



Pentecostalism and the Dynamics of Democratic Governance in Nigeria since 1999

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Abstract

The phenomenon of religious politics in Nigeria is an obvious one. In political aspects such as the style of governance, policy formulations and the electoral process in Nigeria, religion has been a decisive determining factor. However, the influence of Christian religion on politics in Nigeria could be both positive and negative. In other words, as religion enhances national development, it could also be counterproductive. This paper critically discusses the influence of Pentecostalism and the dynamics of the Democratic Government in Nigeria since 1999, emphasizing the roles of the church in political leadership in the country. In practicing politics in Nigeria, adherence to religious and moral values and observance of the Nigerian constitution, which provides freedom of religion, is necessary for national development. The study discovered that the uncertainty concerning the future of Nigeria is unfortunately connected to a poor democratic culture, which is an essential factor in the political life of every nation. The paper concludes that, despite the abundant economic resources and several attempts by different governments over the years to reduce poverty and unemployment and promote sustainable development, Nigeria is still struggling in many fronts due to lack of political will, corruption, and no proper coordination for sustainable growth and development programs. In addition, the church, even though a strong voice in the political system of the nation, has not played her roles well. It is argued that Christians need to get more actively involved in politics, and that the Christian religion can and should be an agent of change and progressive national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Pentecostal, Nigeria, democracy, governance, religious influence, leadership.

Introduction

Pentecostalism is a charismatic Christian movement that emphasizes a personal encounter with Jesus Christ as Saviour and healer, potentially becoming “born again” as Christians. Nigerian Pentecostalism started in the 1970s as university-educated, charismatic youth began creating their spaces for worship (Gaiya, 2004). Its foundations are in the African Initiated Churches, especially in British and American Pentecostal and Evangelical types of the 1960s, which Nigerians encountered through international studies, Pentecostal outreach, American televangelism and other Christian media. Nigerian Pentecostalism includes elements of African worship while emphasizing its place among transnational Pentecostal networks, which have grown through conversion and immigration (Gaiya, 2004). The achievement of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria inspired the overall charismatic movements in Nigeria, which, by the late 1970s, widely



attracted members of the Christian upper-middle class. Academics believe Nigerian politics is structured by the division between northern Muslims and southern Christians.

Since democracy was inaugurated in the country in 1999, the Christian aspect of Nigerian politics has witnessed the rising power of Pentecostalism, the country's fastest-growing religious group. Two of Nigeria's four presidents since 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan, were Pentecostals. Although the current president, Muhammadu Buhari, is a Muslim, his administration contains several prominent Pentecostals, including the Vice President, Professor Yemi Osibanjo. Therefore, the role of Pentecostalism as one of the most vocal voices in Nigerian politics and within an implacable civil society that fought the military to a standstill for a more people-oriented democratic government has been acknowledged in many academic analyses. However, this paper attempts to evaluate the influence and consequences of Pentecostal churches on the democratic governments in Nigeria since 1999 (Ojo, 2008).

Methodology

The study evaluates Pentecostalism and the dynamics of democratic governance in Nigeria Since 1999. It emphasizes the roles of the church in political leadership in the country over the last 24 years. The study used a descriptive research method to complement the analysis of concepts and terrains of leadership in the political arena of the Nigerian State over the years in question. This method was considered to be suitable for this study because the research work is historical in nature and it requires a thorough analysis and description of, to an extent the past, and especially the current political scenario in Nigeria and the roles of the church in the order of events.

The Islamization Agenda, 1979-1999

During a succession of Muslim military dictatorship, the Association became increasingly political and acted almost as "an unofficial opposition to the dictators" (Freston, 2001:184). The government proposed the creation of a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal in 1979, and in the 1988-89 Constituent Assembly, efforts were made to extend the jurisdiction and coverage of Sharia courts. Pentecostals and Evangelicals in the Youth Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) organized prayer sessions and campaigns against the Sharia agenda. By 1988, most Association publications challenging the programmes and policies of General Ibrahim Babangida's pro-Islamic government were produced partly by its Youth Wing (Freston, 2001: 182-83; Ojo, 2004: 6).

In 1986, under General Babangida, Nigeria became a registered member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, triggering numerous Pentecostal protests. Benson Idahosa, the famous Pentecostal preacher, threatened to call for a Christian boycott of newspapers favouring Islamization. Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, a leading Muslim cleric in 1987, stoked further controversy by publicly declaring that Muslims would never allow non-Muslims to assume political leadership in Nigeria. In response, Pentecostal leaders allied with other Christians in Kaduna state and launched a campaign to field candidates in local government elections in 1988 (Ojo, 2004: 6; Amadi, 2004: 3).

In 1993, both government-sanctioned parties fielded Muslim candidates for the presidency. The Christian community voted mostly for Chief M. K. O. Abiola, the flag bearer of the Social Democratic Party, a Christian-leaning party from the South. When it became evident that Abiola would win, the government voided the result, and the Christian



community appealed to the military to relinquish power (Freston, 2001: 188). Pentecostals and other evangelicals contested elections at various levels in 1993, with “priests, deacons, prophets, apostles and evangelists emerging as governors, deputy governors, local government chairmen and councilors.” In the 1990s, Benson Idahosa encouraged Christians to push for political reform (Freston, 2001: 185-88).

Olusegun Obasanjo: The Pentecostal Messiah of Nigeria

Following the release of Olusegun Obasanjo from prison on 16 June 1998, the Pentecostal apolitical stance experienced a shift towards activism. Significantly, Obasanjo was imprisoned on 28 February 1995 by the Abacha dictatorship for his alleged involvement in a phoney coup. Initially, his sentence was for life, but following the intervention of world leaders including Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Helmut Schmidt of Germany and Jimmy Carter of the United States, this was commuted for 15 years (Onuoha, 2013). While in prison, Obasanjo claimed to have received a new spiritual experience of the ‘born-again’ type and was ordained by God as a pastor. As a demonstration of his newfound faith, Obasanjo, a Baptist Christian, moved from one Pentecostal church to another to celebrate his survival of prison life. Mainstream Pentecostal leaders and organizations, and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) (under Primate Sunday Mbang), collectively adopted and endorsed Obasanjo as a born-again political personality (Onuoha, 2013). From 1998 onwards, prophecies and revelations publicized by Pentecostal leaders became a critical political discourse to chart a new future and fortune for the country.

Additionally, such political prophecies were pathways of courting the emerging political class jostling for active engagement in the inaugurated Fourth Republic (Yong, 2010). Like risk-takers, political entrepreneurs are generally drawn to prying into the future, so Pentecostal political prophecy soon became veritable instruments of political permutation. Adopted by the Pentecostal community and bankrolled by the military, Obasanjo easily won the February 1999 presidential election (Yong, 2010).

Obasanjo and the Pentecostal community in Nigeria before and during his eight-year administration became very complex and tenuous. He was a (lapsed) Baptist Christian who was unapologetic about his moral and social conduct. His post-prison narrative about incarceration and the draconian Abacha regime’s survival inevitably led to increased pious ardour. Surviving the draconian Abacha regime gave Obasanjo a renewed purpose in life; God, he reasoned, must have saved him for a higher destiny. In that political milieu, especially with the military eager to relinquish power to a trusted insider, Obasanjo was the most likely candidate, a former military general from the same ethnicity as Moshood K. Abiola, the presumed winner of the annulled 1993 presidential election (Faiola, 2008). The clamour, particularly from southwestern Nigeria, was that the election of 12 June 1993 and the mandate presumptively given to Abiola by the Nigerian electorate be “actualized”, albeit indirectly (Faiola, 2008). According to Julius Adekunle, “electing a Yoruba in the 1999 presidential election seemed to be a reasonable compromise” (Faiola, 2008).

Obasanjo supported the annulment of the 1993 presidential election and became a direct beneficiary. He had maintained that Abiola was not the messiah Nigeria needed. Interpreted as the fulfilment of Pentecostal prayers and arid prophecies, Obasanjo’s victory of 1999 validated Pentecostal political activism and a test of what Pentecostal citizenship could mean or do for the nation. It meant the salvation and redirection of the country towards achieving its lofty destiny. In essence, the divine choice of a leader has been validated through the ballot box (Beresford, 2016). The euphoria following this event



pointed to the symbolic, practical attachment and values and the legal responsibility the Pentecostal community claimed to have for Nigeria as a country. Henceforth, Pentecostals believed that loyalty to God implies active participation in politics and the public life of society. As a president, even when his aides tried rebranding him as “the father of the nation”, Obasanjo left no one in any doubt that he was the ‘born-again’ Yoruba president from southwestern Nigeria (Obadare, 2006). His self-advertisement as a “Christian” president created so much resentment among some Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals. They felt he was undermining becoming a president for all Nigerians irrespective of religio-ethnic affiliation; instead, he ran a “Pentecostal presidency” in cohort with an emergent theocratic class.

Against this background, the utterances and activities of Tunde Bakare, another Pentecostal leader and founder of the Latter Rain Assembly in Lagos, are situated (Obadare, 2006). Tunde Bakare, a former Muslim-turned-Christian, and former-lawyer-turned-pastor, made his now-infamous prophetic proclamation that Obasanjo was not the country’s “messiah” (Obadare, 2006). Instead, Bakare likened Obasanjo to “King Agag” with a prophetic axe dangling over his head. Bakare’s political prognostications raised prolonged public furor; he was arrested, detained briefly and released. His fellow Pentecostal pastors, who sought political visibility, recognition, and easy money from political and military classes, came heavily against him (Ojo, 2010). The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), through its erstwhile President, Bishop Mike Okonkwo, dissociated itself from Bakare and his prophecy.

However, one year into Obasanjo’s second term in office, Bakare’s vision gathered widespread support. On 31 January 2011, Bakare announced he would run for office as a vice-presidential candidate to Muhammadu Buhari on the Congress of Progressive Change political party platform. Buhari lost that election to Goodluck Jonathan, who got 5 8.89% of the votes (Ojo, 2010). Tunde Bakare has represented a distinctive Pentecostal conception of Christian citizenship in Nigeria since 1999. Among Nigeria’s high-profile Pentecostal leaders, he represents a minority voice. However, he demonstrates skill and sharp intellect in articulating a strategic religious understanding of social processes and a critical political interpretation devoid of populist pressure. His penetrating insight into exploitative social and political structures and their implication for Nigeria’s economic development and leadership deficits is unrivalled among his peers. His socio-political spirituality led him to establish the “Save Nigeria Group” (SNG) in 2010 to rescue the country (Ojo, 2010).

According to his publicized intentions, from the stranglehold of a cabal of political entrepreneurs bent on keeping the then medically incapacitated President Umaru Musa Yar’ Adua in power. He became a solid Pentecostal voice of dissent, socially responsive and responsible citizenship that resonates across religious lines. For Bakare, Christian citizenship means both light and salt to the nation; Bible-believing Christians’ salvific vision, modelled after the inspiration of the Judea-Christian scriptures, history and experience, needs to be brought to bear on governance structures and culture. Holding civil, political and religious leaders to account for their actions (and inactions) is a critical aspect of this obligation (Ojo, 2010).

Leadership is a public trust that requires public accounting. Failing to perform this duty is an abnegation of responsible Christian citizenship. His SNG mobilized Christians and Muslims to campaign and protested against corruption, mismanagement of national resources and (constitutional) misrule by politicians. Bakare, following Achebe’s The



Trouble with Nigeria (1983), understands that the critical problem of Nigeria is more political, particularly leadership deficits and abuse, than economic. For Bakare, Nigeria's unethical or inequitable (rather than unchristian) leadership structures exacerbate financial exploitation and stunt the country's transformation enterprise. The second momentous challenge Obasanjo faced from within the Pentecostal fold came from the Reverend Kris Okotie. He is the founder-pastor of Household of God Church and the presidential candidate of the Justice Party in 2003 and Fresh Democratic Party (FDP) in 2007 and 2011.

Okotie alleged that the worrying spate of bloodletting since 1999 was because of the struggle for leadership between "evil forces in government" and the forces of good that his group represents. These "occultic societies within the government have almost destroyed President Obasanjo", he alleged. Okotie was insistent that Obasanjo had run out of ideas for handling the affairs of Nigeria because Obasanjo represented an older generation of politicians not in touch with contemporary realities (Burgess, 2008). Okotie criticized Obasanjo, claiming that he represented the clique of oppressors. And his only ambition is to conquer the rest of civil society, capture the power and continue with the circle of deceit, killings, maiming, looting of the public treasury and sharing our commonwealth within their family and amongst their cronies" (Burgess, 2008).

Okotie's ideas resonated with those of another Pentecostal leader, Chris Oyakhilome. In a rare interview, he declared: Today's Nigeria is the dream of yesterday's men, of our present crop of leaders. Jesus said you could not put new wine in old wine bottles. You cannot expect a new Nigeria from an older generation, so the only new Nigeria that can evolve is the new Nigeria that would be the dream of the younger generation (Burgess, 2008). The new one cannot be given to us by the present leaders because this is an outgoing generation. Age is not on their side. Effectively, Oyakhilome said that the mainstream Pentecostal community supported a dying generation of politicians who were out of touch with the present generation of Nigerians and the vision of God for the country (Burgess, 2008).

Goodluck Jonathan: The Unimaginable President

Unlike Obasanjo's self-projection as a "Pentecostal messiah", Goodluck Jonathan presented himself as the meek and righteous servant-president of Nigeria: For the evangelical community, especially its leadership, Obasanjo was the answered prayers of the honest and faithful community of God. At the same time, Jonathan was the Pentecostal miracle, God's fortuitous gift to Nigeria: The most dramatic demonstration of Pentecostal political power was during the general electioneering campaign of 2010/2011 (Adebanji, 2012). Despite the massive opposition by the Northern Muslims against his candidacy, Jonathan won a decisive victory over a formidable opponent. Muhammadu Buhari, paired with a firebrand Pentecostal pastor, Tunde Bakare, lost the election. The north believed it was their "right", under a gentleman's agreement within the ruling PDP, to field the next presidential candidate to complete the second term of late President Yar'Adua (Adebanji, 2012).

Jonathan's decision to contest the election, they argued, went against such an understanding. Notwithstanding the massive mobilization of the northern electorate against the PDP, Jonathan won the election on his cognizance but benefited immensely from the power of the Pentecostal voting block. The Pentecostals were eager to capitalize on their numbers to bring Jonathan to power, hoping their candidate would exercise moral



authority and implement a ‘born-again’ governance roadmap (Obadare, 2006). In December 2010, in the heat of the electioneering campaign, President Jonathan visited the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Camp for prayers and endorsement by Adebayo. In what emerged as the high point of a politico-religious drama, the president knelt before Adebayo for blessings and prayers. Like endorsing Olusegun Obasanjo during the 1999 and 2003 presidential contests, Adebayo supported and actively campaigned for Jonathan and the PDP in 2010. “A kneeling president before another citizen had no precedent in the history of Nigeria (Obadare, 2006).

The image of a kneeling Jonathan before a pastor demonstrated the place of religion and the power of Pentecostalism in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic (Ukah, 2008). Numerous pastors believed and preached that the dire state of the nation was because of the Muslim misrule of the country. In this respect, for example, Paul Adefarasin, founder of House on the Rock, Lagos, in a sermon said: “Nigerians used to be the most educated people in the world until the likes of Abacha and Murtala Muhammed came and destroyed our educational system to hurt the South so that the North can catch up, instead of speeding up the north”. In Nigeria, Pentecostal citizenship has developed, arguably, as an assertive, even aggressive exercise against the rhetoric of demonizing Islam and Muslim domination (Ukah, 2008).

Yemi Osinbajo: Waiting in the Queue

Nigeria’s current vice-president, Yemi Osinbajo, is a senior Pentecostal pastor in the RCCG. During the Holy Ghost Service, a popular all-night vigil service held on 2 January 2015, the patriarch of the RCCG, Enoch Adebayo, instructed his teeming audience and fans to obtain their Permanent Voters Cards (PVC), a requisite document for voting in the coming elections (Ukah, 2008). He further urged church members to bring their PVCs to church service on the first Sunday of January for prayers. During the Holy Ghost Congress convened in the sprawling, 2,000-hectare Redemption Camp from 8-13 December 2014, Adebayo made a similar announcement from the pulpit. On that occasion, he held up his and his spouse’s PVCs for his audience to see as visual and material evidence that he intended to vote in the coming elections. By encouraging his congregation to obtain their own PVCs, Adebayo exercised his civic responsibility as a moral and religious gatekeeper by ensuring that the Christian community in Nigeria participated fully in the 2015 general elections (Ukah, 2015).

However, by instructing Christians to bring their PVCs to church on Sunday, 4 January 2015, Adebayo was transgressing religious obligation or service boundaries by turning his church, effectively, into a micro-political infrastructure. Since 1999, Adebayo has been performing a strategic political power play; he informed all political stakeholders that he could sway the voting patterns and outcomes in the coming elections (Ukah, 2015). Praying over PVCs was intended to invoke the Holy Spirit to guide voters to align their voting practice with the will of God. The voice and choice of God inform or supersede, even trump, the electorate’s decision. Significantly, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), was the former Commissioner of Justice and Attorney General of Lagos State (1999-2007) and, essentially, an unknown political figure with elective political experience before 2015 (Ukah, 2015).

However, his most important political credential turned out to be religious capital. He is a Christian from Lagos State and, crucially, a senior pastor of the RCCG, an organization that the politically savvy Adebayo heads. His selection as a vice-presidential candidate



was to moderate, even neutralize, the perception and construction of Buhari as a Muslim fundamentalist with sympathies for the dreaded Boko Haram insurgency. Specifically, Christians in northern and central Nigeria who have endured the most religious violence since 1999 might have had some confidence and reassurance in choosing a Pentecostal leader as the vice-presidential candidate to Buhari (Ukah, 2015). The political calculus that informed the choice of Pastor Osinbajo could not have been separated from the desire of the APC (All Progressives Congress) to divide the Pentecostal political market or voting block. Enoch Adeboye is a publicly known PDP sympathizer who calls Goodluck Jonathan “my son” (Ukah, 2015).

While in office, Jonathan visited Adeboye’s “Miracle City” on three occasions, at least. Adeboye played a significant role as Jonathan’s emissary of peace and reconciliation to former president Obasanjo. To select a pastor from the politically perceptive and economically powerful RCCG as Buhari’s running mate was a wise and pragmatically (even religiously) informed political move to forestall the dominant PDP, which relishes the official endorsement of the church. It was also a public acknowledgement of the voting power of the Pentecostal community to shape the future of governance in Nigeria (Ukah, 2015).

The nomination of Osinbajo as Buhari’s running mate positioned him and the APC as the first choice of RCCG members in the 2015 election. Rather than ideological consideration, religion and ethnicity was the most significant variable and, therefore, a formidable political capital of the APC in its attempt to wrest power from the PDP. The APC, like the PDP, instrumentalized religion in its pursuit of political power. Religion, rather than political ideology and philosophy, is key to the political power of Nigeria’s two major political parties (Adekunle, 2009).

Evaluation

Citizenship is the status of citizens encrusted “in politico-legal rights and responsibilities and the symbolic-affective terms for group identification and shared value”. There is a diversity of self-understanding and conceptions of Nigerian Pentecostal Christians. For some Christians, their primary allegiance is to their religious community, not the nation-state. Writing about the “weight of citizenship”, Nimi Wariboko says, “Believing that this is the accepted time to stand up and act for Nigeria, Pentecostals are engaging the plight of their country by correlating their existential experience with the Bible and Christian tradition” (Wariboko, 2012). Nigerian Pentecostal Christians offer two forms of citizenship: moral and political. Ethical citizenship derives from the proposition that Nigeria will emerge from the ashes of corruption and deprivation by individuals’ conversion and holiness. According to Ruth Marshall, Nigerian ‘born-again’ Christians offer “a vision of citizenship in which the moral government of the self is linked to the power to influence the conduct of others” (Wariboko, 2012). Pentecostal moral citizenship projects a vision and responsibility for the future of the nation-state, especially as an alternative to secular, postcolonial development paradigms.

There is a sincere hope that this political principle of Pentecostal revival from the 1970s will save the country and realize its destiny in Nigeria. Based on Proverbs 29:2, 13, political citizenship is mobilizing members of the Pentecostal community to take up positions of political responsibility and govern with the fear of God. To exercise moral authority and revert the country’s downward spiral such that God will accomplish his covenant with the nation and resurrect it from its present prostrate status. The Pentecostal vision of



citizenship, godliness and a godly people is averred as cardinal to realizing the compromised promises of the post-colony (Wariboko, 2012).

Corruption, nepotism, fanaticism, and economic mismanagement collectively result from ungodliness in the rapacious and predatory postcolonial state. The transformation of the wickedness of the human heart and conduct is the Holy Spirit's work, which reforms and informs the "new creature" in mapping out a new vision where God is at the centre of socio-economic and political development. As the ultimate cause and curse of the nation's problems is the devil or Satan, the goal of citizenship is the production of righteousness that enhances the practice of virtue and the constitution and perpetuation of the community of believers (Wariboko, 2012).

The conception of Pentecostal citizenship defines the nature of agency and activism, which believers can exercise in transforming their societies. However, the inverse notion that attributes all the nation's ills to a metaphysical source directly absolves criminals, corrupt persons and organizations of any wrongdoing. The fundamental and foundational basis of both democracy and citizenship is the people. Pentecostal citizenship dispenses with "the people", replacing it with the mysterious will of God, as mediated and interpreted by powerful men of God (Ukah, 2014). This overly spiritualized conception informs and explains Pentecostal pragmatic engagement with politics and public office. The concepts and conditions inform the performance of economic, social and political duties and practices of citizenship. Where Pentecostals in public office fail to execute Spirit-driven programmes and transformation, the devil, rather than the individual, readily takes the blame.

The failure of the Obasanjo and Jonathan administrations, cumulatively 13 of the 22 years of democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, to transform and improve the socio-economic and political conditions of citizens and 'heal' the nation is attributed to the devil's intent on thwarting and sabotaging the efforts of believers and the destiny of the country. This thinking gives the devil too much power over believers. As a form of externalizing blame, it also reinforces the lack of self-appraisal among the Nigerian Pentecostal community. It is comforting to corrupt politicians and public bureaucrats. As Ojo points out, the failure of Pentecostal adventure into national politics stems from its inability "to understand the complexities of the socio-economic and political factors about governance. They still hold on to the belief that government could be better if Christians were in the position of power, a myopic perception which negates the everyday reality on the ground" (Ojo, 2006).

However, a critical issue that Nigerian Pentecostal leaders have omitted, which needs addressing, is the practice of citizenship within the church and its contentious relationship with the larger society, as exemplified by the undemocratic organizational character of Pentecostal institutions in Nigeria (Ojo, 2006). Pentecostal churches are governed like fiefdoms of their founders and general overseers. The man of God or prophet, is entirely in charge of doctrine, administration, and fiscal control and is not accountable to church members or ecclesiastic organizations, like the PFN and CAN, autonomous auditing agencies, or governmental agencies. Given the dynamics of opacity in Nigerian Pentecostalism, their activities and practices in democratic governance only perpetuate a culture of obtuse accountability and the absence of transparency. Holding leadership responsible and insisting on public accountability are foundational elements and duties of citizenship.



When Pentecostal leaders are unaccountable to their congregants for their actions and conduct, the membership cannot demand and hold political leaders accountable for their policies and stewardship (Ojo, 2006). Church leaders, in most cases, believe they only account to God for their actions and the large sums of money they collect from members. The voice of God must represent the voice of the people. It isn't sincere to claim to teach the virtue and practice of public accountability and political citizenship among their followers without practising it.

Consequently, when Christians fail to question or scrutinize their pastors' actions and excesses, they invariably carry the learned behaviour over to their political rulers. (Ojo, 2006). Therefore, it is hard to envisage how these undemocratic, authoritarian, and despotic institutions and their influential owners and leadership can foster enduring responsible and accountable citizenship (legal, social, political) in a religiously plural complex society like Nigeria. The vital problem of Pentecostal citizenship practices in Nigeria marked disjunctions between the vision of moral citizenship and political citizenship at local (church, municipal and sub-national), national and international levels (Achebe, 1983).

Conclusion

After a careful examination of the fulcrum upon which this study is based, the researcher recommends that the members of Pentecostal churches and, of course, Christians generally should be enlightened more on political affairs as it relates to the doctrine of their congregations in compliance with the Holy Bible because God is the God of the ruling class and the author of the institution of politics. The church cannot escape from power (politics), for to escape from it means to fail and to divorce itself from all human relationships which involve management in one way or the other. Christians must be in politics to protect human dignity, rights and values. The church must stand as an antidote to the anonymity of power: It should be a moral watch in politics and the nation's conscience necessary for nation-building. Christians must be in politics as an instrument of the common good of the people. The church, with its natural and spiritual potential, should come out to influence public morality. The Church in Nigeria should stand on its grounds and be the voice of the voiceless and question the wealth and allowances that the leaders are allocating to themselves when the masses are not sure of their daily three square meals.

The uncertainty concerning the future of Nigeria is unfortunately connected to a poor democratic culture, which is an essential factor in the political life of every nation. Nigeria has failed on all fronts (political, economic, social and moral). Despite abundant economic resources, attempts to reduce poverty and unemployment and promote sustainable development have not become a reality in Nigeria. Lack of political will, corruption, proper coordination for sustainable growth and development programs, and wasteful production and consumption have hindered any significant progress in Nigeria. The poor participation of Christians in politics, monetization of politics and credentials, violent behaviours of politicians such as political thuggery, molestation of innocent citizens, politically motivated assassinations, seizure of ballot boxes, wanton destruction of properties, intimidation of political opponents, looting, political sycophancy, the prevalence of cult's activities and religious crisis are negative behaviours exhibited by the political thuggery in the name of politics in Nigeria. These aforementioned anti-social behaviours portray the politicians as having no fear of God nor respect for their father's land and humanity because money has been introduced into politics in Nigeria. This reality, however, has made it necessary for



the researcher to emphasize the need for more genuine Christian participation in politics considering the moral concerns in contemporary Nigeria.

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