POLITICIZATION OF RELIGION AS A CAUSE OF CRISIS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Presently, Nigeria is in crisis. An obvious challenge to peace and unity in Nigeria is the intrusion of politics into religion. Religion becomes an instrument for political manipulation. A crisis may start as a political conflict but develops into a religious crisis. The main aim of this research is to analyze the involvement of politics in religion that causes crises and ways to resolve them. The research approach is Descriptive analysis. The data obtained was subjected to critical analysis. Findings show that in Nigeria, politics is mostly associated with corruption, manipulation and creating violence for personal gain, which are contrary to morals preached by religions. The research recommends, among others, that there should be a paradigm shift from politics of domination and manipulation to love, moral soundness and genuine service in politics. These will enhance good interactions between politics and religion in Nigeria. The research will benefit the government and Nigerians who desire peace and unity in Nigeria.
Keywords: Politics, Religion, Crisis, Reconciliation, Peace, Unity

Introduction

Presently than ever, in every part of the world, the interaction between religion and politics has been an ongoing subject of academic analysis. There are ongoing discussions concerning this issue, as corroborated by Abubakar 1984; Oguntola-Laguda, 2008, pp. 123-124; Okafor, 1997; Okwueze, 2012; Igboin, 2012; Ugwu, 2014; Babatola, 2015; Abah, 2016. Analysis shows that interaction between religion and politics is viewed, at least in two opposing ways: firstly, as an attraction and secondly, as repulsion. It is attraction when politics and religion mutually tend to approach human problems for the well-being of all human persons. It is repulsion when any of them tends to have undue influence or uses the other as an instrument to achieve its goal. Wherever the two exist together, suspicions often arise about what the outcome would be. Such a situation of suspicion often brings about crises in society. The situation in Nigeria indicates that it is more difficult than it is for politics and religion to have mutual coexistence. In Nigeria, politics is

often associated with corruption, election rigging, falsehood, infidelity, manipulations, inequality or creating violence for personal gain, etc., that are contrary to morals preached by religions.

For instance, in 2003, an issue arose between members of a religious group and a popular politician in the town of Amokwe in Udi L.G.A., Enugu state, Nigeria. The problem started when the politician who hails from the same town and who was then a governorship aspirant came to the church some minutes after the Sunday Mass began. The time of his arrival at the mass and the dedicated concern given to him by the church ushers were worrisome. The church ushers were trying to give him a comfortable place in the front pews, and this drew the attention of many of the worshipers, who turned their positions, and some stood up to have a glance at him and his decorated entourage. These briefly distracted the attention needed for Mass.

That notwithstanding, immediately after the Communion rite, as if it was the next part of the Mass, the politician signalled to the Catechist to inform the priest who was officiating in the Mass that he had something to tell the congregation. He was given the microphone. He praised the congregation for their faith in God and their seriousness in building their church, which was then being constructed. He promised to help them to complete the building of the church. As a token of his seriousness towards the completion of the church, he promised to give them ₦120,000 cash. His speech was welcomed with great applause and appreciation by the congregation.

However, the main problem arose after. It was about a few weeks before the 2003 governorship election in Enugu state. Because of this, the church councils could not meet with the politician to redeem the ₦ 120,000 pledge to the church. They were always told that he was too busy, and because of that, they could not see him. A few days after the election, the church council visited the politician again. Luckily, on that day, they met him at home and requested him to redeem his pledge to the church. To their surprise, the politician told them to stop requesting money from him anymore because they should have known that he did not win the election for the governorship position.

Hence, many concluded that the politician was never interested in worshipping God but only came to the church to manipulate the congregation to achieve his ambition; that pledges he made to the church were made to attract the church to vote for him in the election and not to help the building of the church. Such opinions are still raised

towards the involvement of politicians in religion that many religious people propose shunning politicians from religious affairs and keeping religion and politics apart.

No time in Nigeria captures the politicization of religion than during elections. At this time, politicians visited from one religious house to another. In response, religious leaders made countless prophesy and revelations in favour of aspirants who visited them, especially those who donated huge amounts of money to them. About the 2023 General election, there was glaring involvement of religious leaders in politics. Many meetings, utterances, prophesy and messages were openly made by religious leaders in favour of one aspirant or another. The height of such incidents is a case of a popular Reverend preacher in charge of a prayer ministry in Enugu state. The said Preacher was accused of openly endorsing or condemning aspirants for his congregation. For instance, it was said that the Preacher openly condemned one presidential aspirant because, as it was said, the aspirant did not publicly donate money to the Preacher's prayer ministry ground which was being constructed. This culminated in banning the preacher from public preaching for his "politically-related preaching". (Omorogbe, 2022) The Preacher's meddling in politics caused a crisis between the church authorities and members of his prayer group, who violently attacked the Bishop of the church for banning the preacher from public preaching.

Consequently, the above incidents point to the persistent question: if there could be a good relationship between religion and politics in Nigeria. This paper uses a descriptive method to tackle this question. Nonetheless, the question further elicits more anticipated questions: if politics has got anything good to do with religion or if politics has any good concern in religion. The situation in Nigeria has become critical, which has raised thoughts that it is impossible to have a good relationship between politics and religion. Therefore, there is a need to investigate if the thoughts are true. The main objective of this paper is to draw attention to the depth of involvement of politics in religion, which, however, has caused many crises in Nigeria. Critical analysis was used to analyze findings from life situations and secondary sources on the involvement of politics in religion. The paper makes recommendations. The study could be beneficial to religions, political leaders and Nigerians who desire peace and unity in Nigeria.

Defining Politics

According to Soanes and Stevenson (Eds., 2009), the term "politics" means "the activities associated with the governance of a country or area". This involves beliefs, theories or principles concerning or inherent in activities of governance, power and status in society. One may characterize "political" activities, expressions, institutions, and practices that are concerned with governance and "politicization" as causing things or situations to be political. The idea of what is known as politics was derived from the Greek term "polis", which means city-state. Encyclopaedia Britannica (2013) asserts that polis means "a tiny political entity, which for the Greeks meant both society and political system". The formation of city-states was mainly aimed at aiding political activities. The political activities in city-states were focused on answering pertinent questions of governance, which include: who should rule? And what should be the nature and limit of the government's power? Mondin (2014) emphasises that the polis became an all-comprehensive horizon of fundamental value to man in society.

For practical purposes, some definitional models of politics can be seen in history. In the ancient era definition by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, there is a holistic amalgamation of politics and ethics, natural law or universal standard of justice (dikaiosyne, Plato, 2000, book 5, 473d) and happiness (eudaimonia, Aristotle 1999, Lawhead 2002, p. 81). By the medieval era, Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas elaborated the correspondence of political laws to divine or eternal law. (See also Saint Thomas Aquinas, nd. I-II, q. 93, a. 3). An important inflow into models in politics is Judaism which combines all aspects of life into religion. In this, the laws with which society is governed are by God's codes as contained in the covenant code (Exodus 21-22), the holiness code (Leviticus 17-26), Deuteronomy code (Deuteronomy 12-26). This is contrary to the thoughts of medieval thought, which divided human affairs into models of the 'city of God' against the 'city of man'. It is also contrary to early Islamic thoughts, which believe in the unification of all human activities into politics, as Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126-1198 AD) maintained that the world is God's handiwork in human care. (Lawhead, 2002, pp. 163-164)

However, by the modern era, there was the elevation of or detachment of politics from ethics and religion proposed by thinkers like Marsilius of Padua- Defensor Pacis Defender of the Peace, 1324; William of Ockham; Machiavelli Niccolo- The Prince, 1975; Thomas Hobbes- Leviathan of a Commonwealth, 1651; Jean Jacques Rousseau- Social contract, 1762), etc. This political model of separation from morality,

supremacy of the leader, domination and manipulation of all aspects of the society for the good of the leader has been a model in Nigeria. In Nigeria, politics is often associated with the supremacy of the leader, corruption, falsehood, infidelity, manipulations, inequality or creating violence for personal gain. Yet, Locke (1980) occupies a prominent position in the modern era with his proposition for a liberal state as a logical abstraction from the essential nature of human beings (perfect freedom, liberty, equality). According to Locke, therefore, "all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another" (Locke, 1980, § 4) and "the government must rule by laws and not simply by force or an arbitrary will". (Lawhead, 2002, p. 290)

Although there are diverse approaches towards defining politics in human history, yet most common conviction is its search for the realization of the well-being of society. Politics took as its subject matter how best to govern the society. Therefore, politics is an organized social formation which governs human society and its civil endeavours. It is a process or system through which a state or its government seeks to meet both the civil and moral common good of citizens. Hence, this paper suggests the return of ethics, natural law and universal standard of justice, especially in Nigerian politics.

Defining Religion
Although religion is a universal phenomenon, there is no unanimous definition that incorporates all that constitutes religion. The origin of religion can be traced to the point of human beings' recognition of wonders surrounding them which predisposed them to think of beings, forces, perfection, and others beyond them and to establish ways to attain rapport with what they considered supernatural beings, force or order. Over time human beings formulated varieties of ways or practices to establish this rapport. Religion is defined by diverse perspectives or specializations because of these varieties of practices.

Wallace (1977, § 60) subjectively defines religion "as a virtue that leads man to render to God the homage that is due to him and objectively as a manner of behaviour and concrete manifestation of this virtue- which comprises belief in God, respect and submission expressed in worship activities". McGee (1980, cited in Oshewolo and Maren, 2015) defines it as a set of activities organized around the sacred - that non-empirical source of power, transcendence, mystery and awe. Harold (2009) sees religion as beliefs, practices and rituals that are related to the sacred, to God, to the mystical or the supernatural. Soanes and Stevenson (Eds, 2009) define religion as the "belief in and worship of a superhuman

controlling power, especially a personal God or gods and a particular system of faith and worship". For Durkheim (1915, p. 37), religion is "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, to things set apart and forbidden- beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community all those who adhere to them". William James (1902, pp. 31-32, cited in Okwueze, 1998, p. 137 and Okwueze, 2004, p. 1) defines religion as "feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand concerning whatever they consider divine".

To elaborate foregoing definitions, Buber (1923) posits that religion is a relationship, the type of I-thou and I-Thou-eternal, which is of reciprocity, of present and of dialogue of love between human beings, which opens relation between a human being and God. Udoidem (1997, p. 153, in Okafor (1997), sees religion as "man's response to his awareness of the existence of a Supreme Being who is the creator and how this response affects his relationship with other creatures". To put this better, Okwueze (2004, pp. 1-2) states that religion is "a regulated pattern of life of a people in which experiences, beliefs and knowledge are reflected in man's conception of himself and relation to others, his social world, the physical as well as the metaphysical world". It is at this point of relationship with others that religion becomes a social institution that meets and has relevance to the entire society. Religion becomes awareness of belief in the existence of a Supreme or supernatural being or force and how this belief urges people to behave in certain ways. A certain pattern of behaviour is encouraged by this belief with attachment to the promise of good life. Therefore religion can be defined as an organized pattern of belief of a people in which their actions and world outlook are understood, expressed, regulated and approved within their relationship with that in which they believe.

Relationship between Politics and Religion

This paper affirms that the relationship between politics and religion has been an issue of great concern. Consequently, there is a view which insists on the total separation of religion from politics. Van der Veer (1996 and Salawu, 2009 cited in Abah, 2016) believe that the interplay of both has given birth to division, conflict, incessant wars, lawless and reckless killings, genocides and the birth of dreadful terrorism. Abah (2016, p. 70) opines that "religion should never be used by politicians as a tool for political propaganda. This disposition by political leaders poses a great danger". This view upholds that religion is that aspect of the spiritual approach to human reality while politics is that material approach to human reality. Thus, there is a clear-cut separation between

things of God (divine, sacred, heavenly, spiritual, religious) termed "religion" and things of the world (worldly, profane, earthly, bodily, secular) termed "politics". This view was upheld in some early religions that saw politics as a worldly affair and heathen, while religion was a holy, godly affair. Hence both cannot have any connection. As a result, religious believers were advised to detach themselves from worldly things, including politics. For instance, while Greeks saw polis as the highest good, Judaism and early Christians saw the highest good as God and the heavenly city. A Christian theologian-Tertullian asked: What has Jerusalem in common with Athens? That view was the mentality of many Christians that Paul (Romans 13:1-7) and Peter (1 Peter 2: 13-17) began to admonish Christians to change such mentality and to also be obedient to political authorities.

Contrary to the above view, religion and politics have a lot in common, in the words of Oshewolo and Maren (2015), "a point of convergence". One of the indispensable points of convergence, as stated by Gaudium et spes (1965, nos. 25; 40-45), is that both have to do with social solidarity to the wellbeing of entire human persons, where human reality, destiny and situations are the same. It is because "since God the Father is the origin and purpose of all men, we are all called to be brothers. Therefore, if we have been summoned to the same destiny, human and divine, we can, and we should work together without violence and deceit to build up the world in genuine peace". (Gaudium et spes, 1965, nr 92; See also: Ad gentes, 1965, nr 3; 11; Nostra Aetate, 1965, nrs 1-5; John Paul II, 1996, p. 174; John xxiii, 1963, nr. 4; Locke, 1980, § 6; Buber, 1923, p. 72; Ngwoke, 2016, pp. 175-182; Okwuenu, 2005, pp. 58-62, in Anyacho, 2005)

Adama and Okafor (2018, p. 50) assert that religion and politics are "cultural factors" which interact with and penetrate the people. Both regulate behaviours and advocate for responsibility in excises of powers. In line with the above view, this paper affirms that religion and politics are good in themselves. Both have to exist for the survival of any human society. This is because a person is both a religious and political being who naturally tends to affirm this socially pluralistic nature. The rational nature of a person predisposes them to seek satisfaction of both material needs and to move beyond that as well to attain fulfilment of spiritual needs. These dual human needs can be fulfilled only where there is cooperation between politics and religion based on principles of truth, solidarity and justice. Yet, many a time, these principles are thwarted or distorted, which causes a crisis. The situation in Nigeria is a typical example of this aberration.

Nigeria's situation

Presently, there is a problem with the way virtually everything is going in Nigeria. Nigeria is in a crisis. There is constant violence ranging from attacks by religious militant groups like Boko Haram and others, kidnapping gangs, assassination gangs, violent herdsmen and interreligious conflicts. Furthermore, ascension, appointment and stay in political offices are mainly made based on ethnic and religious affinity. As corroborated by Yoroms (2002, in Alemike, 2002), these lead to politics of religious grouping and manipulation of religion. As a result, this has paved the way for the allocation of resources disproportionately, indifference about the development of areas other than the leader's area, corruption for selfish or sectional advantage, and governmental policies in favour of exclusive religious groups. Political party formation, political agenda, campaign speeches, etc., have concealing religious posture, which intensifies the fears and suspicions among Nigerians. This situation positions Nigeria as "a time bomb waiting to explode" (CBCN communiqué, 2018) and "one huge wasteland, huge debris of deceit, lies, treachery, double-dealing and duplicity and a nation at war with itself" (Matthew Kukah, cited in Jannamike, 2021).

Causes of Politicization of Religion in Nigeria
1. **The beginning of coercion**
Colonization has caused great damage and left ugly scars on Nigeria. It all started as Eze (2004, p. 55, in Okwueze, Ed, 2004) affirms that "the colonial authority's position in the matter was patently self-serving. It did not mind supporting Islam … to its favour". Till today Nigeria suffers under the triangle game orchestrated by some European nations. (Achebe, 2012, pp. 99-105) First, the 1914 amalgamation of the regions now called Nigeria was a political construction which favoured the economic and administrative purposes (politics) of the colonialist. Little or no regard was given to the differences among Africans living in those regions. Later, the colonial administrative arrangement propelled religious and ethnic political divisions in Nigeria. The colonialist used the peculiarity of the regions as a tool to achieve their ambitions which were selfishly political and economic. Consequently, even after the amalgamation, each region retained certain diverse peculiar ideologies about the new country. For instance, Hinds (1978, cited in Okafor, 1997) confirms that "when therefore, by the late 1950s the southern region was speaking and agitating for independence, the ruling class in Northern Nigeria was looking forward to a handover of power to the heirs of Anglo-Fulani hegemony. The Muslims were struggling to regain Islamic rule, which was lost during the colonial administration.

For them, independence meant freedom from the rule of Non-Muslims and the establishment of an ideal Muslim state".

Nigeria has not been a united country even after the 1960 independence from colonial rule. Religious and ethnic manipulation emerged during the colonial era and has had cumulative effects on politics in Nigeria. Till today, many political parties' ideologies have been sectional in orientation. Political usurpation of all systems was enabled by colonialists' manipulation and coercive strategy to keep Nigeria together. Unfortunately, religion in Nigeria has become an "undisguised culprit" of the situation. (Eze, cited in Okwueze, Ed., 2004, p. 74)

2. **Inadequate appreciation of the roles of religion**

Religion plays a prominent role in the lives of many Nigerians. Religion virtually divided Nigeria into Northern (Hausa/Fulani), which is predominantly Muslim, Southwestern (Yoruba), which has a mixture of Muslims and Christians and Eastern Nigeria (Igbo)/Niger Delta/south-south) the region, which is predominantly Christian. There are African traditional religion (ATR) practitioners in all parts of Nigeria before and even after Islam and Christianity were brought to Nigeria. Thus, three major religious groups exist in Nigeria: African Traditional religion, Christianity and Islam.

These religious groups teach salient moral values like rectitude, loyalty, the sanctity of human life, honesty, justice, humility, chastity, and moral order. A crisis arises when any other ideology: religious or political, infringes on or thwarts these moral values. Consequently, Nigeria recognizes freedom of worship and membership in any of these religions. Yet, some selfish leaders try to make one religion dominate or exact undue influence on others. Nigerian leaders did not galvanise the good aspects of these religions for peaceful coexistence. Rather religion became a "political springboard through which politicians ride to political fame". (Nnadi, Okolo and Ezeugwu, 2018, pp. 250-251) Religion became an instrument for attaining personal political appetencies.

3. **Political triumphalism and religious politicking**
Nwobodo (2021, p. 42) posits that religious politicking connotes "a deeper political and economic warfare for the selfish welfare of the religious fanatics who sponsor them". Kunnumpuram (2007, p. 342) explains religious politicking as "political formation which uses religion to promote their economic and political interest" Many Nigerian

politicians unequivocally can be referred to as 'fundamentalist politicians'. Some of them use politics to perpetuate their extremist religious ideologies. Since independence, Nigeria remains a nation with suspicion between members of religious groups, mainly between Islamic and Christian communities. These two predominant religions seek "to take over the architectural design and construction of the Nigerian polity" (Kukah, 1994, p. ix cited in Okafor, 1997). For instance, while there are suspicions that some Muslim politicians intend to make Nigeria an Islamic country by institutionalizing sharia Law at the Federal level and admitting Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Conference, some Christian politicians struggle not to allow such tendencies.

Hinging on this uneasy relationship, some leaders have instigated crisis through expressions of mistrust, hatred and support in their campaigns and public speeches. In this regard, there exist radical religious groups and series of religious violence such as in Kano (1980, 1982, 1987, 1991), Katsina (1991), Kaduna (1987), Gombe (1985), Bauchi (1991, 1992), Ilorin (March 1986), Zaria and Funtua (March 1987), etc. (Udoidem, 1997, 160-180, in Okafor, 1997). Some time ago, some sympathizers and senior politicians in the North were under investigation on allegations of giving Boko Haram financial or logistical support. Ibrahim Shekarau (former governor of Kano State), Isa Yuguda (former Governor of Bauch State), Ahmed Zannah Khalifa (senator from Borno State, he was once detained), Senator Ali Mohammed Nduma of Borno State (who had previously been appointed by President Jonathan to a Committee to consider opening talks with Boko Haram), Nuhu Muhammed (Chair of Petroleum drivers Association), Shaykh Ibrahim Datti Ahmed (Head of Supreme council of Sharia), Ali Modu Sheriff (former governor of Borno state) and others were alleged to have sponsored Boko Haram. (See brief detail of these allegations in Nwobodo, 2021, pp. 113-115)

4. **Lack of freedom of expression**
Locke (1980, § 95) affirms that the end of government is for people to be "joined and united into a community for their comfortable, safe and peaceable living, one amongst another in a secure enjoyment of their property and greater security against any, that are not of it". Yet, one wonders why there is no genuine peaceful co-existence, unity and security of life and property in Nigeria. Over the years, the Sharia law issue has threatened the unity of Nigeria. Some Muslim politicians demand that Sharia law and courts be established in every state in Nigeria, to which all citizens will be subjects. Nigeria, as established by the Constitution (1999, Section 38), is a secular nation with a mixture of

religions. Hence any attempt for a particular religion to impose its religious laws than that contained in the Nigerian constitution creates a crisis and infringes on the rights to freedom of expression, association, etc., of citizens who do not profess that same religion.

5. **Leadership hypocrisy**

Malicious silence of some political and religious leaders in times of crises arising from agitations by religious sects often aggravates the situation. For instance, the group Boko Haram claims to be a religious group acting in the name of Islam. The group claims to be fighting to enshrine an Islamic state (Caliphate) in Nigeria. The Islamic leaders cannot afford to be ignorant of these claims. At least, they are aware of recent bomb and gun attacks on Christians, Churches, schools, government buildings and personnel and civilians in the name of Islamic religion. It coordinated an attack against the United Nations headquarters in Abuja on 26 August 2011, which according to BBC (2011), killed at least 18 people and many wounded. Boko Haram had kidnapped and killed thousands of people almost unhindered.

Recently, the Fulani herdsmen gang has become a worse group terrorizing Nigerians, especially farmers and rural dwellers. Some Christian leaders have spoken out against these gangs (CBCN, 2016; 2017 a; b; 2018). Yet northern Islamic and political leaders have not openly disowned these groups. Kukah (in Aworinde, 2014) corroborated this assertion and stated that "I believe that there has been too much hypocrisy in northern Islam, based on how the elite have used the religion to deceive, belittle even their people. Secondly, some of their leaders have thrived in pretending to place Islam over and above their nation, not to talk of other minorities within their enclaves… When our churches became objects of target practice, all these years, the leaders merely looked the other way or stayed in silence or fear".

6. **Lack of common national objective**

Some leaders have taken Nigeria as a federating centre for competing for personal interests and a battleground for religious and geographical affinities. Nigeria, to such people, is "a mere geographical expression" (Obafemi, 1947, pp. 47-48) and "still far from being united" as a nation (Balewa, 1947, p. 208). To many politicians, Nigeria is like "a sinking ship in which they should individually or collectively take out whatever they deem fit by hook or crook before the ship sinks." (Momah, 2013, pp. 109-110) This creates bad governance, a "low level of ethical consciousness" (Ewelu, 2008, p. 96) and a crisis.

Reconciliation Roles of Religion and Politics in Nigeria

The examination of the bad situation resulting from the politicization of religion in Nigeria shows that religion and politics have vital mutual roles to play in remedying the situation. In this paper's definition of religion and politics, one understands that the major task of both is to enhance the moral and civil common good. By extension, religion should play the following specific roles:

a)   role of enlightenment: religion should socialize people in identity formation and awareness of the dignity of self. Such as exhorting people to abide by laws that guarantee good governance.

b)   role of defence and conscience of the society: religion should serve as a last resort for the people and never feel intimidated or subdued by any roaring waves of political forces while it speaks against evils. It should defend the nation from corruption, injustice, tyranny, and discrimination and ensures that the government's activities have strong consideration for poor people.

c)   role of maintaining moral tempo and development: religion should serve as a moral watchdog and seeks peace and mutual co-existence. It should firmly teach against negative behaviours and provide restrains to immoral acts. For instance, it is erroneous to believe in the idea that politics is all. All cannot be politics because there is ethics that should resolve weakness or excesses in politics. It should promote moral values like truth, accountability, freedom, justice, etc. and insist that they are put into practice.

Therefore, if religion plays these roles, politicians will be obliged to perform effectively their social, economic and political roles. The government will be held to guarantee an ordered society where freedom, liberties and rights of individuals are protected without preferential protection and to eradicate corruption through making good laws, building credible institutions and creating a conducive environment that encourages civic friendship. These roles will insist that no political authorities underestimate moral dimensions but rather ensure that their activities serve integral human and environmental development.

Recommendations

1.   Since crises in Nigeria arise from the politicization of religions, there should be genuine solidarity between politics and religion. The President and the 10th National Assembly should seriously deliberate on healing past but still existing political and religious grievances. At this time, all regions of Nigeria should be

genuinely welcomed as belonging in equal status to Nigeria. The power of peace is truth, forgiveness and reconciliation. So, "accepting that together we may arrive at the truth can heal difference". Oredipe (2008, p. 75)

2. There is a need to build credible institutions, especially credible electoral board, that guarantees that people with proven public interest presides over public affairs. There must be a paradigm shift from political domination and manipulation to love, moral soundness and genuine service in politics. Nelson Mandela of South Africa (Mandela, 1995, pp. 624-625) is a paradigm of a politician who sacrificed a lot for the freedom of his country.

3. Religions in Nigeria should form a trusted bond that will forestall any political manipulation or domination. What a joy it would be to form a formation of a religious body that may be called Joint Christians Muslims African Traditional Religion Association of Nigeria (JCMAAN). The bond will be empowered to sanction any tendencies to politicize religion.

4. Religious leaders themselves should be morally sound. They should shun materialism and partisan politics, which are strategies callous politicians use to entangle them. Achebe (1974) captured the importance of discipline among religious leaders in the character of Ezeulu, who could not deviate from his religious values even when the white political administrator-Captain Winterbottom enticed him with material and power promises. Nigerian religious leaders should emulate Archbishop Desmond Tutu (South Africa), Bishop T Bacani, Cardinal Sin (Philippine), etc, who spoke strongly against political evils in their countries.

5. The performances of Nigerian leaders should be accessed on both civic and moral attitudes to the common good. This paper recommends a return to ethics in Nigerian politics.

Conclusion

The taproot of the politicization of religion in Nigeria is traceable to both ill-thought emergence and bad leadership of Nigeria. This root should be healed. In this case, as this paper has identified, there is a need to resolve a lot of grievances of the past and to curtail present bad leadership styles that predispose to crisis. Only when the roles of healing where both religion and politics in justice, truth and solidarity cooperate for the common good can Nigerians live in faith, unity, peace and progress. The past general elections in Nigeria still reinvigorated tendencies for the politicization of religion. Therefore, in subsequent elections, Nigerians should be made ready to be credible. Nigerians must insist on their moral and civic right in voting and choosing the

right leaders. Therefore, Nigerians should go beyond narrow, selfish, political or religious partisan considerations. And vote for persons who have the genuine moral and political capacity to build a peaceful society that the majority of Nigerians are yearning for.

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