RELIGION AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Religion is one of the most vexatious and contentious issues across the globe. Intrinsic in religion is the characteristic of power. This power characteristic positions it inextricably from politics in Nigeria, as in other countries. Across the world different religions and even different sects of the same religions are engaged in never-ending jostle for power and prominence. This paper is an attempt to locate the place of religion in the politics in Nigeria. In terms of methodology it relied on analysis of secondary data while using the social identity theory as a preferred theoretical framework. The paper found that inherent in all human relations is competition. Therefore, the paper recommends that for any religion to remain relevant or at least be allowed to exist, the adherents must be politically active.

Keywords: Religion, Politics, Christian, Church, Islamisation

Introduction

McGee (1980, p. 336) defined religion as "a set of actions organized around the sacred, that is a non-empirical source of power, transcendence, mystery and awe". Another attempt to define religion was by Durkheim (Tylor, 1958, p.62) which says it is ''a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say things set apart or forbidden--beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a church all those who adhere to them''. According to google.com.ng religion is the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods. Religion, or more appropriately religions, are cultural phenomena comprised of social institutions, traditions of practice, literatures, sacred texts and stories, and sacred places that identify and convey an understanding of ultimate meaning. Religions are very diverse. While it is common for religions to identify the ultimate with a deity (like the western monotheisms – Judaism, Christianity, Islam) or deities, not all do. There are non-theistic religions, like Buddhism. Wikipedia in etymology and history of the concept of religion noted that there are an estimated 10,000 distinct religions worldwide. It further stated that about 84% of the world's population is affiliated with one of the five largest religions, namely Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or forms of folk religion.

Some of the prominent religions in the world and their symbols above in clock-wise order include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Bahá'í Faith, Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Slavic neopaganism, Celtic polytheism, Heathenism (German paganism), Semitic neopaganism, Wicca, Kemetism (Egyptian paganism), Hellenism, Italo-Roman neopaganism (Seul, 1999). In Africa there are also African traditional religions. It may be necessary to observe here that while the above

religions   suggest man looking for a way to reach God Christians hold that Christianity is not a religion because it is God looking for man through Christ (John 1:1-5; 3:16,17 and 3:31).

Adherents of the different religions tend to disagree on many things including how the same man offering the worship came into being. While the Christians believe that God formed man from dust and breathed life into him some others believe that man evolved from monkey, etc. According to April Holloway (2017) there are many different Hindu creation stories:

> Lord Brahma is the Creator of the universes, and the first in the triumvirate. The other two gods comprising the triumvirate are Vishnu, who sustains the creation, and Shiva, the destroyer of the evil. These 3 gods form the Supreme One who is behind all of creation and destruction—and these Gods create and destroy universes continuously. Brahma creates human beings and all life. All different species come out from different parts of Brahma's body. He created man as the first of the animals and the strongest. He created him from his own soul. One of the stories mentions that Brahma splits himself into two to create male and female. In other texts the *Prajapati* (a group of deities), the sons of Brahma, are said to be creating all living beings, both gods and mortal creatures. The concept of god in Hinduism is exceptionally complex and varies according to different philosophies and traditions. Generally, gods in Hinduism appear more like supreme personal beings. *Devas* (a word for deity) can easily be conveyed as supernatural beings and, according to Hindu texts, there are 33 in the celestial world.

Another point of fierce disagreement is who actually this superhuman that deserves to be worshiped is. While the Christian doctrine holds that Jehovah is God and that He cannot be seen, some others believe snakes, monkeys and elephants are sacred objects deserving of their worship. Among some groups in Nigeria, like some parts of Anambra and Rivers states the python is revered as a god. An accidental killing of the python in these areas attracts burial of the snake as a human being by the killer. Among some groups in India elephants and monkeys are sacred animals deserving man's worship.

> Animals have been traditionally considered sacred in Hindu culture. The symbolic significance of animals in India are as vehicles of god or deities themselves. Bull, the vehicle of Lord Shiva, Tiger the vehicle of "Maa Durga", mouse is also considered as one of the holy animals in India, It is vahana (mount/vehicle) of the Lord Shri Ganesh. The Karni Mata Temple is very popular as the temple of rats in Rajasthan. Indian Eagle Garuda and peacock are considered as the sacred bird of Hindu. Not only animals are worship as sacred in India, Holy rivers, Sacred trees, land and birds are also worshiped in Indian culture. Street show of animals like monkey, bear and snakes used by the tribe people for living hood. ... The cow is holiest animal

in India and their slaughter is banned throughout India. Cow is one of the most worshiped animal in India, she treated as the gods in the shape of animal. Cow the "Sacred Animals of India" is even more than a mother in the sense that it fulfills all the needs of her children. The cow in India is believed as a gift of the gods to the peoples (http://www.walkthroughindia.com/wildlife/the-5-holy-animals-of-india)

The Egyptian pantheon was especially fond of zoomorphism, with many animals sacred to particular deities — cats to Bastet, ibises and baboons to Thoth, crocodiles to Sebek and Ra, fish to Set, mongoose, shrew and birds to Horus, dogs and jackals to Anubis, serpents and eels to Atum, beetles to Khepera, bulls to Apis. Animals were often mummified as a result of these beliefs.

These very pronounced doctrinal differences appear to make it near impossible for these religious groups to see eye to eye. These religions and Christianity have often been engaged in overt and sometimes covert struggles for dominance and fierce competition for state resources in various countries. Such competitions are seen in jostling for positions of power to be able to authoritatively allocate values. It is this competition for power that we refer to as religion in politics in Nigeria. As David Engels and Peter Van Nuffelen (2014) observed economic theory, with its assumption of the ultimately positive nature of competition, is merely the most obvious illustration, but much sociological theory, emphasizing the contest for status and capital of various sorts, presupposes competition as a natural condition among individuals.

The Oriental religions were seen as overcoming the decrepit old Roman religion, and then competed with Christianity. According to Engels and Nuffele (2014) Cumont's image of Mithraism is therefore very much modelled on what we know about the early Church. Both groups competed, as it were, for the upper hand in Roman society, but Christianity won when Constantine chose to support it. In Nigeria, as in other places, such competition is intra-religion as it is inter-religion. For instance, among Muslims there is power struggle between Sunnis and Shia moslems. According to BBC news (http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16047709) of January 04, 2016

> The divide between Sunnis and Shia is the largest and oldest in the history of Islam. Members of the two sects have co-existed for centuries and share many fundamental beliefs and practices. But they differ in doctrine, ritual, law, theology and religious organisation. Their leaders also often seem to be in competition. From Lebanon and Syria to Iraq and Pakistan, many recent conflicts have emphasised the sectarian divide, tearing communities apart.

In spite of professing the same faith Hausa moslems never share mosques with Yoruba moslems. In the Christian fold Protestants, Roman Catholics, new generation, and African instituted churches pull in different directions when it comes to power sharing. A popular theorist, Lasswell (1936), defined politics as ''who gets

what, when and how'' and this in political sociology connotes application of power, where power is the capacity to achieve one's objectives even when those objectives are in conflict with the interest of another actor or actors. It can also be seen as a study of power relations. Politics is contest by powers for scarce resources in a given environment or context. It may also be defined as struggle for protection and promotion or advancement of parochial or peculiar interests. Another way of defining politics is to see it as organized advancement of organized interests. This may be through political parties. Organized interests suggest plurality and aggregation of interests. Human nature perpetually thrives on interests. Various disciplines in the social sciences emphasize interest. In law one needs to show interest in a matter to have locus. Again, in law even lack of interest can cause abortion of a matter through lack of diligent prosecution. In business administration the proprietor would ask: what is in it for me? Or, is my interest protected? In public administration, the officer weighs and balances interests and options. He may also seek to ascertain public interest before action is taken on a public matter. Sometimes, and in an often-unfortunate manner, the public administrator (public servant) often considers his interest before attending to public issues. Once the interest is defined the need for its protection and promotion arises. At the national level minority groups tend to congregate around parties that will protect their interests best, since on their own it may be elusive. To address this fear some political parties in Nigeria have adopted what they call zoning formula. It is indeed as cyclic or endless as man's needs are insatiable. Resources to satisfy any or a combination of Maslow's five hierarchy of needs, including physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualization, are usually scarce.

The environment determines the type of politics in question, that is environmental determinism. The environment may not only be spatial but can also be any human grouping and may range from family (even just a man and his wife), club, school, church, office, local government area, state, regional (within a country and among a number of countries), national to international. And so, when we prefix the environment to the word politics we get the politics we are referring to. Examples include village, church and international politics. The scarce resources in contest may also be used to distinguish the types of politics. Thus, we may have food politics, water politics, employment politics etc. Food is important because without food there may be starvation. It is a basic resource. Indeed, it is an obligatory starting point for other forms of politics. Politics may also be defined as balancing of interests among contending powers. The powers in the contest or struggle for the scarce resources are the actors in the group(s). Depending on the size of the group(s) they may form alignments from time to time and from interest area to interest area. They may call themselves stakeholders, a term which in itself arrogates a special status or advantage to them in terms of ability to lay claim to the resources in question or contest. Once this is done, the disadvantaged groups tend to be relatively incapacitated concerning their aspiration over the resources in question. They are thus psychologically conquered and tend to depend on the stakeholders to allocate crumbs to them. The stakeholders are usually small in number and are often

erroneously looked up to for a change in any resource distribution that adversely affects the majority. This is usually not possible because it will amount to shooting themselves in the leg, exchanging riches for poverty, trading places with the poor or conceding power to the poor. Power is not given, but taken. Even the bible says that "from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent *take* (emphasis mine) it by force (Matthew 11:12)".

Theoretical Perspective

This paper is situated within the social identity analytical framework developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. The theory was originally developed to understand the psychological basis of intergroup discrimination. According to this theory, identity competition plays a central role in the inception and escalation of intergroup conflict, even when economic and political factors also are at play. Individual and group identity competition is considered a by-product of individuals' efforts to satisfy basic human needs, including various psychological needs. Religions often serve these psychological needs more comprehensively and potently than other repositories of cultural meaning that contribute to the construction and maintenance of individual and group identities. Religions frequently supply cosmologies, moral frameworks, institutions, rituals, traditions, and other identity-supporting content that answers to individuals' needs for psychological stability in the form of a predictable world, a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and even self-actualization. The peculiar ability of religion to serve the human identity impulse thus may partially explain why intergroup conflict so frequently occurs along religious fault lines.

According McLeod (2008) to Henri Tajfel's greatest contribution to psychology was social identity theory. Social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership. An individual draws self-esteem, self-worth and pride from his membership of groups like family, social club, race, college attended, profession, etc. In this theory group membership bestows sense of belonging on the individuals. Tajfel (1979) proposed that the groups (e.g. social class, family, football team, etc.) which people belonged to were an important source of pride and self-esteem. Groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world.

We attempt to advance the rating of our group in order to increase our self-worth.

> For example, England is the best country in the world! We can also increase our self-image by discriminating and holding prejudice views against the out group (the group we don't belong to). For example, the Americans, French etc. are a bunch of losers! Therefore, we divided the world into "them" and "us" based through a process of social categorization (i.e. we put people into social groups).This is known as in-group (us) and out-group (them). Social identity theory states that the in-group will discriminate against the out-group to enhance their self-image (McLeod, 2008).

There is a tendency to exaggerate the differences between groups and the similarities of things in the same group. The 'we and they' categorisation breeds prejudice as it seeks to reinforce in-group superiority by finding negative aspects of the out-group. This is the foundation for prejudice. Thus, McLeod (2008) stated that ''Prejudiced views between cultures may result in racism; in its extreme forms, racism may result in genocide, such as occurred in Germany with the Jews, in Rwanda between the Hutus and Tutsis and, more recently, in the former Yugoslavia between the Bosnians and Serbs''.

We categorize or stereotype people in the same way. We see the group to which we belong (the in-group) as being different from the others (the out-groups), and members of the same group as being more similar than they are. Social categorization is one explanation for prejudice attitudes (i.e. "them" and "us" mentality) which leads to in-groups and out-groups.

Some examples of In-groups/Out-groups or We/They categorisations include:

   Nigeria: Christians and Moslems
    Palestine: Jews and Arabs
     Rwanda: Hutus and Tutsis
     Yugoslavia: the Bosnians and Serbs
     Northern Ireland: Roman Catholics and Protestants
     Germany: Jews and the Nazis
     Politics: Labor and the Conservatives
     Football: Liverpool and Man Utd
     Gender: Males and Females
     Social Class: Middle and Working Classes

The process according to Tajfel and Turner (1979) involves **social categorization, identification and comparison**. We tend to lump or categorise people and ourselves into groups. This can be along lines of religion, race, ethnic origin, complexion, profession, etc. Once this is done we discover more positive things about our categories and tend to judge others by our standards. It is also possible for an individual to belong to several categories. Thus, a Christian can also be an Igbo and a Moslem can be a Fulani or Hausa. Closely following categorisation is **social identification**. Here the individuals appropriate the identity of the group they belong to and begin to act as they think worthy of the group. They struggle to conform to the norms, ethics, etc of the group. If we must maintain our self-esteem we must then compare our group membership with others. Then comes the **social comparison** stage in the process. It is the product of this stage where the negative aspects of other groups as against the positive aspects of one's group that breed rivalry and even hostility. It is expected that this theory will help us to understand the place of religion in politics in Nigeria, especially given the constant rivalries among religions in Nigeria.

Politics in Nigeria

In politics there are the rules, techniques, plans, etc, employed by the actors to knock out their opponents. They may be legitimate, illegitimate, moral, immoral, combination of these or even absurd in some cases. These include pacification, diplomacy (including carrot and stick), coveting state media and other infrastructure, negotiation, numbers, war and threat of war, among others.

Pacification is a technique used at all levels of politics. It is used by a party or actor to alienate another or others, thus reducing the number and strength of its opposition. It puts the pacified or bought over on the side of the pacifier. The pacified then tends to collapse his interest in the hands of the pacifier, believing it will be safe there. It is like mortgaging the future for a plate of porridge (Genesis 25:29-34). An example is when politicians make apparently harmless or innocuous donations to churches and ministers of God ahead of elections. Over time the church and its ministers come to believe that politics should be left for politicians alone. Ironically, the same politicians who donated to the church while campaigning soon turn round to insist that the church pays tax.

Coveting state media (Chukwuma, 2007, p.10) and other infrastructure belonging to the state or all by state governors or others already in power is another strategy usually employed in politics, especially in Africa and other developing countries where there are weak separation of powers and distinction between personal and collective interests (Eleagu, 2005, p. 66). Here, these actors see state-owned media houses as regular ministries of information staffed by civil servants who are guided by civil service rules including absolute loyalty to the government in power. This way information or news from other contending powers or opposition is usually killed on arrival, unless it is adverse to the interest of the opposition. Compliance with this arrangement is enforced through carrot and stick style of salary payment to state media staff, employment of known government party agents and propagandists into the media houses as journalists and deployment of 'erring' media staff to redundant tables, sometimes next to public toilets, in the ministry of information or as information officers in very remote local government areas. In some other cases, during electioneering campaigns, stadia and other publicly built and maintained facilities as schools are no-go areas for opposition parties but are available to the party in government. Government circulars, citing security threats, are often issued to the facility managers, school headmasters/headmistresses and principals forbidding public gatherings and worship without clearance from the governor, which is usually impossible, in such places. Ironically, the same places are used without such clearance by the party or parties in power, for the same purposes.

Intimidation is another absurd means of compelling loyalty from opposition. For instance, in some states of Nigeria, and for lack of resources to approach the courts, people who join opposition parties risk withdrawal of certificates of occupancy or outright demolition of their houses if they ever hoist opposition flags, posters or even handbills therein or even use such places for their meetings. This, however, contradicts the constitutionally guaranteed right to peaceful assembly and association (Chapter 4, Section 40) in Nigeria.

Actors in politics often reach written and or unwritten agreements which often guide their behaviour in the struggle for scarce resources. Their adherence to these agreements is often determined by their level of individual discipline and how they later interpret the accords or agreements. The more undisciplined they are and the more they feel change will be in their permanent interest the more they are prone to break the agreements. Some will even deny that such gentlemanly agreements ever existed in the first place. This is because they are often not written, done in the dark and may not even be actionable.

An unwritten understanding in church circles is to leave politics to the politicians, as if the church is bereft of internal and external politics. Is it not curious that a very high percentage of bishops have older bishops as their filial relatives? Yet the church and the priests are to distance themselves from partisan politics. What party, whose interest? At civil society events during the build up to elections in Nigeria it was usually argued that religion should not be an issue for discussion. But once a Buhari won Islamisation became an unwritten state policy, as provided for by a non-existent chapter of our constitution. While the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was pretending to be apolitical Nigeria's Muslim presidents, without recourse to the constitutional secularity of Nigeria, were busy enlisting Nigeria as member of Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism, and even licensed Islamic Banking in Nigeria. In the current administration Muslim President Muhammadu Buhari is also strategically the petroleum minister and nearly all the heads of the armed forces and paramilitary or security agencies as well as heads and boards of key boards are Moslem northerners, in spite of federal character balance enshrined in the constitution of Nigeria**.** An insignificant percentage went to Muslims from the centre and the west while the bewildered Christians, especially from the east, appear to watch in utter amazement.

Appointments by the Buhari Government according to Zones (2016)

FOR THE NORTH
(North West, North East, North Central)

1. **Aide de Camp to president:** Lt. Col Abubakar Lawal
2. **Senior Special Assistant, Media and Publicity:** Garba Shehu
3. **State Chief of Protocol/Special Assistant (Presidential Matters):** Lawal Abdullahi Kazaure
4. **Accountant General of the Federation:** Ahmed Idris
5. **National Security Adviser:** Babagana Monguno
6. **Chief of Army Staff:** Tukur Buratai
7. **Chief of Air Staff:** Sadique Abubakar
8. **Chief of Defense Intelligence:** Monday Riku Morgan
9. **Director General, State Security Services, SSS:** Lawal Daura
10. **Executive Vice Chairman/ Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Communications Commission:** Umaru Dambatta
11. **Director General, Budget Office of the Federation:** Aliyu Gusau
12. **Group Managing Director, Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC:** Maikanta Baru
13. **Secretary to Government of the Federation:** Babachir David Lawal
14. **Chief of Staff to the President:** Abba Kyari
15. **Senior Special Assistant on National Assembly Matters (House of Representatives):** Suleiman Kawu
16. **Comptroller-General, Nigerian Customs Service:** Hameed Ibrahim Ali
17. **Director, Department Of Petroleum Resources, DPR:** Modecai Baba Ladan
18. **Commissioner for Insurance and Chief Executive of the National Insurance Commission:** Mohammed Kari
19. **Managing Director, Asset Management Company of Nigeria, AMCON:** Ahmed Lawan Kuru
20. **Comptroller General of Prisons:** Ahmed Ja'afaru
21. **Comptroller General of Immigration:** Muhammed Babandede Jigawa
22. **INEC Chairman:** Mahmood Yakubu
23. **EFCC Chairman:** Ibrahim Magu, a Kanuri
24. **NPA Managing Director:** Hadiza Bala Usman
25. **Inspector General of Police:** Ibrahim Kpotun Idris

FOR THE SOUTH
(South South, South East, South West)

26. **Special Adviser, Media and Publicity to the president:** Femi Adesina
27. **Chief of Defense Staff:** Abayomi Olonishakin
28. **Chief of Naval Staff:** Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas
29. **Special Adviser, Niger Delta Amnesty Office:** Paul Boroh
30. **Executive Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service, FIRS:** Babatunde Fowler
31. **Senior Special Assistant on National Assembly Matters (Senate):** Ita Enang
32. **NIMASA Director General:** Dr. Dakuku Peterside
33. **NDDC Director General:** Ibim Sementari

Appointments by Buhari for Ambassadorial appointments.

1. South South States: 6 Nominees with Bayelsa missing but Edo, APC state 2
2. South East: 6 with Ebonyi missing but Imo APC state2, Anambra 2
3. South West: 7 nominees

AMBASSADORIAL NOMINEES ACCORDING TO ZONES

1. **South South States:** 6 Nominees with Bayelsa missing but Edo, (APC State) 2
2. **South East:** 6 with Ebonyi missing but Imo (APC State) 2, Anambra 2.
3. **South West:** 7 Nominees.

Source: WhatsApp broadcast massage.

It may be important to note, as Ike (2016) did, that Christianity is most apparent in southern Nigeria, an area dominated by many different ethnic groups, for example, the Ibibio, Efik, Igbo, and Yoruba. A cursory look at the distribution of capital projects in the 2016 federal budget will suggest that the Christian south is neglected deliberately. There is hardly any other way to explain North Central's 272 trillion allocation over South East's 28 trillion or over the 35 trillion budgeted for South-South. It is also noteworthy that the same budget was essentially based on oil proceeds from the same South-East and South-South. For now the entire North does not contribute a drop of oil or its proceeds to the national treasury.

Distribution of Capital Projects in the 2016 Budget

Zone	Capital Projects (Appropriated)
NORTH CENTRAL	271,787,440,914
NORTH WEST	74,541,106,578
SOUTH WEST	48,970,193,154
NORTH EAST	46,689,092,193
SOUTH SOUTH	35,309,931,022
SOUTH EAST	28,217,587,012

Source: National Assembly Budget and Research Office (NABRO)

Curiously too, religious crises usually arising from Muslems' demand for imposition of sharia laws are almost always when Muslems are not in power. Uju (2004:145) noted that:

> Between the middle and late 1970s the issue of sharia became the first obvious ambition of the Northern political elites to give national elevation to Islam over and above Christianity. Therefore there can be no mention of religious crisis without the Sharia crisis since it epitomizes in its true form the connection between religion and politics in Nigeria.

The elements or ingredients of politics include power, influence, force, negotiation etc.

These elements can be found singly or as a combination. They may be interwoven in both definition and use. For instance, power is ability to influence or compel another or others to accept or do one's wish. It may be achieved by force or peaceful negotiation. The ultimate aim is a shift in position in the interest of the powerful. It may involve pooling together of strengths by actors to bring down a common threat. Example at the international level of politics was the coming together of the Allied Forces in 1945 to check the spread of Nazi Germany, under Hitler, across Europe and the rest of the world. Again in 2012 it took the coming together of France, USA, and Britain etc to bring down the government of Col Muomar Ghadaffi in Libya, in an attempt to check Libya's export of terror across the world. In Nigeria, in 2011 elections, it took the merging of forces among opposition parties to unseat then Governor Ikedi Ohakim of Imo state. Even at the family level a rallying behind

the wife by the children tends to water down and keep in check the influence of the father. His behavior will be influenced by his desire to win back his children's love, respect and loyalty, items that are usually scarce in supply. In politics power is not given but it is taken. Even when it is given, as in the case of Governor Theodore Orji of Abia State and his predecessor, Dr Orji Uzor Kalu, it may be subject to protracted litigations, a huge sign of struggle. The contest will necessarily be there but it may be fraught with irregularities and lack of transparency which brings us back to ability or power to manipulate the system in one's favour. In essence, even the one to receive power at the end would not be alone. He would have been chosen over a number of other contestants lined up to be given power. He may have long-drawn litigations to contend with, as did Theodore Orji.

On November 29, 2014, according to a monitored CNN report, the present Pope visited and prayed at the blue mosque, Istanbul in Turkey. Recent report from BCA (Broadcasting Corporation of Abia State) Memory Lane programme said another pope did the same in 2008. It is said that Abraham and the Jews were of Syrian origin (Deuteronomy 26:5) and other records suggest he existed around Istanbul in present day Turkey, not present day Israel or Palestine. Could it be religious harmony alone that is driving popes to worship in mosques? Which god are they praying to from a particular mosque? Will we be expecting imams to worship in the church? Is it not possible that the popes have their eyes on something there, especially as they were said to have prayed 'silently'? Could it not be a lost ground in one of the earlier conquests that the popes are subtly attached to but cannot overtly go after to sustain inter-religious harmony? Either way it is politics in the faith, church and even across faith borders. The Anglican Communion (Uzodinma, 2014) in Nigeria bestowed its highest honour during its 11th general synod in Enugu in 2014 on then President Goodluck Jonathan, a man with two wives (stargist.com). This is a church that professes the tenets of the bible. However, the same bible preaches that a deacon, one deserving honour, must be husband of **only one wife** at a time (1Timothy 3:2 & 12). It, thus, becomes clear that the church leadership did not offer that award to the then president as an encouragement to him to keep up the good deeds or to be a source of inspiration to the rest of the members. Politics and accoutrements may better explain the award. Curiously, large percentage of knighthood and other recognitions in the various denominations are reserved for those with the wherewithal. People who are poor but run all menial errands in the churches are nearly always forgotten when it is time for recognition and awards.

Some bishops will readily lever on Galatians 5:19, 20 to enjoin the clergy under them to avoid dissentions, *iro otu* (Igbo), porapo (Yoruba) or *dengi* (Hausa) but behind the scene they encourage clergy from their own natural localities to come together periodically to protect their interests, including the interests of the encouraging bishops, as outsiders cannot be fully trusted with certain key positions and details. They give the groups innocuous labels as ABC or XYZ Brethren. These same bishops ironically are the champions against politicizing the church or politics in the church.

Many new generation churches in Nigeria started out with general overseers who encouraged the people from everywhere to freely give and help build the lord's churches. But as they age their greatest concern is to retain the church leadership in their natural families. When they die succession, plans are arranged in such a way that the lord's church leadership remains in their families. Again, in terms of ethnicity, majority of the new generation churches with Yoruba general overseers find it hard to appoint *igbo* pastors to head even local churches in *igbo* states. At best they would send a pastor from the old mid-west region, if they think *yoruba* pastors would be resisted. There the *igbos* can only be prayer warriors, burial committee chairmen or fund raising committee chairmen. But the lord prayed in John 17:22 "that they may be one, even as we are one". Matthias was chosen over Justus (Acts 1:23) through casting of lots after praying. Today, however, bishops are made, dioceses are carved out and cathedrals and archdeaconry headquarters locations are chosen to suit powerful interests, sometimes following lobbying, not casting of lots.

Conclusion

Politics is about power and its use. Indeed in their work titled *The Relationship between Church and State*, Kasomo and Naila (2013) maintained that the "church and state are two realms inseparable basically because they concern the same subject matter, namely man and woman, who are both material and spiritual." Even the subtle efforts to hide political moves or maneuvers from the other competing side or sides are strategic in politics. One may refer to this as diplomacy but it is essentially a political tool or strategy. The church is made up of people and because these people interact within and without, influence in either direction is inevitable and so politics is unavoidable. It is misleading to think that the church is apolitical because the church does not exist in isolation. Even if the church is an island internal power play is found there, and that is politics.

Recommendations

The church as a collectivity has interests. Christianity as a faith, with all the buffeting missiles (2 Timothy 4:1-4), should come out clearly and seek to possess the Christian possession (Joshua 1:11). The church should be free to command votes and extract promises from competing candidates in order to ensure, at least, the continued secularity of the entity called Nigeria as well as maintain earthly relevance while upholding heavenly consciousness. The wanton religious killings and indiscriminate rape of innocent women and girls by Fulani herdsmen in the southern part of Nigeria, where they are strangers, will abate if Christian leadership moves from reacting through press releases to such ugly incidents to angling for positions of reasonable power in the polity.

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