



The Moral Justification of Christian Clerics' Participation in Politics

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of the Church in Nigerian politics. As politics has been viewed as a dirty game, this study is intended at addressing the controversial questions: Should the Church of Jesus Christ seek to play a role in political affairs or shun any involvement in politics and concentrate on its mission? What about the involvement of the individual clergy into politics? Since independence, Nigerian citizens have scored the political ruling class lower in terms of governance and statecraft. This is because there has been recorded low improvement of welfare and lives of the citizens by the political leaders who pilot the affairs of the Nigerian nation. This scenario has bred civil unrest among citizens as the youths engage in all manner of vices like kidnapping, thuggery, cyber-crime, ritual killings, prostitution, etc., amidst corrupt lifestyles of politicians who misappropriate tax payers' money. This ill-fated development has prompted the ordinary citizen to opt for Christian clerics who are morally upright to be elected as political leaders so as to bring changes in the society. The study adopts historical method to trace the political development of Nigeria with a view to identifying the religious clerics that expressed desire and vied for political offices and expository method presents the underdevelopment scenario of the nation and evaluate the justification for clerics to be elected into political offices at all levels. The study found out that the Nigerian nation is witnessing underdevelopment as result of noninvolvement of leaders who would rule with the fear of God. The study therefore recommends that clerics should

be saddled with the responsibility to pilot the political affairs of this nation so that God's 'will' will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Keywords: Christian Clerics, Involvement, Morality, Nigeria and Politics

Introduction

The involvement of the 'ordained clergy' in politics is interrelated to the subject of the affiliation between the church and the state. Christians that live by the doctrines of Christianity have a gigantic aptitude for adding the extraordinary morals of integrity, transparency, organization, and pragmatic education into the Nigerian politics, which should logically set in motion the stimulation of progress in all areas of national life comprising the economic, social, legal, educational and civic organs, inter alia. However, involving in control of the state machinery is what the church and clergymen should continually require to do so as to renovate the society for good. The Church has so repeatedly exempted herself of partaking in governance of the state while it is abandoned to reckless people who have caused so much harm to the polity of the Nigerian society. The paper digests on the moral implications of Christian clerics' participation in politics. The paper establishes that if Christian clerics are elected into political offices, they would perform far better as they would implement the moral laws advocated in the church to serve as a catalyst for transformation. In so doing, the Church should be active in partisan politics for the reason that, this will procure citizens who are morally upright into the helms of affairs in governance, empower them and stir up real progress.

Definition of Terms

For a clearer understanding of this paper, the following concepts shall be explained thus:

Morality: Morality (from Latin *moralitas* 'manner, character, proper behaviour') is the differentiation of intentions, decisions and actions between those that are distinguished as proper (right) and those that are improper (wrong). Morality can be a body of standards or principles derived from a code of conduct from a particular philosophy, religion or culture, or it can be derived from a standard that a person believes should



be universal. Morality may also be specifically synonymous with “goodness” or “rightness” (Long and Sedley, 1987; 366-367).

Politics: Consistent with Hornby (2000), politics is articulated as the “the activities involved in getting and using power in public life, and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society” (p. 899). Politics is essentially about good governance and primarily involves the structuring of power for achieving some articulated goals. Originally, politics refers to the art of governing a state.

Controversies Surrounding Christian Involvement in Politics

There have been some objections to Christian participation in politics over the ages coupled with some biblical verses that needs to be pointed out. First of all, Christians perceive that politics is a ‘dirty game’ as it is marred by fraudulent practices. This development degenerates to elimination of human lives and property. The attitudes of politicians scare ‘true’ Christians away from participating in politics. Some even express apathy towards it.

Conceivably, according to Falaye;

Most Christians proof that it is very wrong to get involved in politics because of Jesus’ refusal to be made king by His followers. They go on to tell any would-be Christian politician that the Christian task is evangelism, not politics that being involved in politics will cause a distraction from the Christian task of bringing lost sinners to Christ. Generally, Christians trying to get into politics are usually criticized: going into politics is going to be very tough; the pressure will be immense, one would find himself frequently walking a tight rope between remaining faithful to one’s Christian principles and breaking down misunderstandings generated by popular negative perceptions against Christianity, etc. However, one concludes that it is too hard to be involved in politics, that



means the whole arena of leadership and governance is surrendered to the hand of Satan.... (p. 3).

Affirming Falaye, Osei-Acheampong also observed that the early missionaries aloof Christianity from politics specially in some African countries and this made some Christians registered discontentment towards politics, and they transferred the wrong view of politics to their children where the children disregarded the importance of politics to human survival (165). Up till now, some Christians shy away from politics thinking that it is too mundane to bring about salvation. This attitude is peculiar to the Catholic Church that was badly influenced by the emperors' roles in the early life of the Church. The pagan emperors at the infancy stage of the Church used political powers to victimize the early Christians. No wonder Christians from the beginning associated politics with paganism and mundane things of the world, and as such believed that political activities lead to damnation. This influence affected the clerical order to the point that it was enshrined in the revised 1983 Code of cannon law. Cannon 287 is clear about this: that any cleric involved in partisan politics was outlawed (*Anathema sit*). In other words, to make sure that the clerics were forbidden from active participation in politics, it was enshrined in the Codes of Cannon Law governing the lives and conducts of the clerics (Omegoha, 2011).

Similarly, Barth also blamed Christians for not participating in politics; that its root was from the German National socialism-which they held that politics is completely German affairs not Christians' affairs; which direct itself to the whole contemporary world (22-28). Furthermore, Archbishop, Ecclesiastical Province of Niger Delta, Most Rev. Blessing Enyindah, delivered a lecture on the theme: "Leadership Challenge and National Rebirth: Solution from the Christian Perspective" spotted that heightened by weakness and obliviousness, Christians in Nigeria have peddled their birthrights for the sake of holiness. He held: "An adage among the Christian folks with this mindset is that that politics should not be mentioned among those who are to be raptured with Jesus Christ; that is one of the reasons we have sold our birthright" ("Clerics, Ndoma-Egba," 2022).



Some people are afraid that Christian clerics' direct involvement in politics can be diversionary and distractive. The role they are playing at the moment from the pulpit is sufficient to stir the soul of the nation away from evil and ultimate perdition. Some interpret Matthew 22:21 where Jesus said "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" to mean that a true Christian ought not to interfere or meddle his/her Christian life with politics. Daily Trust Newspaper of Sat, 08 Dec, 2018 sampled the opinions of religious clerics on "Should Clerics Get Involved in Politics" reports that President Muhammadu Buhari at the Interfaith Initiative for Peace Conference in Abuja in October, 2018 advised religious leaders in Nigeria to eschew partisan politics ahead of the 2019 general elections, saying those engaging in political controversies among them risk losing public respect. Daily Trust Saturday sought opinions of clerics thus: Pastor Benedict Aliku of the Restoration Bible Church and Ministries, Kaduna shared his opinion thus: I don't believe a cleric should be involved in politics. Clerics can encourage their followers to be good and law-abiding politicians. The office of a religious leader comes with many responsibilities, and as such, being part of politics will affect his/her spiritual and moral responsibilities. They are to receive from God in order to give to the people, while politicians collect from the government so as to give to the people. Nigeria was healthier when clerics were not involved in governance. They are expected to assess the politicians but the assessment is neglected and that is why Nigeria is in shambles currently. There may be no transformation except the clerics return to their God-given responsibilities ("Should Clerics Get Involved in Politics?" 2018).

It justifiable that the clergy must as a matter of religious obligation perceive to the development of the society through political activism since no one can live in seclusion from the political life of the State. Nonetheless as stated by John Stott (1999), the church should not enter this field without the needed knowhow. Concerning the clergy's involvement in politics, it is significant to observe this question as Stott pinpointed; whether Jesus was involved in politics? From the work of Jesus Christ, it could be purely known that though He did not originate any political party, His entire ministry was political 126 since He was so

concerned about the entire life of the community; the foundation for the clergy's involvement. The clergy's civic obligation is consequently slice of national politics as the achievement of these tasks are tailored towards governance and the wellbeing of the Citizen

On his part, Labani Kehinde of Charismatic Renaissance International Church, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State asserts:

Yes, clerics should get involved in politics because their absence is getting the wrong leaders on seat. If we get involved, then we will intentionally build the kind of leaders that will drive home our vision. Christians have been shying away from politics because of what people would say, forgetting that David and Daniel among others in the Bible were politicians of their time and they were relevant. Until we start participating, we will keep complaining while we have the influence to dictate what we want. There is also need for us to work as a team to produce the right leaders with the vision of transforming the nation and not leaders that start and abandon critical projects ("Should Clerics Get Involved in Politics?" 2018).

On the dis-affirmative, Pastor Yohanna Y. D. Buru of General Overseer, Christ Evangelical and Life Intervention Fellowship, Kaduna objected to clerics' participation in politics. His reasons for the objection are derived from the Bible. In the Old Testament, it was detailed obviously that the office of a priest or prophet is a religious or spiritual one and not a political office. The religious leaders were given the mandate to only guide the political leaders on spiritual and physical matters in order to lead God's people aright through the teaching of God's word, to both the leaders and the led. Furthermore, God made a vibrant separation between sacred and the secular, whereby the secular was headed by kings while the spiritual was headed by priests or prophets ("Should Clerics Get Involved in Politics?" 2018). Again, he said that although Israel was ruled by God and judges, after the people of Israel asked for a king, God made

the differentiation between sacred and secular. This separation between the secular and sacred sustained through to New Testament, in which God guaranteed humanity that all authorities are God's (Romans 8:1-7). To be called into pastoral ministry does not include politics as it is specified in the holy book that religious leaders are called into ministry leadership and gift for the edification and unity of the body of Christ. Above all, this calling and gift for ministry leadership is meant to help in influencing politicians and political system for the good of all. So, if religious leaders are tangled in politics, who will direct the politicians to do right before men and God? ("Should Clerics Get Involved in Politics?" 2018).

In projecting the other side of the coin, Asante (1990) opines that the ordained minister's task must reflect to display the good of the larger society with the restructuring of society. In carrying out this role, the clergy as ordained agent of the church must admit the socio-political requirements of the nation and grasp to concern him/herself with it. The faith of the church may be indefinite if the 'agent' and other believers downgrade or refuse to join the larger society to offer ripostes to the questions of human's worry and insecurity. This is for the reason that the church has a right mission in the political, social and economic order as society forestalls the coming of the Lord as advocated by the church. To achieve this mission, the ordained minister has a part to play which is part of the civic responsibility. This echoes in the civic role anticipated of every citizen. If the Christian faith has any truth to go by, it must be practical and this must be co-supported by the clergy. Asante (1990) argues that the clergy have no defense but to make the Christian faith and mission practical by involving themselves with the socio-political state of affairs of the society. Playing a part in the socio-political status quo of the nation by the ordained Clergy is a civic responsibility. In so doing, theology is both 'political' and 'social' philologically in so far as it articulates God's act and engrossment in the organization of human society (p. 203).

Aliyu reasons that:

This is a wide question. It depends on the angle. For a cleric to become an active partisan politician is unacceptable because he/she cannot merge the two

points of view together. They are conflicting; you cannot do that because they belong to two different camps. As a citizen, he can comment on political issues as long as it is not partisanship. Some religious leaders today have lost focus; they are even more partisan than the politicians themselves. Therefore, a cleric should maintain neutrality and look at all as his own. He should provide spiritual and moral guidance and allow the politicians do their work (“Should Clerics Get Involved in Politics?” 2018).

Above are some of the controversies surrounding clerics’ active involvement in politics. Some have objected while some see nothing wrong in their active participation as they (clerics) would pragmatically preach the gospel.

Secular Views on the Relationship Between Politics and Christianity

Politics in the secular world is the establishment of political parties with the shared curiosity and philosophy with the singular goal of acquiring power to execute their diplomacies and policies on the citizens. Nkem (1999) avers secular politics as the skirmish for power which itself is the authority to frame and effect verdicts and plans which are acknowledged by the humanity for the advantage of the publics. Again, the skirmish for or the procurement of power and the response of the people to it, hinge significantly on the degree of political growth of the state (Maier, 1965). Machiavelli, the 17th Century political philosopher held that Christianity is the basis of state and natives, hence, the political leaders should attribute more value to it, since it is the spring for progress and advancement of every nation. Montesquieu, a prodigious French politician established that Christians should participate in politics because Christianity offers unity, synchronization, peacefulness, harmony and social stability for the native people in the community. Hobbes, once more, a 17th Century historian and politician contended that Christians and politics should go along with Christianity which is

vivacious for progress and development of a state (qtd. In Dooyeweerd, 1972). Emperor Constantine was a Christian leader, before his time, Christianity was regarded as “illicit religio” (illegal religion). When he came into power, he made Christianity a legal religion; he stopped the persecution of the Christians and built churches. He allowed some of the bishops to be part of the ruling body of the government, etc. It was seen that during his time, there was peace and tranquility in politics. In history, Constantine was the Christian leader who made changes in politics of his time and even in the lives of Christians (Temitope 87). Montesquieu, a great French politician established that Christians should be participate in politics so that Christianity can afford unity, agreement, calmness, harmony and social firmness for the native people in the society (qtd. In Dooyeweerd, 1972). Some Christians assert that politics and Christianity should be isolated from each other because of liberal acuity (Booth 1982). this is in compliance with the liberal ideas of John Locke and Thomas Jefferson which asserts that there should be a parting between Christians and politics to evade disagreement and skirmish (Bainton, 1960). Thomas Hobbes (qtd. In Dooyeweerd, 1972), another 17th Century historian and politician contended that Christians and politics should go together since Christianity is dynamic for progress and development of a nation. The inference in the foregoing reveals that politics is not all that evil, but the manner through which Christians go about it may generate dissection and acrimony amid them and other citizens.

Religion has turned out to be an overriding influence in Nigerian politics particularly in this post-independence period. In whichever way one sees religion, the fact cannot be denied of its interaction with politics in Nigeria. The apparent relationship between religion and politics has riveted the responses of intellectuals and what looks as if the agreement of such responses is the unsure role of religion in the growth, progress, and subsistence of the Nigerian society (Kukah, 1993; Imo, 2008; Marshall, 2009). As acknowledged by Adeye (1988) religion molds an ideal heart in man to be mindful of the necessity to have a pure heart. Owing to this, he will breed to have a benevolent or partisan thought before volunteering to lead or stand for his people in management of the state. Moreover, religion will fix the mind of man to be an upright politician who will continually rely upon his religion to lead him. The

instruction or coercions of religion are anticipated to direct him so as to lead his people correctly as a politician with fear of God in him. He will not be selfish to ever esteem himself first, somewhat he knows that he is the servant of the people that brought him to power (p. 165) Johnstone (2001) in the same line of thought corroborates this view in upholding that what one believes, with admiration to that which is upright, accurate, and needed in addition to what God anticipates for people and society, could be anticipated to impact the choice one makes in the political circle. That is, religion should impact people's voting form (p. 103).

Scriptural Basis for the Relationship Between Christianity and Politics

In this section, the relationship between politics and Christianity would be established. This is to express the fact that politics is not of "another world" or a distinct art that Christians need to distance themselves from. A few of these examples would be identified. The Holy Scriptures records that "But select capable men from all the people, men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens (Exodus 18:21). This means that if clerics who are believed to be representatives of God on earth are chosen to represent the masses, the political system would definitely experience a new dawn. Christ pronounces that the role of Christians in the world is to be salt and light of world. This is fitting because Matthew acknowledges that Jesus left Nazareth to Capernaum, which was situated by the Lake in the expanse of Zebulun and Naphtali to fulfil the prophecy of prophet Isaiah, which said: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentilee, 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). This infers that before the advent 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. Jesus Christ offers a plan for the role of His Church that is functioning in a wicked world system so Christians are declared to be the conservancy flavor of exceptional principles and values for the world system. Christians are sent into the world to be salt and light to it. The call to the whole of the Church of Christ to be salt and light to the whole world,

therefore, is not initiated only in the Great Commission of making disciples, but it is sited in the systematic teaching and renovation of the lives of the people from attaining the basic means of livelihood as shown in the political manifesto of Christ in Isaiah 61: 1-3.

The price the Church is paying today for being in this socio-political chaos emanated as an outcome of the past tenacious indecision of Christians in Nigeria. If the Church is distant from politics, the machinery of governance will be prone to permeate infiltration of evil people who would decide their fate. If good ethics is not central to good political governance, then the cry for good leadership is simply an illusion. The biblical assertion on leadership embraces the running of state affairs. Every single citizen has a role to play in governance as stated in Romans 13:1-6; that every Christian has an input to make in guaranteeing the good governance. They are dynamically encouraged to search for elective positions, paying taxes, obeying or respecting those in authority, and, in particular, praying for those holding leadership posts. This labels a status quo of synchronization between the Church and the State (Romans 13:2-7; Hebrew 13:17 and 1 Peter 2:13-17).

Nigerian Clerics' Participation in Politics

Christian clerics who contested elections and won were Rev. Fr. Moses Adasu (a Catholic Priest) of Benue State Nigeria who on 2nd January 1992, emerged as the Executive Governor of the state on the platform of Social Democratic Party (SDP). Second Republic Governor of Benue State, Rev. Father Moses Adasu, has illuminated the reason why he went into politics, articulating in opposition to the belief that politics is a dirty game and would corrupt him as a priest, he has "come to baptise politics and make it pure." Adasu, who was the Benue State governorship candidate for Alliance for Democracy (AD) made the comment in Zaki-Biam, where he held responsible the leaders in the state over its failure to progress that has caused a penurious people, which he held "have now become beggars in the presence of abundant resources." Promising to reunite the many segments of the state if elected, the catholic priest



encouraged the electorate to assess the attitude of each candidate in quest of their mandate, so as to circumvent errors of the past (“I’ve Come to Baptise Politics”, 2003). He further enlightened that politics is not a dirty game. It is those who are in it for egotistic motives that make it dirty. As a man of God, he said he has dedicated his life to service of humanity and was ready to die to make the world a healthier place for current and upcoming generations (“I’ve Come to Baptise Politics”, 2003). Political participation of a religious leader could mean direct involvement with public office, as well as formerly held public office, efforts at running for office, nomination for advisor of public office, or direct involvement with the public, together with leaders who have spoken at events with political matters.

Again, Jolly Tavoro Nyame was Governor of Taraba State in Nigeria from 29 May 1999 to 29 May 2007. He also served as governor of the state from January 1992 to November 1993. He is a member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) (“Jolly Nyame: 13,” 2018). Nyame was born to Christian Parents. In line with his Christian faith, he took up a vocation in Priesthood and was ordained a Reverend in the United Methodist Church of Nigeria. Earlier, he joined politics in 1991, contested for Governor of Taraba state in 1992 and won. His term as governor in 1992 was short-lived due to the military takeover of power. In 1999, Nyame contested again as a governorship candidate of the Peoples’ Democratic Party and won. He was also re-elected in 2003, making him the only individual to have won three governorship elections in Taraba state (“Jolly Nyame: 13,” 2018). These are only but a few examples of Christian clerics’ active participation in politics.

The Justification for Christian Clerics’ Involvement in Politics: Moral Implications

Haruna (2009) justifiably argues that the Church has shot itself in the foot when they agree with the clergy to spurn partisan politics. To hold unto political authority is to have participation, representation, delegation, and to have a voice. Nevertheless, to reject to be dynamically attracted and join politics is to undertake the place of weakness, and that is the silly poverty-stricken state the Church has resigned its fate and has consigned the lives of millions of Christians to in Nigeria (p. 6). No religion

overlooks immorality. Demonstrating the function of religion as a provider of moral values, Mbiti in Nmah (2004) says, “It is religion which tells what is right, and what is wrong... religion enriches people’s morale for the welfare of the individual and society at large” (p. 177). Obedience to religious ethical values is imperious for all religious adherents. Remarkably, Nigerians are one of the most religious people in the world. Thus, as posited by Omoregbe (1998) there is a necessity to live a moral life because it is demanded by God. Failure to practice this will be inimical in the matter of national growth. One anticipates a dependable electoral procedure in a religious society, like Nigeria, if the rules are followed. Religion, being a representative of social rheostat, aids in preserving the standard of the society, which is the actual source of politics.

The researcher’s emphasis in this work is that the interest of clerics in politics arises from the common boundary the church shares with the state and the urgent need to address the challenges that children of God go through. Whereas, the state is the place democracy takes place, the church by way of suggestions and sermons provides the morality for the play of politics. This is rightly articulated by Skutch (qtd in Ngwoke 36). Meanwhile, to Omegoha, at the moral level the church inoculates the spirit of justice and fair play among the peoples involving in politics. From the above assertion politics belongs to the second type; the sphere of morality, and the church on the third level. It is therefore the obligation of the church to guide her members who are fighting the course of democracy. It is authentic church and state are working at different levels but both of them are in the service of man for substantial and spiritual accomplishments (30-31).

Omegoha’s viewpoint elaborates on the moral implications of Christian cleric’s participation in politics. Flowing from this view, it is indispensable to uphold that politics is natural to man and does not belong to the ordinary world as inaccurately observed by the early Christians. Reverend Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu shared the view of the Synod Fathers, that politics and religion are intertwined, and they are likely to give man decisive services. In an interview with the National Concord Magazine, he further elucidated that, politics and religion are interlaced. They are



cohesive. Once you remove religion from it and go into politics, it is counterproductive. That is why Nigeria is in state of underdevelopment and chaos (qtd in Omegoha 28). In other words, the state in her political activities no less than the Church owe man an ordered society which is a stepping stone to heavenly glory. It is the efforts of the Christian clerics to work for the harmonisation of her services and of rendering to man this service in the fear of God. Over the years, Christian clerics have identified the error in thinking that everything politics was paganism, mundane and satanic, thus, there is need to face the prevailing challenges that stir Christians in the face by taking the bull by the horn to get involved in politics. According to Pescke, “The Christian is called to fulfill his temporal duties responsibly and to cooperate in the progress of the world, as much as he is called to adore God and to worship Him” (295). This understanding should motivate Christian clerics to change this position of the Church concerning the roles of clerics in politics. The more we understand the nature of this service, the more we must realize too that neither the Church nor the State can achieve satisfactorily this dual nature of man’s destiny alone. The work of the cleric must be complemented by politics. Today, there are many clerics, all involved in the move to sanitize the society but are not given a level playing ground. When differences in ideology and circumstantial influences on individual leader brings about tension in directing social, economic, political and religious needs of man, then the Church comes in with the light of Christ, as Groppi rightly opines: The Church must re-fine and renew this suffering humanity, for the needs of one’s neighbour.... If the church is to be relevant to the needs of the suffering people, the cancer of racism (tribalism, religious fanaticism, selfishness manifested in embezzlement in high and low places etc) which quarantines brother from brother must be wiped out (71).

The Senior Pastor of The Censers Church Inc. Worldwide, Pastor Ugochukwu Anike has called for the participation of more Christians in the political activities of the nation as he discourses that when the righteous are in power, the people rejoice. Pastor Anike asserted this in a sermon where he cited Proverbs 29: 2 which declares, “when the righteous are in authority the people rejoice” and similarly reiterated that



digesting the cited scripture is to realize that God desires the righteous to be in the helm of affairs, to be in governance. This is because when the righteous are in power, they will make rules that would bring overwhelming impact and thus bring delight to the world (“Why More Christians,” 2022). Anike recalled the story of Mordecai that there was a decree that God’s people be wiped out. Mordecai and the whole Jewish race prayed that God should intercede. But God interceded by sending Esther to the seat of governance (“Why More Christians,” 2022).

In addition pastor Anike asserted:

In Matthew 5:13-16, the Bible calls us the salt and the light of the world. As you know, salt’s value is seen only when it is added. This means that the usefulness of every salt is in adding value. Also, light is useless if it does not give light. “Salt is a preservative which means as believers we have been raised by God to preserve the societal value and norms of our day. Light brings illumination thereby expelling darkness. So, as believers, we must make a difference when we get elected, appointed or promoted into high offices “The key point is to realise that we are involved anyway; we have no choice about being political because if we choose not to engage then it is the vote for the status quo – the way things are. “Christians need to be involved in politics because we believe in a God who cares passionately about His world and His creation and consequently how it is run. The Bible is hugely political- in that it is about how God wants people to behave and act toward Him and toward each other. This involves economics and law because these are tools that need to be used to build justice. “Let us all rise as believers and get involved directly or indirectly in politics. Directly when we



run for political offices and indirectly when we encourage godly people to join politics and also when we go out and fulfil our civic responsibility which is to vote. The future is in our hands if we all rise and do the needful,” he said (“Why More Christians,” 2022).

Christians need to be involved in politics because they believe in God who cares passionately about His creation and consequently how it is governed. Aquinas’ (1920) political philosophy as ideologically as it is, divulges that the principles of the good rule are fixed and persistent, and that every political choice and action must be focused consistent with these principles, in spite of the restrictions of human will, power, and situation. Therefore, Aquinas is not concerned with the explanation of good rule, but with the clarification of the principles of good governance; his political writings are not a ratification of a specific form of government, they are rather confirmation of principles that should be pursued for purpose of the goals of peace, unity, and welfare of community. Augustine’s influence continued in Calvin's theocracy in Geneva, and in the early Puritan settlements in the United States which were for the most part theocratic in outlook. His position also has echoes in some modern Christian views which claim that the Church can and must interfere directly in politics in order to secure its spiritual and moral ends. Calvin's intention was hence to, found a theocracy in the sense of a Holy Commonwealth, a community in which every member should make the glory of God his sole concern (Bainton, 1953).

Following the same trend on the above fact, Aor Inyaregh (2011) in his book entitled, “The Message of Amos to Israelites on Justice and Righteousness: The Relevance to Contemporary Nigerian Experience” recognises the religious cum political obligations of prophet Amos thus: The Prophetic engagement of Amos is quite significant for present day Nigeria. He was a foremost social critic who lived at the time Uzziah reigned in Judah and Jeroboam II ruled Israel. During this period, there was economic and political prosperity as it is in Nigeria. But this was attended by religious misdemeanor, sociopolitical disintegration and moral degeneracy. Amos condemned the irresponsible magnificence of



the people. Situating Amos and his prophecy in Nigerian context would divulge the abnormal and dysfunctional prophetic/clerical engagement in Nigeria concerning the realities in the socioeconomic, political and religious spheres of the nation. Comparable to the eight century Israel, Nigeria is very rich and endowed with enormous natural resources. Nigeria is similarly rich in human capital or resources. But regrettably, the quality of life of an average Nigerian does not replicate such classification. All that Amos condemned in Israel are prevalent in Nigeria. Therefore, just like Prophet Amos, Christian clerics should intensify efforts by participating actively in politics and should not look helplessly as God's children are denied justice, maltreated and denied the basic necessities of life that enable them to serve God better. Christian clerics should step in to salvage the situation (Inyaregh, 2011).

Stott (1999) articulates that the clergy cannot appear indifferent and be negligent in the discharge of civic obligation or dissemble to live in seclusion and thrive in the assignment assigned in the church. With all the zeal the ordained minister endeavours to minister to people, they must pursue to be involved in eradicating the causes of wants in the world, participate in both political and economic goings-on for the welfare of the public, change structures of the society, convalescence of persons who appear to be less privileged, champion the quest for justice for the downgraded and facilitate the deliverance of the poor in the society. The engrossment of the clergy in national politics is always linked to the church's engagement in National politicking. The participation of the church in the social, cultural, political, and economic development of society has shown clearly that while the church seeks to avoid any kind of political reduction of the Christian faith, the church is increasingly aware that the Christian faith has a concrete dimension involving certain sociopolitical attitude and obligations (Asante, 2007). As agents of the Church, the Clergy cannot undermine this. The mission of the church which is the mission of Jesus Christ is carried out in a societal system that uses politics in selecting leaders and enacting policies to facilitate governance (Asante, 2007). It is apparent from the contextual framework of the Church's social teaching on politics that these hard-hitting positions against clergy participation in partisan politics were articulated in the light of the gospel morals and against the milieu of experience of



politics for centuries in Europe and America. They do not in any means echo African homegrown political authenticity. It is acknowledged that practically all European countries had state religions, with France, Italy, Spain and Portugal being Roman Catholic, England was Anglican, while Germany was Lutheran (Ezeogu, 2008). Ezeogu (2008) Christianity struggled for political rheostat in all Scandinavian countries like Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland, then ascended the pedals of power from pagan rules as is typified in their histories and the signs of the cross initiated on their flags even currently. States religions are not obtainable in African countries and particularly not in Nigeria (p. 56).

Today, the question begging for answers should hence no more be, “should the clergy partake in partisan politics or not”, but “how should the clergy morally engage in politics in Nigeria”? No religion condones immorality. Highlighting the function of religion as a provider of moral values, Mbiti in Nmah (2004) says, “It is religion which tells what is right, and what is wrong... religion enriches people’s morale for the welfare of the individual and society at large” (p. 177). Adherence to religious ethical values is imperative for all religious practitioners. Interestingly, Nigerians are one of the most religious people in the world. Therefore, as posted by Omoregbe (1998) there is a need to live a moral life because it is commanded by God. Failure to do this will be counterproductive in the matter of national development. One expects a credible electoral process in a religious community, like Nigeria, if the rules are obeyed. Religion, being an agent of social control, helps to keep with the norm, of the society, which is the real basis of politics.

Conclusion

The realities in the Nigerian civil society today call for Christian clerics’ active involvement in the political affairs of the state. Politics that ensures democratic governance ought to play an important role in promoting the common good of the citizens. Its main role is in helping to create the conditions where people can flourish and to assist when necessary. At the core of the Christian vision of government is that the human person is created in the image of God. The purpose of politics is to serve man, not for man to serve the state. The Christian vision of government places politics in the context of human freedom, the call to human flourishing,

and in the light of our eternal destiny. The Church should be active in partisan politics because this will get righteous people into the corridors of power, authorize them and spur progress (Proverbs 29:2). The cleric as a major stakeholder in the spiritual, social, cultural, religious and even in the political life goals of man, would naturally uphold genuine efforts of a member to bring about the realization of democracy in more practical terms. The time is ripe for the electorates to understand that politics can be put to good use by introducing the light of Christ into it. Considering the fact that the church is not a perfect society, the canon law upon which the administration of the church revolves can be shortsighted according to the prevailing situations of a given time, it is therefore, recommended that, the Christian clerics should play an active role in partisan politics to purify it from all possible stains. If good people abscond from politics, the evil ones will have a headway. The Church has a significant role to play in good governance which is to give the necessary support in terms of commendation, encouragement and participation, directly or indirectly where needed. Reproving bad governance as God leads continuously and at all costs, clerics should remember that their duty is to ensure there is order in politics, while being aware that the word of God would be better preached when not manipulated to serve the interests of politicians.

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