

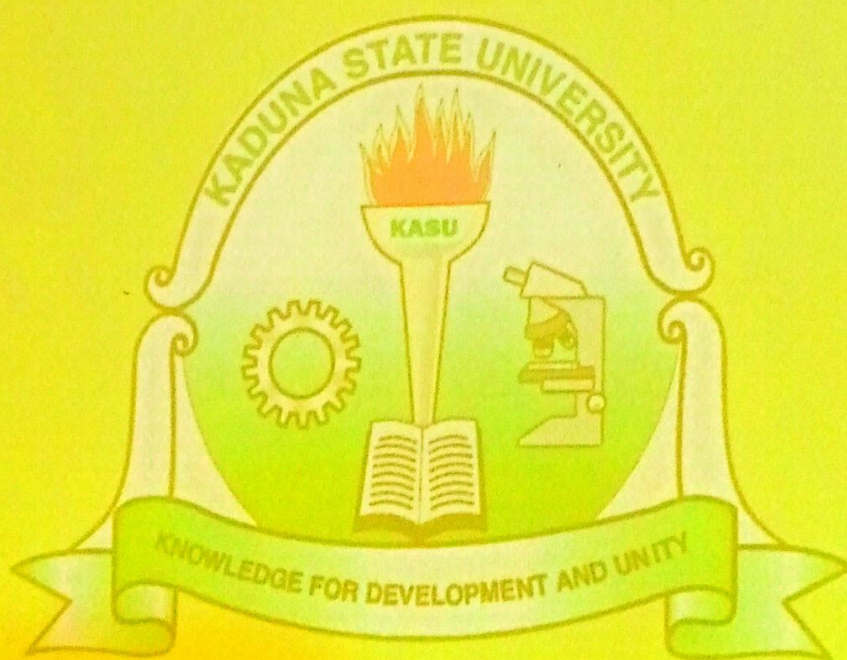


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The Role of Religious Leaders in the Sustainability of Democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract

Democracy is simply defined as the government of the People, by the People and for the People. With this assertion, true democracy is not obtainable as far as Nigeria is concerned. Corruption has eaten deep into the whole essence of democratic system in Nigeria today. The heroes of Democracy have put their best to sustain the democratic system but, in a way, have failed. The 2015 General Elections had an element of Democracy in which the immediate past President Ebele Jonathan conceded defeat after losing to the opposition Party. The roles of religious leaders have not been helpful to the democratic system in Nigeria. The focus of this paper is to examine the role of religious leaders in the sustainability of Democracy in Nigeria because the Political class is looking up to them for action, and one of the roles of those leaders is to pray for the people in government and to know the mind of God for them because it is an institution from God. The historical and analytic method would be adopted to achieve the aim of this paper. The real impact of the religious leaders would also be considered to achieve the real democratic sustainability in Nigeria. Conclusively, the paper gives democracy the real pride of place in the positive impact religious leaders would play in order for the democrats to achieve a sustainable democracy.

Introduction

Democracy is simply defined as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. From the backdrop of liberalism, democracy is a procedural system involving open political competition, with multiparty, civil and political rights guaranteed by law, and accountability operating through an electoral relationship between citizens and their representatives. (International IDEA 2000). In most societies of the world, an important way of evaluating whether a nation is democratic or not is by holding regular and transparently free and

fair elections. Recently, a scientific research on the state of democracy in Africa had concluded that since 1990 till date, 42 out of 46 countries of sub Saharan Africa have held multi-party elections ushering the hope that Africa might have risen above its challenges. But as one of the Africa's most careful observer, Michael Chege, asserted after a survey, "Africa has overemphasized multi-party elections..... and correspondingly neglected the basic tenets of liberal governance". (Onyiah, M., 2006)

Nigeria can be said to have been aspiring, towards the practice of liberal democracy since it can boast of having a functional independent Judiciary, multi-party system, universal suffrage, civilian control of the military and police, rights to free assembly and worship except for some north Eastern parts where there is relatively peace due to insurgency experienced there, as well as observance of due process. One of the problems of democracy in Nigeria is corruption and that is why in 1999 when Olusegun Obasanjo came on board as the president, his administration took bold initiatives and practical measures to fight corruption, to insist on transparency, and to seek the cooperation of appropriate foreign governments for the location and return of stolen public funds. I

In addition, an omnibus Anti-Corruption Bill was submitted to the National Assembly for consideration, which was eventually passed into law. Moreover, Obasanjo's administration subsequently established two bodies, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC) specifically to sanitize the country of its corrupt practices especially in the public sector and suffice it to say here that the two offices were not heard during the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan because we only read from the newspaper and news headlines that they are functioning but none of the political class could be pointed to that was arrested and charged by these offices. About a year after the commencement of Obasanjo administration, he remarked as follows:

However, as I had cause to reemphasize recently, there is no question of compromising with corruption. There is no question of compromising with an evil that is capable of wiping out all our other gains. As a matter of fact, we cannot gain much in terms of socio-economic development, survival of democracy, or international acceptability if corruption remains a way of life in our country. Those who want to do business with the country always look forward to a situa-

tion in which corruption is not the order of the day. Those who want to give programme support in the areas of infrastructure, social and service, human resource development and capacity building want to be sure that the money will not end up in private pockets, as was the case in the past. We are determined to change the situation permanently for good. We have no illusions that the task will be an easy one. However, we can say without fear of contradiction that it is no longer business as usual. (Ibrahim Lame and Femi Odekunle, 2006)

In Nigeria, the last sixteen years (1999-2015) have been the longest period of democracy in the country, these periods have been able to keep the soldiers in their barracks, except for the times they were used for elections and this makes us to know that democracy that we have in Nigeria today needs to be revisited.

The role of religious leaders comes to the fore in the sense that a good number of Christian leaders wield enormous amount of power that can positively influence the socio-political and economic situation in Nigeria, if the powers are directed toward that end. Very often, the powers are unleashed for ecclesiastical concerns alone but some policies do overlap and can indirectly benefit society, if the Church would frown at and discriminate against corrupt civil servants who deny the people infrastructure by embezzling public funds, life in Nigeria may change for the better. The current situation in Nigeria seems to be that Christian leaders simply look the other way, or give their support to the status quo, so as to enjoy socio-political and financial patronage, possibly.

Here and there, veiled condemnatory words could be read, particularly in communiqués issued by bishops and other meetings of Christian leaders and these political leaders are looking up to these religious leaders for guidance, to know the mind of God for their people but they seem not to get the right channel due to the menace of corruption all over the country and in every sector of the economy. The paper therefore examines the menace of corruption from various point of views, the meaning of democracy and what we have today, the duties of Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC) and its relevance in the government of the day, the duties and functions of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and focuses more on the impact of religious leaders in the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

all definition, corruption as a phenomenon has been described in many ways depending on the context in which it is employed. The definition provided by Act No 5 of session 2 of 2000 ('the Act') passed by the National Assembly and signed into law on the 13th of June 2000 thereof defines corruption as "bribery, fraud and other related offences". In general terms, Corruption has been defined as a dishonest or immoral behavior which is not in line with the general accepted standards.

Attempts at defining corruption have resulted in a variety of definitions. A legal luminary (Adegbitelateef, 1991) advised that the word corruption is susceptible to varying definition. He stated that the word corruption is used, it could denote moral depravity, perversion of integrity through bribery or favour. To some, "corruption" is the conscious and well-planned act by a person or group of persons to appropriate by unlawful means the wealth of another person or group of persons. To others, it is the act of turning power and authority into ready cash. Another authority defines it as 'the diversion of resources from the betterment of the community to the gain of individual at the expense of the community. A much more useful definition which encompasses all these three notions of corruption is provided in Khan (1996) where corruption is defined as 'an act which deviates from the formal rules of someone in a position of public authority because of private regarding motives'. This definition avoids the problem of value judgment arising from an ethical definition. It permits the extension of the notion of corruption to its public office, market and public interest-centre manifestations. This is important for any understanding of the concept because the genesis of corruption is located in the political and economic arrangement which govern the organization of society. (Oloponie Abdul-Razaq A.1998)

The United Nation Organization also has the following to say about corruption. Through experience, observation, information, discussion, reports, newspapers, finding of commission of inquiry and of limited social-scientific studies, one can make an endless descriptive list of instances of corrupt conduct or practices. One can also give these various instances assorted labels: bribery, abuse and or misuse of office, illegal payment, kickbacks, tax, credit and customs fraud, misappropriation and embezzlement, currency violations, forgery, false accounting, real estate swindles and land speculation, abuse of public grants; environmental damage; smuggling, violation of labour regulations, over-invoicing, over-pricing and transfer-pricing; illegal, ille-

gitimate monopolization and restraint of trade, hoarding; illegal flight of capital, exploitation of labour, fraudulent sales, adulterated food or hazardous drugs, acts of constant or distortion of development plans and among others. (UNO 1980:8)

For the purpose of this paper, corruption is seen as "the act of diverting illegal resources (particularly financial resources) meant for the good of the citizens in a defined geographical area by a privileged individual or a group, into personal use, presumably to satisfy self aggrandizement."

Democracy

Democracy is a system of government in which all the people of a state or polity are involved in making decisions about its affairs, typically by voting to elect representatives to a parliament or similar assembly. (Aluko J.O.1988) Democracy is further defined as a government of the people, by the people; especially: rule of the majority, a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections. (Free Merriam-Webster Dictionary) According to political scientist Larry Diamond, 2004, democracy consists of four key elements: 1. A political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections. 2. The active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life. 3. Protection of the human rights of all citizens. 4. A rule of law, in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens.

Democracy contrasts with forms of government where power is either held by an individual, as in an absolute monarchy, or where power is held by a small number of individuals, as in an oligarchy. Nevertheless, these oppositions, inherited from Greek philosophy, are now ambiguous because contemporary governments have mixed democratic, oligarchic, and monarchic elements. Karl Popper defined democracy in contrast to dictatorship or tyranny, thus focusing on opportunities for the people to control their leaders and to oust them without the need for a revolution. Several variants of democracy exist, but there are two basic forms, both of which concern how the whole body of all eligible citizens executes its will. One form of democracy is direct democracy, in which all eligible citizens have direct and active participation in the political decision making. In most modern democracies, the whole body of eligible citizens remains the sovereign power but political power is exercised indirectly through elected representatives; this is called a representative democracy.

Democracy may be a word familiar to most, but it is a concept still misunderstood and misused in a time when totalitarian regimes and military dictatorships alike have attempted to claim popular support by pinning democratic labels upon themselves. Yet the power of the democratic idea has also evoked some of history's most profound and moving expressions of human will and supreme power vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system. Lincoln Diamond defines democracy "as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people".

The word "Democracy" is coined from Greek words: *δημοκρατία* (*dēmokratia*) "rule of the people": "demos" (people) and "Kratos", meaning "people's rule". (Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, 1966) It is said to be one of the concepts in political science in which there is no agreement on definitions. According to Diamond, Joseph Schumpeter defined democracy as a system "for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquired the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote". Yusuf quoted Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy as "...government of the people, by the people, and for the people". According to him, democracy is government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system. This means that in democratic government, the masses determine who should govern and have a say in the governance of their country by their elected representatives. They have a say in the passing of the laws of land and can to some extent control and contribute to the decision taken by their elected leaders.

Consequently, in a democratic setting, there should be freedom of speech, of the press and of opinions, as people are free to express their views and to question decisions taken by their leaders. Akubor asserts that freedom and democracy are often used interchangeably, but the two are not synonymous. Democracy is indeed a set of ideas and principles about freedom, but it also consists of a set of practices and procedures that have been moulded through a long, often tortuous history. In short, democracy is the institutionalization of freedom. For this reason, it is possible to identify the time tested fundamentals of constitutional human rights, and equality before the law that any society must possess to be properly called democratic. He maintains that democracies fall into two basic categories, direct and representative.

In a direct democracy, all citizens, without the intermediary of elected or appointed officials, can participate in making public decisions. Such a system is clearly only practical with relatively numbers

of people in a community organization or tribal council, for example, the local unit of a labour union, where members can meet in a single room to discuss issues and arrive at decisions by consensus or majority vote. Today, the most common form of democracy, whether for a town or nation, is representative democracy, in which citizens elect officials to make political decisions, formulate laws, and administer programs for the public good. Whether the method used, public officials in a representative democracy hold office in the name of the people and remain accountable to the people for their action.

One basic truism that permeates each of these definitions or any definition of "democracy" is that if truly analyzed and practiced, it should be a "government in which the people through elections freely choose their leaders who will represent and govern them well". Thus, "democracy" is a philosophy of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly. Kaur asserts that, etymologically, "Democracy" means government by the people", and therein lies the big problem. According to him, today there is no country that can make public statement that is not government by the people. However, the question is, what do we mean by people? There is not and there has never been a state or city where "the people" means every individual in the state because of either social economic, religious and political differences.

The Nigerian Democratic Experience

Since independence in 1960, we have witnessed different unsuccessful attempts to democratize. This was a proof that Nigeria was not insulated from the prevailing democratic aspiration of those days. This is largely because, since the collapse of communism, democracy has become fashionable in almost all the parts of the world and a measure of progress in most African countries and Nigeria was not an exception. However, our collective experience shows that we are still far away from a true democratic culture. Some recent experiences in the African continent seem to suggest that we are one step forward today and ten steps backward tomorrow.

Examples are not farfetched. Kenya and Zimbabwe quickly come to mind. The attempt to democratize is either a farce or an attempt to take leadership by hook or by crook, which has often resulted in wanton destruction of lives and property. This has been the tale of some many communities in the Nigerian State. O'Neil (2006) notes that: With regard to the failure of democratic advancement, Nigeria appears to be in a class of its own. Here in a country, which as far back as 1979, when large sections were under various kinds of dictatorship,

organized a free and fair election which successfully transferred governance from the military to elected civilian rulers. Before the applause of such a singular event died down, the Nigerian military decided to plunge the country into diehard obscurantism. Democratic concern among the military has all but completely atrophied with postponements and cancellations of elections which are perceived as mere ploys to perpetuate incumbents in power. Nigeria was at the forefront of the liberation of South Africa from the darkness of the apartheid system to a modern democracy.

From the annulment of June 12, to the sacking of the Interim National Government, the failed Abacha transition programme and our current democratic experience teaches us that democracy is an expensive project, in both human and material resources. It requires discipline, patience, vision and commitment. Kukah (1999) observed that; "so many years of experiencing the traumas and layers of oppression from the colonial and the neo-colonial states rendered many an African too weak to fight both in defense against and for democracy.

As such, no sooner had new democracies emerged in Africa than they began to crumble with ease, threatening to return to the state of nature for many". However, the Nigerian case seems to be unique. Democratic processes have been brought to an abrupt end by military coup and counter coup. Meanwhile, the politicians manipulate their way to power only to be manipulated out again. The drama eventually led to the enthronement of Olusegun Obasanjo as a military head of States. Obasanjo tactically handed power to a civilian administration in 1979 and gave Nigeria her first executive President in the person of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. The situation took on a dramatic turn with the reelection of Shehu Shagari in 1983. He was barely settling down when Major General Mohammed Buhari in another military coup chased him out of power. Within two years of his reign, General Ibrahim Babangida in 1985 toppled Mohammed Buhari. As the drama unfolded, this led to Babangida's controversial "stepping aside" on 23rd August 1993 to make room for the Interim National Government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan.

General Sani Abacha cashed in at this confusion resulting from the nullification of the presidential election of June 12 (believed to have been won by Chief M.K.O Abiola) and the illegitimacy of the Interim National Government and sacked the Interim Government. He was still perusing and perfecting his self-transition programme when death struck. This saw the emergence of the child of necessity staged by General Abdulsalami Abubakar. Abubakar eventually handed over leadership to another ex-military head in the person of Olusegun

Obasanjo through the ballot. With Obasanjo we have at least past the first hurdle that is transiting from one civilian administration to another in which we had the Late President Umaru Musa Yaradua 2007-2009, then comes in the administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan from 2009 - 2015, while we have the incumbent President Muhammad Buhari who was sworn in on the 29th of May 2015.

Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC)

The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), (in full the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission) is a Nigerian agency that was inaugurated on the 29th of September 2000 following the recommendation of President Olusegun Obasanjo. The mandate is to receive and investigate reports of corruption and in appropriate cases prosecute the offender[s], to examine, review and enforce the correction of corruption prone systems and procedures of public bodies, with a view to eliminating corruption in public life, and to educate and enlighten the public on and against corruption and related offences with a view to enlisting and fostering public support for the fight against corruption.

The desire and commitment of the present leadership to place in the past the period of compromising pecuniary indecency as a consideration for effectuating officials and private dealings has been demonstrated by the present civil administration in the making of relevant laws and the establishment of institution to fight corruption. More than any other efforts in the past, the administration of President Obasanjo has not left anybody in doubt about its commitment to ensuring that the legal tools directed against corruption are implemented and enforced in an effective and sustainable manner.

Surely, the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission Act No.5 of 2000 ('the Act') passed by the National Assembly and signed into law on the 13th of June 2000 is momentous potent and far reaching legal instrument that has a very great capacity to combat the malaise of corruption in Nigeria with great impact. The effectiveness of the law will depend largely on the far reaching consequences of the punishments or penalties in the law to deter bribery and other broad activities that qualify as corrupt conducts or practices. Prior to the enactment of the Act there were other laws in place containing provisions to deal with corruption in public offices. The criminal code applicable in the Southern States and the Penal code applicable in the Northern States provided for and penalize corrupt Practices. There are other criminal codes just to mention a few.

The inadequacies of the Criminal code and the penal code, both of which contain anti-corruption provisions to properly address corruption were not only in regard to difficulty in having a successful prosecution of corrupt practices, but also in respect of insufficiency of punishments prescribed for corruption. If there was then reluctance in bringing corrupt people to book in the past, one then can imagine the attitude towards sentencing and punishment. Though Act deals with both public and private corruption, most of its provisions tilt more towards the prescription of acts and omissions of public office holders who at the expense of the public seek private and extra gains and advantages from the public offices they administer. Therefore, it is indisputable that in passing the Act, the manifest intention of the legislature was to prescribe the offering, demanding, giving and receiving of what may be generically termed as secret profits by workers in both private and public sectors.

The Act 2000 establishes in section 3 the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) with responsibilities that can be outlined as follows:

Investigation and Prosecution of Corruption, Study of Systems practices and procedure that encourage corruption and review thereof, Advising Government Departments on ways of minimizing corruption, Educating the public on bribery and corruption, Enlisting public support in fighting corruption.

The above duties are onerous and their effective implementation requires the orientation of the entire public service operation by criminal convention, which has been hijacked by the inordinate greed of officers entrusted with public offices. The whole essence of discussing the duties of the commission as regards fighting corruption is not just to punish offenders but also to facilitate the creation of a corruption free society by engaging in a systematic overhaul of the machinery of the state which hitherto has encouraged administrative lapses and thus occasioning widespread corruption. The era of graft, compromise, want of integrity, dishonor and impunity should be put behind us as we strive to build a corruption free Nigeria and this is the whole essence of having a democracy that the masses would benefit from, the poor would be able to appreciate the government of the day in terms of what they would benefit in all spheres of their lives.

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) set up in 1998, is the electoral body to oversee elections in Nigeria. The origin of INEC goes back to the period before Independence when the Electoral Commission of Nigeria was established to conduct the 1959 elections. The Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), established in 1960 conducted the immediate post-independence federal and regional elections of 1964 and 1965. The electoral body was dissolved after the military coup of 1966. In 1978, the Federal Electoral Commission was constituted by the regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo, organizing the elections of 1979 which ushered in the Nigerian Second Republic under the leadership of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. It also conducted the general elections of 1983. In December 1995, the military government of General Sani Abacha established the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria which conducted another set of elections. These elected institutions were not inaugurated before the sudden death of General Abacha on June 1998 aborted the process. In 1998 General Abdulsalam Abubakar's Administration dissolved NECON and established the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). INEC organized the transitional elections that ushered in the Nigerian Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999.

The Commission was established in accordance with section 153(f) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The functions of the Commission as stipulated in Part I of the Third Schedule to the 1999 Constitution are as listed below:

Organize, undertake and supervise all elections to the offices of the President and Vice-president, the Governor and Deputy Governor of a state, and to the membership of the Senate, the House of Representatives and the House of Assembly of each State of the Federation, Register political parties in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution and an act of the National Assembly, Monitor the organization and operation of the political parties, including their finances, Arrange for the annual examination and auditing of the funds and accounts of political parties, and publish a report on such examination and audit for public information, Arrange and conduct the registration of persons qualified to vote as well as prepare, maintain and revise the register of voters for the purpose of any election under this Constitution, Monitor political campaigns and provide rules and regulations, which shall govern the political parties, Ensure that all Electoral Commissioners, Electoral and Returning officers take and subscribe to the oath of office prescribed by law, Delegate any of its powers to any Resident Electoral Commissioners, Carry out such other

functions as may be conferred upon it by an Act of the National Assembly.

INEC shall be guided by the following values in the performance of its duties:

Autonomy: INEC shall carry out all its functions independently, free from external control and influence.

Transparency: INEC shall display openness and transparency in all its activities and in its relationship with all stakeholders.

Integrity: INEC shall maintain truthfulness and honesty in all its dealings at all times.

Credibility: INEC shall ensure that no action or activity is taken in support of any candidate or political party.

Impartiality: INEC shall ensure the creation of a level playing field for all political actors.

Dedication: INEC shall be committed to providing quality electoral services efficiently and effectively, guided by best international practice and standards.

Equity: INEC shall ensure fairness and justice in dealing with all stakeholders.

Excellence: INEC shall be committed to the promotion of merit and professionalism as the basis for all its actions.

Team work: INEC shall create a conducive environment that promotes teamwork among its staff at all levels.

One major problem in Nigeria's democracy is the existence of an unhealthy electoral body called the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC. The commission is largely not independent as their value states it. Every successive election conducted by INEC after 1999 suffered loss of credibility. Two major national elections conducted in 2003 and 2007 produced the most controversial, highly discredited, notoriously unreliable and widely cancelled results in Nigeria's political history. Governors, senators, House of Representatives members and state assemblies lost their victories at the various tribunals. The 2011 national election did not witness a major radical departure from the floppy parody of the past. Sadly, each election was most often seriously marred by INEC's poor organization, widespread procedural irregularities, lack of essential transparency, significant evidence of fraud during the collation of results, disenfranchisement of voters at different stages, lack of equal conditions for contestants and numerous incidents of violence.

Violence affects the integrity of an election because it undermines constituted authority and its legitimacy. Elections did not live up to

the hopes and expectations of most Nigerians because the process was largely not credible. INEC must seek knowledge widely. Elections were conducted even in States with difficult terrains and most materials arrived late at the designated places and some were not even brought at all to the polling booths. The appointment of Professor Attahiru Jega as INEC chairman inspired Nigerians who then greatly applauded the Federal Government.

There is no doubt about Jega's clarity of thoughts and boldness of vision but what he strongly needed was indomitable courage and impeccable political will to perform his duty which he was able to do to an extent despite the various threats of top political class and we could see from the last concluded election of March 28, 2015 that President Goodluck Jonathan lost the election to the opposition candidate President Muhammad Buhari which he conceded to defeat. Jega deeply understands and strongly appreciates that policy practicals are radically different from academic theories, otherwise, he would have forgotten any optimistic result that could be considered better than the detestable records of some of his predecessors.

The Roles of Religious Leaders

Under Sixteen years into the life of the new civilian constitutional democracy, there is already mounting evidence everywhere that Nigerians have grown disillusioned and disenchanted with the obvious 'non-performance' of the government at all levels. People easily point to the fact that life has grown increasingly nasty, brutish and short for Nigerians in spite of all the sweet promises of the democratically elected leaders. For hard proof, there is still no electricity, no petrol, no water, no personal or proprietary security and life has generally and progressively gone awry for many. That appears to be the regimes' interim scorecard. The only notable exception to the unending tale of woes is the fact that, at least today, the personal freedom of the people has been partially restored as they can now air their views on virtually anything under the sun without the fear of immediate arrest or outright death as was the case during the time of the military.

The fact that Christianity is one of the main religions in Nigeria makes it pertinent to ask what role can and should the Christian leaders play in the sustenance of democratic culture in Nigeria. According to an interview with the Overseer of Daystar Ministry by Pastor Sam Adeyemi on Channels TV Programme of Sunrise Daily on the 1st of July 2015, he said that "leadership is all about character, it's all about morals. An average politician belongs either to a mosque or to a church and as a pastor, I teach them as a leadership consultant and I believe

that someone somewhere is listening and to help have a quality feature of being a good leader and having a life getting transformed." Religious leaders can bring about sustainable political development through the inculcation of high sense of morality, sense of duty, selfless service, public accountability, respect for human lives, love of one's neighbour, sense of humanity, abhorrence of violence, love of peace, contentment with what one can legitimately have, corruption free, justice etc. in the citizens as well as the leaders (Omoregbe, 2003).

If a religion fails to inculcate a sense of morality in the people, then it has failed in its creed and is not in a position to help bring about good governance and sustain political development in a country where it has failed to raise the moral standard of the people. Adherence to religious tenets by the leaders and followers will greatly enrich political activity. Embedded in each religion are the beliefs, practices and ethics that serve as check for excesses in human behaviour. Thus, values in religion are viable mechanisms for political stability and development. In addition, religion can function as a unifying factor for political development, since religion influences every aspect of human life and serves as a basis for human existence. Religion can boost inter-religious dialogue which can ultimately bring about religious tolerance in the society. Inter-religious dialogue is a platform where religious leaders can discuss and orientate people about the essence of religion and its efficacy in the society. Hence, it is important for religious leaders to guide against hypocritical teaching that can disrupt peace and political stability. Therefore, exchange of ideas removes ignorance and eliminates religious conflicts.

Also, the observance of the oath of office by the political leaders will sustain political development. Political office holders should allow their religious tenets to guide them continuously. Adeleye (1988) asserts that: Religion breeds an ideal heart in man to be able to be conscious of the need to have a clean heart. By this, he will grow to have a philanthropic or patriotic thought before venturing to lead or represent his people in government of the state. In another words, religious leaders will prepare human mind to be a good politician who will constantly fall back upon his religion to guide him. The teachings or tenets of religion are expected to guide him to be able to lead his people aright as a politician with fear of God in him. He will never consider himself first, rather he knows that he is the servant of the electorates. Religion in an idealistic set up, therefore, serves as oil to lubricate politics. This is to say that religion bears peace and love, both of which are vital ingredients that can sum the interests of societies together for an ideal and a very healthy and purposeful politics.

Therefore, in achieving good governance and political stability, religion should serve as a guiding factor in all political activities that the country engages in. The impact of religion on politics can enhance sustainable development if the impact is positive.

According to Abioje (2002) in his article said that political office holders are misusing religion as a tool to get to power while religious leaders are mishandling it to get personal gain from those who hold public office. Many Christian leaders are accused of crimes which include money-making ritual murder (cfr, for instance, *The Leader* Vol. XLI No. 1, Owerri, January 24, 1999, PP. 1 & 3); armed robbery' (cfr., for instance, *Weekly Trust*, August 23-29, 2002, P. 10); duping (cfr., for instance, *Saturday Tribune*, 20 September, 2003, P.5), and so on. There are discernible signs of anti-clericalism, as indicated by reports of armed robbery attacks on some Christian leaders in their mission houses (cfr., for instance, *Sunday Champion*, August, 11 2002, p.3, and suggestions as to why churches should pay tax cfr, for instance, *Sunday Champion*, May 26, 2002, R2), If the influence of Christian leaders can be measured, at least to some extent, by whether many Christians abstain from crimes and anti-social activities, then, the influence can be rated low, since many Christians are involved in various forms of crimes that are committed in Nigeria, including the ones listed above, and others, such as bribery and corruption, embezzlement of public funds, nepotism, ethnicism, and general abuse of office.

The enumerated reasons above are not to conclude that there are no good Christian leaders, as well as saintly Christians in Nigeria. Many churches founded schools, established hospitals and health clinics. Some expatriate Christian leaders in particular sponsored the education of several Nigerian youths. Leprosarium and some other rehabilitation centres were also founded by some Christian Churches. Yet, Nigeria remains a perverted and crime-infested society, to a large extent, because on both sides of the divide (i.e. the leader and the led), the saintly are always in the marginal minority.

One can affirm, based on the research for this paper, that a good number of Christian leaders wield enormous amount of power that can positively influence the socio-political and economic situation in Nigeria, if the powers are directed toward that end. Very often, the powers are unleashed for ecclesiastical concerns alone. But some policies do overlap and can indirectly benefit society. For instance, Quoting from Abioje's article that the Catholic Arch Bishop of Owerri, Anthony J.V. Obinna, was reported to have told the members of his extensive archdiocese that anybody who dressed indecently would henceforth not be allowed into the premises of' any church under his

jurisdiction. He was said to have been disturbed by the rampant and the corrupting influence of immodest dressing (Nwokpara 8). If some or many members of his archdiocese imbibe the culture of modest and decent dressing, based on the Archbishop's injunction, they may positively influence some other people around them, and that is how a Christian leader can indirectly influence life in the larger society.

In the same vein, if the Church would frown at and discriminate against corrupt civil servants who deny the people infrastructure by embezzling public funds, life in Nigeria may change for the better. If like the indecently dressed persons, self-serving, public officers are declared *personae non gratae* (i.e. unacceptable persons) by Christian leaders, abuse of office, which is currently regarded as normal by many Nigerians, may soon be appropriately perceived in many quarters as a shameful and disgraceful thing to do.

Far from that, the current situation in Nigeria seems to be that Christian leaders simply look the other way, or give their support to the status quo, so as to enjoy socio-political and financial patronage, possibly. Here and there, veiled condemnatory words could be read, particularly in communiques issued by bishops and other meetings of Christian leaders. With specific reference to Nigeria, Obiokeke, a bishop and General Overseer of God's Pentecostal Mission, observes that:

"Clerics are not telling our political leaders the truth. Instead of calling them to order when they err, they join the world to genoflate and sycophant to them. That is not God that is not Christianity".

Conclusion

Looking at the problems of Nigeria in the last twenty years: poverty, unemployment, insecurity, lack of water, lack of adequate housing, crime, corruption, rural underdevelopment, low industrialization, technological backwardness, nepotism, ethnic distrust, religious violence, deteriorating infrastructure, illiteracy, poor pay for workers, lack of social security, unreliable power supply, poor public transportation system, malnutrition, high maternal and child mortality, inadequate health services, political instability and rascality, etc. Nigerians are not happy any longer. That is the crux of leadership and democracy but bad leadership cannot enhance democracy. Bad leadership cannot promote accountability, discipline, social justice and good governance.

Bad leadership cannot encourage discipline, productivity, creativity, unity, and patriotism. Bad leadership and bad governance are

directly related. But what exactly is good governance. By good governance we refer to the existence of an environment that promotes accountability, social justice, fiscal discipline and responsibility, transparency, service delivery and accessible leadership. Good governance requires that the people remain primary in the deployment of governmental powers, the allocation of programmes and policies as well as resources. Good governance demands a leadership that emanates from the people and functions within the context of dialogue, consultation, and constitutionalism. In an environment of good governance, the public will and public good dominates, and the people, their communities and constituencies are consulted before governmental actions are taken. Good governance is about the people, their hopes, dreams, relationships, cultures, values, and general socio-cultural environment. Can we say that we have been experiencing and enjoying good governance in Nigeria?

Good leadership brings hope and energy to the people. It attracts the best minds as well as local and external support. Good leadership brings about quality and good governance, progressive policies, happiness in the people, and general dynamism. Good leadership brings out the most purposeful, creative and innovative qualities of citizens and expands the capacity to share the pains of reform and to establish strong platforms of tolerance, mutual support, cooperation, innovation, and social justice. In fact, no matter the level, there is no alternative to purposeful, honest, focused, dedicated, and patriotic leadership. A good leader encourages the emergence of other leaders, encourages people to take charge and to want to make a difference (President Faure Eyadema, 50th Birthday Lecture for Prof. Julius Ihonvbere, Benin City, 2006).

From the above considerations, it has been observed that for sustainable democracy and good governance to be achieved in Nigeria, the role of religious leaders cannot be waved aside. Religious leaders have a great deal to contribute to moral rejuvenation of the citizenry in Nigeria. Good moral promotes fertile soil for democracy and good governance to germinate, grow, flower and bear lasting fruits. Religion is an indispensable instruction for the promotion of moral values that will help the nascent democracy and good governance to grow like other advanced democracies all over the world.

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