizens to gain some things via economic and political dominance. It was stated that Nigerian citizens barely participate in politics, while few that did were closely supervised and monitored. Thus, Nigerians demanded for independence from their Colonial master.

Contrariwise, Otijele, (1990, 47-48) submitted that in the Post-Independent Era, Nigerian leaders became victims of what they fought the Colonia Master of. For the satisfaction of their avarices and selfishness, they exploits their fellow citizens tyrannically. The nonchalant attitudes of the leaders towards the plights of the citizens and lack of dedication to work, proper care for public properties, and good maintenance culture; characterized Nigerian’s native leadership activities. To escape the tyranny of these leaders, the Nzeogwu coup, which gave rise to other intermittent military coups followed by brief periods of civilian rule, occurred. Otijele foresaw great tribulation and asked if future leaders will not commit same crimes as did past leaders And true to his insinuations or fears, the future and present day leaders did and are doing worse than what was foreseen.

Isiramen (2010, 2) opined that Nigeria is a country with over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own language and dialects. Nigerians are a diverse group of people with distinct cultural heritages. Yusuf (2012, 43) noted that Nigeria is regarded as the Giant of Africa and one of the most populous nations of the world. The founding fathers of Nigerian Independence were dedicated and not too desperate to be in power, as the present-day politicians are. This is because the desperate leaders do not know that “every leader is a vicegerent of the Creator (Allah). Authority rests with none but the Sovereign God Who is the Law-Giver” (43). It should be noted that the selfless hearts and sacrificial services of Nigerian founding fathers, such as Mbonu Ojike, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and General Yakubu Gowon, among others, are nowhere to be found in most past and present Nigerian political leaders.

Imaekhai (2010, 170-176) noted that the Nigerian Constitution, both past and present, has acknowledged the secular nature of the nation state. They adhere to the concept of the separation of Church and State. The state is not supposed to interfere in Church matters, likewise the Church is not supposed to interfere in state matters,

and the people have freedom to choose and practice the religion of their choice without being prosecuted. It was noted that corruption although a global evil, “is the single most important problem in Nigeria today” (176). Ayandokun (2017, 52) stated that there is a high level of corruption in the political system in Nigeria and noted that the corruption assertion is true and can be attested to by other scholars. Corruption is indeed a great challenge in Nigeria because some politicians and office holders are either involved in corrupt practices, or cover corrupt acts or support corrupt activities.

Mbah (2024, 11-12) wrote that Nigeria’s south-east state, Enugu, has a population of approximately seven million. The history of Enugu is the blue print to the evolution of Nigeria from pre-amalgamation, pre-independence and post-independence. The emergence of economic clout in Enugu via Rail line built for the extraction of Coal from Enugu to Port Harcourt, made Enugu a decorating economic center and was the stimulus for the sustained movement into the town recorded in the early 20th century. Thus, Enugu became the center for Colonia administration in Nigeria, inevitably. Nigeria is African’s most populous nation with above 200 million population, and the Continent biggest economy. Nigeria has a landmark of 923,768sq km, located in West Africa. Contrariwise, Nigeria, especially in this present government regime, is backwards economically as compared to some other West African nations.

Baba (2022, 3) opined that politicians had little interest in promoting ways to meet the needs of the less privilege as soon as they get to office, Many of them either forget or care less about their political campaign manifestos. They instead delve into all manners of corrupt practices. Abati (2022, 3) also stated that Nigerian politicians in years past have employed both ethnicity and religion as device to exploit and manipulate the masses for their own selfish purpose. The connection between religious belief and how power can be exercised has led in the political patronage of religious groups and the rise of religious adherents in some Churches and Mosques. This action is not commendable and should be stopped.

Yesufu (2016, 8) affirmed that the impact of religion in the society tends to have played out in bad light in Nigeria, as politics and religion are mixed in the attempt to gain political hold on the people Attempts made to explore the leadership gap created

by the weaker state of affairs at restraining influential resistance of government or members of religious groups on politics, creates a state of insecurity. Although, “the creation of JNI by the Muslims and CAN by the Christians has provided strong impact in the continued interaction and efforts at gaining social positions within the social system in Nigeria” (8). Although the situation is gradually changing as politician's influence on the citizens in some states are decreasing. This can be confirmed from the observations and assertions of many people in 2023 elections in Nigeria. Some Nigerians refused to be bought over by politicians, while some were ready to die defending their wish for good governance and their votes during the election processes.

Odogwu (2024, 18) opined that when governance affects people at the grassroots levels positively, the reality of the nation to become great is inevitable. This is the secret that made China to become great. However, in Nigeria the leaders have turned governance upside down, as the local government system which ought to handle rural economic transformation and food security is non active presently. When the Local Government which is the core of rural economic transformation and food security is revived, then, every other thing will take place as they ought to. Therefore, those in the helms of authority should please revive the Local Government system executive arm of leadership in Nigeria.

Cameroon Political Situation

Agbu (2022, 32-33) noted that on December 13, 1946, Northern and Southern Cameroon were placed under the United Nations International Trusteeship System, which enabled them to achieve self-government or independence. On June 1, 1961, Northern Cameroon joined Nigeria, while Southern Cameroon joined on October 1, 1961. Etta (2022, 60) stated that Cameroon gained independence from France on January 1, 1960, and became a republic on October 1, 1961, except for the northern part, which signed a plebiscite to remain with Nigeria. Jotanga (2018, 19-20) stated that the Bakkasi Peninsula lies at the border of Cameroon and Nigeria, and it is rich in oil. They have their parliament building in Yaounde. They have bilingual official languages, but French is the dominant one.

Obasanjo (2022, xii-xiii) stated that the Federal Republic of Cameroon gained its independence in 1960. There was the Southern Cameroon Trusteeship territory, which existed prior to 1961, and was managed from Nigeria. Through the reunification of former British Southern Cameroon and the French Cameroon, they became the Federal Republic of Cameroon. But since 1991, there has been the crisis of Anglophone, economic instability, and Boko Haram attacks. Then came trade union agitation in late 2016-2017 for the independent State of Ambazonia for those who were governed by the British administrators. The pro-Ambazonia elements seek secession because they want to feel a sense of belonging and be heard.

Jotanga (2018, 14-15, 18, 26) noted that barely three years after the reunification of the two-state federal republic of Cameroon, the Anglophones expressed their dissatisfaction with how they were treated. Their first president, Ahidjo, had a meeting with Dr. Bernard N. Fonlon, the chief scribe of the KNDP. The Anglophones demanded for decentralization of political power. Unfortunately, their demands were ignored. (p18). On April 6th, 1993, President Paul Biya nearly lost power to group of disgruntled soldiers. It was alleged that Ni Fru Ndi John was the legitimate elected President in October, 1992, but Paul Biya the incumbent president remained in office (p18). Weeks to October 1992 election, money exchanged hands to buy votes, and some of the resources ended up in private bags of few campaign officials. This led to fights among party members and their supporters as the war spoils were not distributed evenly.

Going further, Jotanga, (2018, 28, 30, 38-40, 50) stated that government's inability to listen to the masses to give them fair treatment, resulted in civil disobedience and drop in the country's tax revenues. After 20 years of independence, the Anglophones called for civil disobedience amidst the citizens again. Corruption and miss-normal ate deep into many fabrics of Cameroon governance. It was deep in the civil services that it was hard to know how many persons the government employed. Corruption in Cameroon was described as a demeaning practice that is allowed in by almost everyone, though officially being denied. President Biya dared the citizens to provide proofs that there were embezzlement in the country and no one dares to do so. On the other hand, elections were mainly "a window dressing exercise intended for external

consumption” (50). This was alleged because the government used both legal and illegal means to win the Council elections of January 1996, as well as the Legislative elections of 1997.

At present, Cameroon is still experiencing a political crisis. President Paul Biya, who is currently 92 years old, has refused to relinquish power to another person. He rather sought re-election for the eighth time in office, despite internal agitation from Cameroonians for a change in power, as well as international pressure on him for a transition to a new government. Cameroon was scheduled for another election on October 12, 2025. Contrary to the desire and demand of the masses, President Paul Biya was returned to power. Abuse of power and misuse of political office are gradually eroding the foundations of some African countries.

Burkina-Faso Political Situations

Okewoye (2025, p. 1) stated that in the late 19th century, France colonized Upper Volta. Then in 1960 Upper Volta gained freedom from French colonial rule. On August 5, 2025 they celebrated their 65 years of independence. Their story from the inception of their independence till date is that of resilience, an enduring desire for self-determination and transformation. BBC News (2024, 3) noted that at Upper Volta's independence, Maurice Yameogo became the first president of Upper Volta. In 1966, a military coup deposed him, and Lt Col Sangoule Lamizana became the military ruler. Kambou (2024, 1) noted that on January 3, 1966, the military deposed President Maurice Yaméogo due to massive austerity in the land, which led to strike action. Lt Col Lamizana, Aboubakar Sangoule, took over power, who was then the former Chief of Staff.

Chin et al. (2024, 1) noted that Upper Volta changed its name to Burkina Faso in 1984. From independence in 1960 through 2014, they had never been favoured with good governance. They have only experienced military rule or self-imposed dictators. On October 31, 2014, there was a mass uproar that unseated longtime ruler cum Dictator Blaise Compaore, who ruled from 1987 to 2014. On October 31, Kambou (2024, 1-2) noted that Blaise Compaoré was ousted on October 31, 2014, because he tried to change the constitution so as to stay in power. BBC News (2024,

1, 3) noted that Burkina-Faso is a poor country by West African standard that has suffered from incessant droughts and coups. But there are good number of reserves of gold, manganese, copper and limestone in the country.

Chin et al (2024, 2, 4) claimed that despite unseating Blaise, Burkina-Faso still encountered worse “jihadist insurgency government delegatimation and two coups in 2022” (1) that ushered in military Junta. Military takeover of Burkina-Faso has not given the citizens what they did expected nor the security that was promised. Civilian rule was not restored as promised by military junta led by Damiba, rather it has been extended until July 2029. Contrariwise, Traore declared his country a “strategic ally to Russia in May 2024, as French forces left the nation. There are recent reports of arbitrary arrest, forceful enlistment and kidnapping of critics. It was alleged that the regime of Traore has become so repressive with sensed calculated attacks on civilian rule.

BBC News (2024, 1, 4) noted that Capt. Traore, Ibrahim took over power in September 2022 from Lt-Col. Damiba who ousted president Kabore, Marc in January 2022. In 2023 Traore expels about 400 French Special Forces cutting off military relations with France. Military links with Russia was initiated to combat the jihadists’ insurgency. The French country that colonized Burkina Faso had undue influence in the governance of the land. This led to the cutting off ties with them by Capt. Traore, Ibrahim. But Burkina Faso is still having political unrest, though it is ruled by the military presently The Nigerian political situation is not too great, as its citizens would likely agree. Nigerians seem to suffer political unrest as do some other West African nations including the Cameroonians. Nigeria has a tenured period for government office holders and so have had different political leaders. Nevertheless, the few years that Nigerian politicians spend in office are used to heap untold hardships and some level of insecurity upon the masses. It seems that the incumbent somehow inherits corruption and poor governance from its predecessors. Cameroonians, on the other hand, do not have a tenured office period. Hence, their present president, Biya, has remained in office until a very advanced age and is still in power.

Burkina Faso, on the other hand, cannot say that it is very pleased with its rulers thus far. The statement from Chin et al. (2024, 1, 4) that, from independence in 1960 through 2014, they had never been favoured with good governance, is a testament to this fact. They have only experienced military rule or self-imposed dictators. And recent reports of arbitrary arrest, forceful enlistment, and kidnapping of critics of those in government by the current leaders prove they are yet to be liberated politically. From all indications, it seems that some West African nations are currently undergoing varied political and leadership crises. This is why this writer proposes the full participation of God-fearing religious adherents in politics and governance of their countries.

Various Views on Political Matters

Abbink (2014, 3), citing Ellis and ter Haar (1998), observed that political leaders in Africa often utilize religion in an obviously questionable and opportunistic manner to maintain their political power and exercise authority over the people. However, the conscious reinvention and use of these presumed “epistemologies” by politicians nowadays, merely to gain and maintain power, makes it very clear that they cannot be taken at face value and are not immune to criticism from the masses. In practice, the nature and impact of religion in public life are continuously being evaluated and discussed by religious groups, citizens, and analysts in African nations.

Umeanolue (2020, 151-152) observed that religion and politics can work together to enhance good governance. However, sometimes religion creates a negative impact in politics. This is because some religious adherents use religion to their own selfish interest and never to better the welfare of the masses that trusted and voted for them. Umeanolue noted that both Christians and Muslims’ political leaders do not balance politics with religion in the right proportion that will be of benefits to the pressing needs of the masses. Some politicians prefer to focus on sponsoring pilgrimages to Mecca and Jerusalem. This writer opined that sponsoring pilgrimages to either Mecca or Jerusalem is not a bad thing. However, it could be regarded as being selfish if it is being done to the detriment of more pressing national or state needs.

Closson (2015, p. 1) observed that some Church people view political engagement as inherently tainted and an arena unfit for those serious about the propagation of the

gospel. This is as a result of the inundated television ads, robocalls, campaign mail and the overall negative tone of politics. However, Christians should not think or feel this way as the message of the gospel is that by grace through faith sinners can be reconciled back to God (Ephesians 2:7-8). Paul in Ephesians 2:10 said believers are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared them for beforehand,(Galatians 6:10). Thus, Christians' participation in politics is part of their good works. Christians' participations in politics has ways of giving them opportunity to exercise their rights as citizens that could bring favourable conditions to the masses.

Kandiah (2010, 1) quoting Kuhrt in an interview stated that, Christians must realize that whether they are involved or choose not to engage in politics, it is a vote for the status quo. Kuhrt stated that Christians are political in nature and need to be involved because God cares passionately about the world and His creation, and consequently how it is being governed. There has been believers in Christ Jesus in the past who brought to politics a deeper commitment to justice and compassion which throughout history has made a difference in the political sphere. Some of these men of God are: William Wilberforce, Lord Shaftesbury, Elizabeth Fry, Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu and many others. The absence of godly people in the political sphere encourages injustice which God hates and it grieves His heart.

Drollinger (2023, 2) also opined that when Jesus called believers the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16), He meant that Christians are to represent Him everywhere. They are to illuminate the earth, including in political arenas. The presence of Christians are to bring about positive impact among the political class and authorities of the government. Drollinger furthermore noted that Jesus' teaching of the Beatitude implies that the degree a person internally manifests Christlikeness will be the degree to which the person externally affect his/her world, including the economic well-being of the country. It is on record that William Wilberforce changed the slavery laws of England because while he was in office, to a high degree he exhibited Christlikeness 'Beautitudinal'.

In addition, Welby (2018, 1-2) submitted that Jesus Christ was highly political while He was on earth. He sometimes spoke harsh words to society leaders who did not care

for the needy or who were hypocritical in their attitudes. It was stated that in 1942 Archbishop William Temple wrote a wonderful book called Christianity and Social Order. William Temple knew that God cares for the less privileged and for society as a whole, and believed that after the war a just society must exist that will be better than what was in the 1930s. William Temple was an old friend of another Christian, William Beveridge, a top civil servant who wrote the great report that designed the welfare system and the health service, which improved social care. A third friend R.H. Tawney, a Christian and social philosopher joined them to describe the kind of country that they felt reflected God's values better. They were political, and through their involvement in politics, millions of people enjoyed better, healthier living. Welby stated that no religious leader exercised the authority that these powerful Christians had wielded hundreds of years ago.

BGEA (2024, 1), citing Billy Graham, stated that the word politics has a wider meaning than merely a political party or party platform. Politics affects societal life, the towns, cities, states and nation. Christians must be concerned about the direction politics takes the country to and get involved in deciding who governs the nation and how the nation's laws impact the people's future. Billy Graham stated that "the secret strength of a nation is found in the faith that abides in the hearts, homes and families. Nowadays, it is essential to remind people that all aspects of life, including political, social, economic, and industrial spheres, must be governed by the laws of God. It is on record that Billy Graham, till his death, was directly involved in political matters as a great adviser to many American political leaders, even as a renowned Evangelist of the Gospel of Christ Jesus. Thus, Nigerian Christians could get involved in political matters.

The following massive positive impacts and achievements of these great past soldiers of Christ serve as pointers to the benefits of having Christians actively involved in political activities and governance. Christians and other religious adherents are encouraged to seriously consider joining political groups in ways they can, to assist in bringing sanity and God-fearing leadership influences to the nation's government. Those who wish to enter the political arena must emulate the selfless service and sacrifices made by the aforementioned Christians. They can take the time and pains to study the lifestyles and history of these great Christians, who were heroic

politicians and government officials, and positively impacted their generations. To this day, their good works still speak volumes and are worth emulating.

Some Political Roles Religious Adherents Could Engage in to Enhance Positive Politics

There are many and varied roles or practical steps that Christians and Muslims can take to bring about positive impacts in politics and good governance in their nation as committed and patriotic citizens. Religious adherents should do well to take note of these roles, make more research on them and put them into active practice. This is because the importance of religious adherents actively getting involved in good governance and political matters cannot be overemphasized. Some of the roles are discussed here

Intense Scriptural and Moral Teachings

Raphael (2015, 150-151) posited that Nigeria is a pluralistic society that predominately comprises Christians and Muslims. Raphael opined that the use of Christian-Muslim perspective approach- through the development of moral sound individuals, active and positive political involvement and advocacy for collaborative efforts with different religious groups, will enhance a better and peaceful state of the nation. Harnessing the different sacred texts of doctrinal and moral teachings of different religious groups will aid in the clamour for a just society where people are given equal rights and fair hearings, and good welfare packages. Religious leaders should endeavour to teach their members their sacred scriptures in ways they could understand the teachings better.

Motivation and Encouragement

Enyinnaya (2004, 72) noted that the Church may not turn itself into a political party, but it can motivate its members to take an active part in politics. This is necessary as Nigeria is in dire need of God-fearing and dedicated leaders. It has been observed that the strategy of attempting to influence political leaders from outside the political circle has not been effective. Hence, religious adherents need to be directly involved. Christians can “constitute electoral blocks or a moral majority as a leverage in forcing political parties to uphold Christian concerns” (72). Kayode (2023, 1) opined

that until religious group leaders recognize their responsibility to encourage their members to participate in political activities and decision-making at various levels in Nigeria, achieving the desired change may be difficult.

Godly Mediators

Imaekhai (2010, 175-176) suggested that Christians should view themselves as individuals called by God to be godly mediators, bringing sanity to the nation's political system. The Church can act as an “Interventive Mechanism” (176) against corruption in Nigeria. Nowadays, Christians in politics can achieve this feat of becoming godly mediators. They could do so by being honest, sincere, and see themselves as servant-leaders with integrity, as well as shun engagement in unhealthy political schemes and competing for superiority.

Right Education and Knowledge on Political Matters

Kafang (2011, 13,17,23) submitted that Christians who feel led by God to join politics should be educated by the Church leadership to know that they are going there to be God’s representatives in society, They must seek to understand political perspectives well before joining political race. They should develop a creative and analytical positive mindset that will enable them to develop projects and innovations that create job opportunities for the masses and bring glory to God, Whose Ambassadors they are in the political arena. In addition, Ayandokun (2017, 57-59) opined that training and education are essential ways to get people in various professions to be adequately equipped for their jobs. Thus, it is high time all Church people and other religious adherents who seek for political posts to become properly educated, trained and given current leadership lectures that works in the business and public world.

Anti-Corruption Crusade

Mepaiyeda (2012, 36-39) opined that the Church can get involved in politics through Anti-Corruption Crusade. Corruption has been identified as one evil against development in African country especially the Nigerian nation. The Church should start the campaign against corruption by speaking the truth to its members and to those in positions of authority. In addition, ministers of the gospel that grace top

positions or any government functions, should cease the period to speak the truth of the word of God and correct some miss-normal perpetrated by those in governance. They must guard against turning the opportunity for money-making or building unnecessary popularity at the detriment of peace, equity and good governance that help in the propagation of the gospel. Idowu, 2014, 253-254) submitted that religious leaders, teachers and parents must guide their children from being involved negatively on political matters. Let these youths be gainfully engaged in good works before election period as much as it is possible.

Practical Enhancements

Ugwu and Ukeachusim (2013, p. 194) wrote that Christians, as members of Nigerian society, can contribute practical enhancements to complement the efforts of other bodies towards sustaining a healthy society. Hence, the Church has a significant role to play in ensuring that elections are credible and governance is conducted for the benefit of all in society. Another significant way for religious groups to play active roles in political matters is by making sure that their youths are given proper orientation on the right meaning of the concept of work. Although work is done for one to earn money to feed and pay bills, any work that will cause havoc and threaten the people's peace must be avoided by all means. Thus, proper orientation is vital, as some politicians are in the habit of using youths to perpetrate evils during and after elections.

Fulfillment of God's Kingdom and Earthly Kingdom Mandate

Peter (2017, 2-3) noted that it is written in Philippians 3:20 that Christians are citizens of heaven. Hence, as citizens of God's Kingdom and that of the earth, they have to fulfil their obligation to both Kingdoms. Ultimately, the Church's participation in politics and other socio-economic activities is a good way of evangelization. It is worth noting that Hebrews 12:22-23 affirms that Christians possess dual citizenship. Christians can propagate the gospel that will bring about moral and righteous changes in the lives of the people. When there is peace and tranquility in the land through good governance, it can be equated to having God's Kingdom established here on earth, as stated in Matthew 6:10.

Agents of Positive Change

Ingram (2019, p. 2) stated that Christians should prioritize voting for God's kingdom first and then vote to establish God's kingdom mandate on earth. They should use their understanding and knowledge of the kingdom of heaven to transform the earth. Kandiah, citing Kuhrt (2010, 2-3), advised believers in Africa to form and join the Christian group of the party that they believe in and be an advocate for Jesus' politics within it. This is necessary because the government does not have the power to change the world; they can only restrain evildoers. However, Christians have the power of the Holy Spirit to make great difference in the world. Christians ought to be change agents in their immediate environment and the society at large.

Revisiting and Restructuring of 'Secularity of the State of the Nation'

The separation of Church from state affairs needs to be revisited and restructured. This is because, perhaps it is as a result of this 'secularity of the state of the nation' that some religious leaders do not care about what happen in the Nigerian governance nor do they care to intervene in ways possible. At the same time, some government officials give a deaf ear to the suggestions and wise counsel of some religious leaders. Hence, revisiting and amending the law of 'state of the nation secularity' can encourage more religious adherents and their leaders to actively participate in rebuilding the political system and promoting positive reforms and good governance. Additionally, government officials and politicians could listen to and endeavour to act on their suggestions, as it would be constitutionally binding on them to do so.

Support the Government before Escalation of Insurgency

For countries like Burkina-Faso, Chin et al (2024, 4) opined that there is a need to support those in government to avoid the escalation of insurgency. Religious adherents should get involved in peaceful dialogue between the governments and the people that will be holistic with diplomatic approach that is all encompassing. Christian leaders are empowered by God to speak with authority and achieve the desired results with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Establishment of a Joint Intelligence Analysis Cell (JIAC) for the Maritime

Chin et al. (2024, p. 4) opined that the JIAC could help maritime partners maintain surveillance, preventing violent extremists from crossing into the country from the sea bank. This will also assist in securing the country from terrorists' activities. Religious adherents could provide intelligence information or coordination that aids in achieving this goal. In Nigeria, paramilitary outfits like the Vigilante Group of Nigeria could be tasked with providing intelligence reports to the government as they interact with locals in their communities.

Key Factors that can Propel Religious Adherents' Participation in Politics

For religious adherents to actively and positively participate in political matters as it concerns their nation, there are certain virtues, lifestyles and attitudes that they ought to imbibe. Some of the essential qualities are discussed below.

Genuine Love for One's Nation and the Citizens

For African politics to be revived and have positive effects on the state of the nations' citizens, it is high time religious leaders become deliberate, intentional and fervent in teaching their members the importance of love for one's country. Erhueh (1989, 4) submitted that Christians, Muslims and the Traditional worshippers must know that being truly patriotic is essential to curbing of tribalism, nepotism and covetousness which leads to corruption. This can be achieved if Nigerians learn to truly love one another and their nation, ditto to all African nation's citizens. Equally Apostle Paul stated that love is the fulfilment of all the law, Romans 13:8; Galatians 5:14. Love does no wrong to the one loved, 1 Corinthians 13:1-8. When we genuinely love others, it will be hard to oppress or inflict pain on them.

Fervent Prayers with continuous Positive Confessions

Church members as citizens of God's city can raise their voices to talk to God to intervene in the political situations of their nation. The Church was charged in 1 Timothy 2:1-3 to pray for those in authority so that there would be peace in the land. Peace in the land favours the propagation of the gospel and people will see the reality of Christ in the society. Christians must also be mindful of their utterances after they had prayed for their land. Negative words and unhealthy criticism will cancel what they prayed for. Meanwhile, a continuous positive confession of what they really

need will provoke God to answer and make their nation better, Numbers 14:21, 28. Proverbs 18:21.

Positive Mindset

Oyemoni and Olagunju (2010, 111-112) noted that Christians who felt led of God to go into politics should go ahead with the kind of mentality that was in Esther ‘ if I perish, I perish while standing firm in their resolute to see that justice and equity are being upheld in governance. Hence, those venturing into politics should let their righteousness shine to lighten the darkness of sinful acts among the political elites, as well as make the nation sweet with the salt of their godly character and actions. Religious adherents must make deliberate effort to speak what they pray and ask God. It is wrong to desire good governance, but at the same time one makes confessions that negates the prayers and desired outcomes from one’s mouths. Let us believe God’s word and intentionally confess what we want and believe.

Deep Reverence and Fear of God

The wise man wrote in Proverbs 9: 10-12; 8:12-13 that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Faith Icons that served God in political leaderships in the Scriptures all had genuine reverence and fear of God in their lives times. This was the guiding force and principle that prevented them from messing up their political appointments and leadership assignments with pride, selfishness, greed, corruption and adultery. For instance, Joseph feared God much that he refused to commit fornication with Mrs. Potiphar, neither did he mistreat his brothers in spite of them hurting him in the past, Genesis 39:9; 42:8; 50:19-20. “In the land of Uz there lived a man name Job. This man was blameless and upright, he feared God and shunned evil”, Job 1:1. Because Job feared God, he shunned evil acts. Thus, genuine fear of God can keep someone from becoming a wicked and corrupt leader.

Wisdom and Determination

Daniel pre-determined in his heart that he would not get himself defiled in the land of Babylon, Daniel 1:8. This wise decision was the key factor that deterred Daniel from sinning against his God and from being guilty of any offense or corrupt practice while he held Administrative positions in Babylon for several years, Daniel 6:1-6,

22. Proverbs talks about the importance of wisdom: “Discretion will protect you and understanding will guard you. Wisdom saves you from the ways of the wicked men, whose ways are perverse” Proverbs 2:11-12. Also wisdom is profitable to direct and guide people, Ecclesiastic 10:10. It was wisdom that made King Solomon a great and wealthiest King, 2 Chronicles 9:1-11. Without wisdom any leader can mess up. But with wisdom the leader is assured of making wise decisions that favours the society and bring peace, joy and prosperity to the people. Please note that God gives wisdom to anyone who asks from Him, James 1:5; 1 Kings 3:5-13.

Humility and Shunning of Pride

While Queen Vashti lost her position through pride, Queen Esther got it via humility and sustained the same through humble obedience to Mordecai, and humble and wise attitudes towards the King, her husband, Esther 1:9-12, 2:13-18; 4:16; 7:1-4. Joseph was also a humble leader. Humility made Joseph not to see himself as being equal with Potiphar though his master left everything in his care. Joseph was also humble enough to check on his fellow prisoners; this act paved the way for his enthronement as prime minister of Egypt, Genesis 39:6-9; 40:4-14; 41:9-14. Humility made God to give Jesus Christ name above every other names, Philippians 2:4-11. Thus, humility is a must have virtue for anyone seeking political office (1 Peter 5:5-6; James 4:6).

Concluding Remarks

This write-up examined the possibility of religious adherents, especially Christians, getting involved in politics and the roles they could play to make politics and good governance better. The study gave brief explanation of Scriptural perspective to political participation. It was discovered that God is in support of good governance and expects His children on earth to be good citizens of their society, as they are expected to be good citizens of God’s Kingdom. The teachings of Jesus that says Christians are the light and salt of the world is a strong biblical passage to back up this assertion. The concept of Religion was highlighted. Some points on how the Muslims and Christians can collaborate to the betterment of politics and good governance were stated. The study also considered the opinions of scholars on political participation, the roles religious groups can play to make politics better and

good governance a reality and key factors that could enhance active and positive political participation were explored and stated.

Findings from the study and the opinions of several scholars gathered show that religious adherents especially Christians who are admonished by God to shine their light to brighten the darkness in the world. At the same time, Muslims also have a lot of roles to play in politics. These roles includes: They should understand the teachings of their Holy Bible and Koran, imbibe the commands and instructions therein in their daily living. Anyone who feels led to get involved in politics should go ahead and be the light in the political arena. Religious adherents should register for voter's cards, participate in voting, monitoring of the votes till results are announced. Passionate dialogue and positive advice with/to the Government is a welcome development. It was established that if religious people continue to say that politics is dirty, then they will not participate, then they are leaving their right to good governance to be decided by the so-called dirty politics players. The result will continue to affect them, as it has in years past.

Thus, the onion lies with various religious bodies and their adherents, encouraging them to wake up from their slumber and become politically conscious. They should get involved in any area they can and be at the forefront of their nations' decision-making. One attribute that will persuade them to do this is genuine love for their country, which will inspire them to become patriotic citizens who are motivated by love to serve their fatherland with fairness. They should shun tribalism, bias, greed that leads to corruption, and embrace oneness and brotherly Love. Lastly the key factors that can boost positive participation by religious adherents are among others: Fervent prayers with continuous Positive confessions; Deep Reverence and Fear of God; Wisdom and Determination; and Humility and Shunning of Pride, among others should be virtues that religious politicians and those in governance must desire and imbibe as their lifestyle principles.

Recommendations

The advocacy for Revisiting and Restructuring of 'Secularity of the State of the Nation' could be helpful,

Secondly, a collaboration of Muslims, Christians, and perhaps adherents of African Traditional Religion to form a single voice organization that speaks out against poor governance and provides sound counsel and direction to those in governance is advocated for.

Thirdly, studying past heroes of Faith who changed their world positively in Governance is recommended for political aspirants and those already in governance.

Fourthly, everyone who wish to embark on political affairs especially those who wants to hold political offices must get adequate education and training necessary for them to perform effectively and efficiently while in office.

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