

***The Nigerian Political Space and the Question of Christian Morality: A Historical Perspective**

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Abstract

Tony Blair, a former British Prime Minister once described Africa as a scar on the conscience of the world. An interpretative commentary on Blair's remark would mean that Africa is an embarrassment to the comity of progressive nations in the international system because of the high level of underdevelopment caused especially by corruption. The paper therefore seeks to find out the possibility of influencing African political system through the application of Christian morality using Nigeria as a case study. This is against the backdrop of the renewed call by some prominent Nigerian Christians to actively participate in Nigerian politics with the hope that Christian morality may positively colour governmental policies in terms of the provision of quality services to its citizens. The paper adopts a comparative historical methodology to interrogate the synergy between politics and religion within the Nigerian space and find out that as long as Nigerians are unable to blend religious and humanistic values with political participation, the country may continue to remain in the web of political, social and economic underdevelopment. In the light of the above, the paper recommends some of the following; that Christians should form a political party as done in Germany, set up a Christian monitoring group as a watch dog on politicians, adopt the whistle blowing technique that will expose irregularities in the system, churches should avoid exposed corrupt politician, discourage over emphasis on posterity gospel more that righteousness, and refuse any form of patronage from the state.

Keywords: Politics, Colonial, Morality, Religion, Christianity

Introduction

Section 1, subsection 10 of the reviewed 1999 Nigerian constitution prohibits the adoption of state religion either by the federal or state governments, but it does not discourage religious activities. As part of respect for fundamental human rights, section IV subsection 38 of the same constitution guarantees respect for freedom of thought, conscience and any form of religion except membership of secret societies. Without any ambiguity therefore, the constitution is clear as it has suggested that Nigeria is a multi-faith religious state. This is demonstrated in one of the nation's national anthems. Most Nigerians and the wider world are familiar with the officially and popularly recited Arise, O Compatriots, and not the O God of Creation anthem. If we place both anthems side by side, it will be obvious to appreciate that the country's founding patriots rested the political state on a religion foundation. The two anthems are:

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A

Arise O Compatriots, Nigeria's call obey to serve our fatherland with love and strength and faith the labour of our heroes past shall never be in vain, to serve with heart and might one nation bound in freedom, peace and unity.

B

O God of creation, direct our noble cause, guide thou our leaders right help our youth the truth to know in love and honesty to grow and living just and true great lofty heights attain to build a nation where peace and justice reign.

Studying the above anthems from the structural perspective would show that anthem A is politically nationalistic while B is emotionally religious. Although not directly related to the above observation, but central to our discussion is Prof. Olupona's observation that Nigeria once recognized the relevance of Christianity, Islam and Indigenous religions to national development, but with time, successive political leaders downplayed the role and importance of religion to the country's cohesion.¹ This could mean that the neglect of religious values has made politics in Nigeria to be dirty. Akanmidu has argued that Nigerian politics is dirty because of the hypocritical attitude of politicians therefore it is only religion that can clean politics as he avers:... "It is in this context that religion can have penetrating influences on politics, and apparently act as panacea to politics."² However, given the secular political nature of Nigeria, it will therefore take a dedicated and focused Christian group to concentrate on Christian political advocacy. It should however be stated that the discussion is not on the impact of religion on Nigeria's national development, but to explain why Christian morality has not influenced Nigeria's political activities. To achieve the objectives of this paper, the discussion adopts a historical approach by interrogating the synergy between politics and religion over time.

Clarification of Terms: Political Space and Christian Morality

Politics is the way governance is managed. To achieve the objective of politics, therefore, political parties are organized based on the enabling laws regulating political activities in a society. Political parties are always involved in activities to negotiate power through election for the common wealth of the nation. The intensity and strategies adopted by

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political parties to obtain power created the popular impression that politics is the struggle for power.³ The Nigerian political space should be understood as all political activities targeted at obtaining, sustaining and distribution of political power in government. That is why political activities in Nigeria are characterized by high level of volatility as observed in the rate of politics-related murders, arson, election rigging, corruption, blackmail, intolerance, and other vices.⁴ The concept of morality is viewed from various perspectives. It is therefore important to have a base line of what constitute morality. The English dictionary explains morality from four perspectives. These are;

- i. Concerned with principles of right and wrong behaviour,
- ii. based on one's sense of what is right and fair, not on legal right or duties,
- iii. following the standards of behaviour considered acceptable and right by most people, and
- iv. able to understand the difference between right and wrong.⁵

What then is Christian morality? It means obeying those Biblical tenets that are capable of promoting the spiritual and physical wellbeing of the generality of the people irrespective of individual religious inclinations. In this context, also taking into consideration the English definition of morality, Christian morality should therefore be understood as "Christian political actions [capable of] bringing to politics a sense of Christian responsibility."⁶ In other words, Christian morality should be understood as applying those biblical moral codes that can engender a bound of family-hood and duty to love one's neighbour. If this is achievable, the degree of political volatility in Nigeria would be mitigated as politicians may come to see themselves as members of the same Christian family that should respect God's provision especially the Ten Commandments.

To explain why Christian values have not positively influenced political activities in Nigeria is to first understand the purpose of politics and religion in the contemporary Nigerian state. It appears that their purposes are not primarily to serve and win souls for God respectively. Rather, their activities seem to suggest that they are more concerned with personal wealth creation. Without the benefit of statistical details, it is however known and accepted by majority of Nigerians that the fastest means to acquire wealth and fame is either through politics or religious evangelism. It is not a secret any longer in Nigeria that if the pyramid of wealthy personalities is listed, politicians and religious leaders will top the chart.⁷

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Contemporary Politics and Christian Religious Platforms in Nigeria

The nature of the Nigerian politics calls for serious concerns. We have discussed elsewhere some of the embarrassing and unpatriotic activities within the Nigerian political space. It has been observed that the culture of violence, militarization, god-fatherism, election rigging, compromised electoral body and judiciary, zoning option, and illiterate electorate are systemic challenges associated with Nigerian politics.⁸ The debate whether Christian faithful should take part or not in Nigerian politics resulted from the essence of providing credible and corrupt free leadership. There is a divide among Christian religious groups whether Christians should participate in politics. Some hold the position that politics is dirty; therefore it could pollute a Christian way of life.⁹ There is the strong belief that most politicians are dishonest, killers, thieves, manipulative and could be insensitive to the needs of the masses. In that wise, Christians should not participate in politics in order to preserve Christian morals. There are other groups that hold the position that if politics is dirty, Christians should sanitize it. This group believes that Christians are pious enough to avoid most of the leadership ills that have become the bane of development in the Nigerian state. Ezeogu argues in that direction that Christian theology typifies service to humanity as one of the means by which God can be worshiped and pleased.¹⁰ Ezeogu further argues that abiding by the guiding principles of Christian participation in politics will greatly sanitise Nigerian political space. The principles are outlined as:

- i. that the basic standard for participation be the pursuit of the common good;
- ii. that the participation be characterized by a defence and promotion of justice;
- iii. that participation be inspired and guided by the spirit of service
- iv. that it be imbued with a love of preference for the poor; and
- v. that empowering people be carried out both as a process and as a goal of political activity.¹¹

There is no doubts that political leadership problem in Nigeria is one of the biggest banes to national development because of the leadership ineptitude to strategically respond to the challenges of development. However, as fascinating as Ezeogu's prescriptions are, and in order to appreciate the chances of Christians influencing the nature of Nigerian politics

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through participation, it is therefore germane to first understand the dynamics of leadership recruitment and its attendant consequences within the context of the Nigerian political space.

Leadership recruitment through political platform is financially expensive, exploitative and manipulative. Aspirants contesting for elective political offices are expected to mobilise enough funds running to millions of naira, depending on the political office of interest. For example, Aluko reports how a Senatorial candidate borrowed about ₦ 80 million naira and a gubernatorial candidate spent about ₦435 million naira to prosecute the 2007 general election in Nigeria.¹² If politics is about interest to render public service, why should people pay that much? To be more specific, if a credible but poor Christian is interested in contesting for any political office, that Christian has two alternatives to raise funds to pursue his ambition. The Christian may either compromise and adopt a sponsor or seek for loan from anywhere. The consequence of any of the above action would produce some major fundamental effects on the socio-political and economic wellbeing of the Nigerian state. Some of these effects are corruption and seat tight syndrome.

The poor Christian who depended on sponsored patronage to finance his electioneering campaign would have to make sure his benefactor(s) is compensated. To raise some money, various shades of contracts, expected not to be executed are awarded to offset the cost of election. This kind of practice is reflective in the continuous award of contracts for the same project previously awarded by another political regime. Christians are expected to be epitome of morality in all facets, by this, we mean a Christian should be able to understand the difference between right and wrong. Christians are also encouraged through teachings to be meek and honest. So, the chances of Christians winning political elections without some form of compromises or unholy agreements are slim.

In the Nigerian political space, elected political officers often insist on two terms of regime for themselves, though it is constitutionally permissible. It is popularly believed by most Nigerians that the first term is used to pay back those who financed the election, while the second term is meant to amass personal wealth. This belief tends to be strengthened by the lackadaisical attitudes of some Nigerian politicians who seem not to do much when compared to their first term in office. With that kind of political reality and corruption, no community or society will develop. That means, the masses would have been denied access to good road, hygienic drinking water, electricity, affordable health care services, security and other infrastructures needed to enhance life expectancy. It must be said that the

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contemporary Nigerian political space is volatile and tough. The reality is that the weak, meek, gentle and honest may not fully or really find a space in the rugged nature of Nigerian politics. Having understood the scenario of the nature of Nigerian politics, it becomes more frightening whether Christian participation in politics would change its nature. We must not forget that politics in Nigeria is akin to any profitable economic investment where returns are expected. If Christian groups can pull resources to sponsor Christian candidates, the possibility of returns may be reduced.

However, Christians should take into consideration that the core morality *acceptable to majority of Nigerian* politicians is the standard behaviour of corruption, manipulation, deceit and callousness, which has become the norm in contemporary Nigerian politics. The Nigerian state has been governed since 1960 by men and women of faith (Islamic and Christianity). These faiths teach morals of good behaviour, yet the country is regarded as one of the most corrupt nations in the international system. From the historical perspective and taking into consideration that two dominant faiths groups have dominated the political space, there is however, no evidence to demonstrate that religious ethics have positively influenced Nigerian politics.

Christian religious activities in recent times, especially the Pentecostal Christian Movement have gravely and unintentionally encouraged political rascality. It appears that Christian religious groups are serving as alternative options to government in some parts of the country, especially in the provision of welfare services to the citizens. For example, it is a common sight in Nigeria, that Christian evangelical crusades are advertised with all assurances that the sick, blind, lame, deaf, and even the dead would be restored back to normalcy. This realization has influenced the popularity of some Christian denominations such as Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCAN), Living Faith Ministries (Winner Chapel), and a few others. There are several instances where sick patients have been forcefully discharged from hospitals to spiritual homes for healing. While we do not condemn or criticize such practices, it is however important to stress that their impacts are capable of distracting Nigerians from confronting the real issues of government mismanagement and underperformance.

Closely related to the above, is the trend of prosperity gospel preachers among most Pentecostal Christian groups. Such preaching/teaching have become doctrinal. Christian worshipers are taught to believe that God can make them have economic prosperity once they

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are dedicated to worshipping him through tithe payments and offerings in cash and kind. It is a common believe in Nigeria that one of the factors that have encouraged the spread of Christian prayer centres is the reality of poverty. Businesses are failing; inflation is high, workers salaries are low and the economy is not showing signs of recovery or improvement, instead of realistically addressing the causes of Nigeria's economic woes, worshipers are looking up to God for their daily bread. In an economy that is not self generating, public political office holders in the country are the highest paid in the world compare to their counterpart in other climes.¹³

Since Nigeria's political independence in 1960, the country has been battling with weak and unpatriotic political leadership, which prompted Chinua Achebe to avers that "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership."¹⁴ There is no question about it that political leadership has failed the country, but Nigerians are finding it challenging to change the political structure that has produced weak leadership because of apathy on the side of most Nigerians on how the state is managed. While we do not advocate that prayers have no place in the affairs of mortal beings, we equally reject the posture of helplessness by Nigerians in the face of political ineptitude. Most Nigerians are seeking for divine intervention to address the political leadership crisis the country is facing at this point of its national development. For example, Alhaji (Dr) Yusuf Maitama Sule, a prominent Nigerian, though not a Christian ably identified part of the crisis in Nigeria politics as "the leadership became selfish, self-centred and impervious to reason. It therefore cultivated the habit of intolerance to prodding, exhortation and criticism, no matter how constructive it may be."¹⁵ Maitama Sule therefore called for a divine solution as he prayed:

Let us pray for good leadership, for the whole thing boils down to good leadership.í May God grant, therefore, that we may have leaders not rulers: Leaders with the fear of God; leaders who will not lie;í leaders who will not steal; leaders who are not corrupt; leaders who have fire in their bellies but humanity in their nation and will have the prudence of handing over to others before they forfeit the admiration of their countrymen. Amen! Amen!! Amen!!!¹⁶

The above prayer is to underscore the point that seeking for religious solution to the Nigerian peculiar situation is not limited to Christians. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) at the end of its first plenary meeting of February 16-22, 2013 reiterated

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similar observations made by Maitama Sule. Paragraph 11 of the communiqué of the conference reads:

Today Nigeria faces many challenges, veritable threats to human dignity: the challenge of good governance and the attendant stifling of the potential of the governed, the problem of insecurity, the epidemic of corruption, the collapse of moral and technical infrastructure, violation of the rights of the Nigerian citizens on the ground of ethnic affiliation, religious creed, gender, state or local government of origin. These and other discriminatory practices pose threat to human dignity in our land today.¹⁷

The Catholic Bishops therefore concluded that the remedy to these governmental ills was for Nigerians to “ fervently pray that through the powerful intercession of Mary, Queen of Nigeria, the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son, the spirit of love may reign in Nigeria and renew the image of God in us.”¹⁸

Prayers like the above cited leaves one bewildered if God was the cause of the numerous problems of the country, and therefore God should show mercy and fix them. We recognise that prayers are good, but prayers without action are problematic themselves, because the individual who has prayed and folds his hands with his legs cross over waiting for miracles to happen may be disappointed and frustrated if nothing happens. Miracles do happen, but it is the suggestion of this discourse that if Nigerians should pray, let them pray for courage and boldness to publicly hold political leaders accountable for their actions and inactions towards the general wellbeing of the citizens.

Nigerian political actors are aware of how religious Nigerians are, and therefore always seek public religious legitimacy from religious leaders. Politicians attend religious gathering to publicly identify with worshipers and so hope to win the hearts of the congregation. The romance between political and religious structures has become so intense that State Houses are turned into Churches or Mosques depending on the religious inclination of the occupier of the political office. The nature of intimacy has made it difficult for most religious leaders to chastise government officials because of state patronage. For example let us consider the scenario and the place of the Catholic Church in the 2003 Anambra gubernatorial election in Nigeria. The Church sympathised with Mr. Peter Obi’s gubernatorial political ambition and tacitly supported the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) party.

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However, when Dr. Chris Ngige of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was declared the winner of the election, the Church quickly pulled away from Mr. Peter Obi to build camp with Ngige. Later when the court sitting on post election matters declared that Ngige was not the rightful victor of the election but Peter Obi, the Church again moved its loyalty to Peter Obi.¹⁹ This is a typical example of how political consideration influences religious institutions in contemporary Nigeria. It is reasonable to argue that colonial administration in Nigeria might have contributed to the separation of synergy between political and religious responses to governance if we compare the nature of pre-colonial politico-religious space with that of post-colonial Nigeria.

The Nexus between Politics and Religion in Pre-Colonial Nigeria

The pre-colonial Nigerian society was theocratic because political and socio-economic activities were enshrined in the cultural foundation based on the belief and existence of a God-force. The God-force such as *Olodumare* among the Yoruba, *Chineke* in the Igbo culture, and *Osanobua* among the Edo peoples, directed the levels of community engagement through the kings regarded as divine or semi-divine in some cases in collaboration with the elders. The relationship between politics and religion was so intertwined to the extent that political actions of kings or elders had religious connotation. Ezeogwu's characterization of a theocratic state is apt in this instance;

In a theocracy, politics is not independent but is perceived as part and parcel of religion. God is the sovereign. God alone chooses the human individual through whom he would liberate and govern his people. The people are not consulted in the choice. There are no political parties or campaigns, no voting or election. Politics is simply a subset of religion. The religious leader chosen by God is also the political leader. Political duties are seen as religious duties.²⁰

Ezeogwu's characterization captures the similar nexus between politics and religion in the days of pre-colonial monarchical system of governance that made kings enjoy the status of supremacy. The monarchy was accorded some high degree of cultural privileges to the extent that kings' words on political and moral issues were finale because they were regarded as God's representative on earth. For example, among some of Nigerian communities of the Yoruba and Benin, the kingship institution was the pivot of policies that governed the state. The cultural concept of the kingly *kabiyesi* among the Yoruba is politically and religiously powerful to demand and command obedience. *Kabiyesi* literally means 'no human can

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challenge the words of the king once spoken. This was so, because of the degree of divinity ascribed to the office of the monarchy.

The popularity of the Benin pre-colonial history is attributable to the reign of warrior kings that used their offices to mobilize citizens to achieve some of the glorious events associated with the kingdom. The Benin moats, arts, rituals and wars of territorial expansion is reflective of the effect of a combination of political and religious powers residing in an individual culturally revered as god on earth. The kings and elders determined and interpreted cultural norms that stipulated obedience to family, private and communities' moralities. The pre-colonial political situation was not as competitive and volatile as compared to the post colonial democratic politics. This was so because succession to the throne was pre-determined by the tradition of the people.

Colonialism and Differentiated Morality

Scholars have taken various positions on the impacts of religion on the post-colonial Nigerian political space. Wole Soyinka in *Between Nation Space and Nationhood* argues that the presence of religion symbolises chaos, confusion, and devastation. That one of the bane to Nigeria's transformation from statehood to nationhood is associated with Nigerians attachment to religious illusions. For Soyinka, politics and religion are strange bed fellows and therefore should be separated in Nigeria's stride to nationhood. Soyinka posits;

Religion is one enemy of potential nationhood since the intervention of religion in nation being has been of the most savage, unconscionable and increasingly intolerant kind. We cannot continue pretending, that as long as any one religion aspires to dictatorship in secular matters, we cannot call ourselves a nation. A theocratic order is anathema to nation being, since it implicates exclusion, not inclusion. Religion must therefore submit to community, to nation, otherwise co-existence becomes impossible and the human entity reverts to a state of brutishness.²¹

Isiramen's response to the above assertion is that Soyinka focused on the misuse or abuse of religion and, therefore missed the point on the value of religion to national development. Isiramen further argues that "religion has an intrinsic value in the society, for it promotes sound morality, peace and order."²² On that bases, Isiramen therefore rejects Soyinka's postulation and affirm that religion is a vital component for nationhood.

Igboin, though agrees with Soyinka to the extent that politicians have made it difficult, if not impossible for religious tolerance in Nigeria, he however differs with Soyinka

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that religion has no place in Nigerian politics. Igboin believes that religious sentiment is a constituent of the Nigerian psychic, and therefore it cannot be separated from politics or any other activity. He concludes with finality that 'no matter the intellectual or astute argument for the separation of religion from politics, the practical reality, at least from the majority of the populace, demonstrates that such separation is impossible.'²³ Igboin, in agreement with Isiramen redirects attention from the debate on the role of religion in nation building to developing paradigms that would make it practicable for a successful marriage between politics and religion. Accordingly, Igboin avers 'The challenge to face in the interface is to translate the positive doctrine of religion into our political system. The goal of religion in the defence of justice, legitimacy and dividends of democracy cannot be abstracted. It is concrete, real and pragmatic.'²⁴

While we share the positions canvassed by these scholars that religion has become a sore on the national psychic of the country, which calls for urgent attention, we however want to state that the above scholars fall short of actually identifying the causes of the haplessness religion has found itself in post-colonial Nigeria. Soyinka, Isiramen, and Igboin appear to locate their discussions on the symptoms of the impact of the use of religion within a given political space. For example, Soyinka's thesis hinges on the fact that religion in post-colonial Nigeria has become an instrument of manipulation, deception, hooliganism, hypocrisy, violence, anarchy, ethnicity, and terrorism within the proclivity of the political and politically minded elite. With that realization and specification of the Nigerian situation, Soyinka is therefore convinced that 'religion is one enemy of potential nationhood.'²⁵ Soyinka seems to have ignored the fact that religion had never been a source of tension among the Nigerian peoples until the imposition of colonial rule on the country.

The colonial factor should not be discarded in the fermentation of religious intolerance in Nigeria. Adogame has rightly argued that 'the emergence of religious conflict and violence can partly be understood in terms of the legacy of colonial conquest and occupation' [because] although Islam and Christianity were introduced to various parts of Nigeria much earlier, it was from the colonial historical phase that there emerged a renewed religious encounters, interaction and competition.'²⁶ The formation of the early centres of human habitation and complex civilizations in the geographical Nigerian space were stemmed in religious myths and legend of creation as observed among the Bini, Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, and other communities. Among the various communities that make up the post-

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colonial Nigerian state, the Yoruba speaking people present a semblance of nationhood due to the bound of family-hood made possible by the myth and religio-spiritual sanctity of Oduduwa patriarchy.

Ekeh has demonstrated that one of the structural impacts of colonial rule in Africa is that it bred a duality of moral perspectives.²⁷ Ekeh refers here to two patterns of moral behaviour in post colonial Africa. The morality entrenched in the workings of indigenous social system, and that expected from the public service sector, that there is a conflict between these moralities when viewed from the African cultural background.²⁸ This would mean that from the African moral philosophies, decency, decorum, honesty, and other positive acts are regarded as virtue, while lying, dishonesty, stealing and other adventures of vices are condemnable. That colonial rule separated emotions from governance by introducing alien principles considered necessary for government to achieve stated objectives, by that public servants were not expected to run government with religious sentiments. Okoduwa believe that colonial rule polarized [the society] with new ways and values; some bad and others good. Many indigenous ways lost grounds to foreign values of individualism, capitalism, corruption and oppression.²⁹ Colonialism did not only polarize the society but also the individual because of its capitalist orientation. Capitalism as an economic tool breeds oppression, greed, egoism, domination, and promote self ambitiousness. Capitalism celebrates the individual and not the society that produced that individual, unlike communalism that promote individual success from the communalistic orientation. The structure of colonialism was such that conflict was inevitable with indigenous modes of production.

Capitalist colonialism created a migrated social structure³⁰ in the sense that there was a shift from indigenous modus operandi to incompatible European modes of development. For example, indigenous pre-colonial structure prescribed norms that regulated social relations and sanctions for crimes committed. People tried to avoid crimes that could tarnish their names and the community they came from. But with colonial rule, crime became attractive in a way because of the colonial justice system that was incompatible with African judicial practices. The crisis of dual personality is observed in the manner in which one is not condemned by his community if he misappropriates public/government funds but is ostracized if the same person misappropriates community funds. That means to protect community's interest is moral and there is nothing wrong when the state is pillaged. This

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attitude, Ekeh has rightly noted as amoral which is particularly pronounced in the various apparatuses of the state and in the conduct of those aspects of public life associated with the migrated social structure.³¹

It seems also that the manner Christianity was introduced to the majority of the Nigerian people might be responsible for the difficulty integrating Christian morality into politics. The colonial authorities encouraged Christian evangelism primarily to disconnect the people from their traditional belief practices without any effort to reflect such Christian principles in colonial relations with the colonised. For example, in the late 1930s, Catholic faithful in Uromi, Nigeria enjoyed some measure of colonial government protection as they evangelized from village to village.³² This was done by the authorities with the hope that with more conversion, belief in Uromi traditional practices would be reduced with the impact of western education and Christianity. The colonial authorities were convinced that the remedy to reduce the influence of cultural practices on the people's way of life was to encourage the spread of Christianity under the guidance of Missionaries' spirituality and the general dissemination of modern scientific and, particularly, medical knowledge.³³ To that extent, Christian related activities were encouraged.

From the African perspective, and as has been argued, colonial rule therefore created a split personality in the African individual. This is what Ekeh refers to as living in two publics. By this Ekeh means:

On the one hand, there is a primordial public which operates on societal morality and is therefore bound to the private realm. On the other, there is a civic public which is amoral and devoid of any claims to morality because the same individuals could belong to both publics at the same time that African politics posed such unique problems.³⁴ This amoralism is particularly pronounced in the various apparatuses of the state and in the conduct of those aspects of public life associated with the migrated social structures.³⁵

Having argued that colonial rule structurally divided the Nigerian individual into dual personalities; it becomes easier to contemplate that it is possible that religious principles may not be able to influence political actions in the country. To remedy the situation, there is a possibility that a bridge between politics and religion could be reconstructed. All that is required is for Christian leaders and communities to embark on nationalistic evangelism. This process would help mobilize Nigerians and reconcile them to viewing the country as a state

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that must be patriotically protected as the American and European states that are built on strong Christian principles.

The idea of nationalistic evangelism is not novel in Nigeria. This approach was adopted as part of the strategies for nationalist struggle for political independence. Though, religious leaders did not directly pursue the course of national independence, but their ability to mobilise their members to break away from the orthodox churches due to some racist attitude by their European counterparts was a big issue at that point in Nigerian history. It convinced Africans that they could hold their own without European prompting and supervision. The inauguration of the United African Church, which separated from the Anglican Church, and the institution of the Christ Apostolic Church by Babalola, and the Cherubim and Seraphim by Orimolade Moses are some of the separatist Christian centres that emerged in the course of Nigerian nationalist struggle. It becomes imperative to therefore emphasis that since most Nigerians are religious, Christian leaders should adopt liberation theology in the mould of Prophet Elijah or Jesus Christ in orientating the minds of the people on the ills of bad politics and its immediate and future consequences for the growth and development of the Nigerian state. Christian leaders should be positive references as watchdog of the society.

Conclusion

Politics is one of the political actions of service to humanity just as religion also acts to enlighten the mind towards having the capacity to determine what is good, rational and acceptable within a community. This would mean that politics and religion are not parallel but have convergence as they relate to the wellbeing of humanity. In the Nigerian situation, there is a wide divide between politics and religion. The Nigerian political space is like a war theatre that has recorded some casualties. Though still speculative, there is high suspicion that some of the high profile killings during election periods in Nigeria are politically motivated. For example, the death of some prominent Nigerian politicians such as Chief Bola Ige in 2001, Dr. Daramola, and Engineer Funsho Williams in 2006.³⁶ In the final summation, politics is the struggle for power. That means only the bold, courageous, insensitive and perhaps careless of emotions are capable of participating in Nigerian politics. For a Christian to navigate the treacherous waters of Nigerian politics he/she has to imbibe the character of survival as already discussed. If a Christian decides to act that way, his/her Christian morals

and principles would have been compromised. In the light of the above, the paper recommends that Christians should form a Christian based political party to contest election as this is hoped would provide the platform to display Christian virtues; set up a Christian monitoring group as a watch dog on politicians; adopt the whistle blowing technique that will expose irregularities in the system; churches should shun corrupt politicians, discourage over emphasis on posterity gospel more that righteousness; and refuse any form of patronage from the state. If these suggestions are implemented, Christians' participation in Nigerian politics will make meaningful life-changing differences.

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Notes and References:

*This reviewed article was first presented at an International Interdisciplinary Conference, convened by Professor Afe Adogame of the University of Edinburgh, held at the Centre for African Wetlands, University of Ghana, Legon, between 21st and 23rd October, 2013.

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