



## TAXONOMIZING CHRISTIAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRATIC DEEPENING IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Nigeria is a pluralistic society where Christianity, Islam and African Religion exist virally side by side. Christian Political participation for Democratic Consolidation in contemporary Nigeria has been under threat due to lackadaisical attitudes of some Christians, financial responsibility, lack of funding, prevalent rate of nepotism, tribalism, corruption, rigging, thuggery and threat to life. The paper is aimed at re-wakening consciousness and attitudes of Christians towards active participation in political and democratic deepening in contemporary Nigeria. Also, the paper is a clarion call for Christians from respective denominations to form one body and become active political participants in facets of political position by giving it the Christian qualities. The paper made use of comparative, descriptive, field survey, participant observation and analytic methods of research. Data were collected from the field by participant observation, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and books. The research uncovers that, lack of Christians active participation in politics has yielded low result of democratic dividends and deepening which is lamentable today. Other actions which render active Christian political participation in democratic deepening include killing, rigging, nepotism, deformation of character, envy and hatred, religious sentiments, tribalism, threats to life, lack of show of love, wrong perception of politics as dirty games, injustice and lack of financial support. The research recommends active and genuine Christian participation in politics in deepening democracy in contemporary time. The lives of Christian politicians should also reflect that of Christ who is an ideal role model for leadership. Christian leaders should also encourage fellow Christians to actively participate in politics in order to bring about the needed change where love, transparency, hardwork, equity and justice, and fear of God exist in a world inhabited by Christ faithful.*

**Keywords:** Christian, Contemporary, Democratic, Nigeria, Politics and Taxonomising

### Introduction

Christianity is indeed theocentric religion which is pervasive and influential in modeling the lives of its adherents after its founder (Jesus Christ). Hence, this monotheistic religion exerts strong influence on politics especially in the areas of affiliation, campaign hustling, voting behaviour, public opinion and pressure groups... apart from participating in all political process, Christians are natural citizens of the nation, and are expected to be conscious of their political right and responsibilities (Dzurgba 22). Hence, the dynamism of man is manifold: biological, active, logical, man is indeed un-escapable to its facets in daily life experiences.



In Gen (1:26-28), we were made to understand that God is the creator of man, who is both a social and religious being. God asserts with imperative that, man should subdue and conquer the world which is a political environment (Julius 72). By virtue of man's creation, he has the mental faculty to high rationality to rule over all that God created (Charles, Oral Interview). Man has the general direction of proceedings not only in the world but also the biological gardens in his self assigned superior position in creation, which he concedes in place of higher order of existence (Oguche 37). Man's consciousness is a gift from God which he occupies in political events (39). It is worth gain saying that as asserts, Almajiri political democracy requires some level of citizens participating in its process of decision making which many Christians have failed to take cognizance of this opportunity by participating in political deepening of democracy in contemporary Nigeria (Oral Interview). Many Christians see politics today as a dirty game; an activity of crooks, liars, criminals, thugs and as an institution, where nepotism, financial involvement and, occultic band and intoxication with power exist (Ojo145). Nigeria being a pluralistic nation where democracy is highly practiced since its inception on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999, many Christians failed to participate actively in politics in order to give it a true face of God' kingdom here on earth, and has created a vacuum where so many ills prevailed without being corrected through virtuous Christians teachings on love, justice, fearness and active deepening of democracy in contemporary time (Lydia, Oral Interview). A look at our political activities today is marked with full pledged of injustices, corruption, rigging, killing of opponents, use of diabolical powers to attack opponents, high involvement of politicians in secret cult organizations to seek for power and protection (Augustina Augustine, Oral Interview). There is also, lack of trust and fear of God among some Christian politicians, representation and poor service delivery amongst others disgusting actions happening in politics. Thus, with all these ungodly activities, many Christians have failed to actively participate in order deepen political consolidation bearing Christian virtues as integral recipe for an idle Christian political participation for a better society(Jerome, Oral Interview) .

Christians involvement in political deepening of democracy has not been effective as found among adherents of other faiths like Islam and African Religions(Faith, Oral Interview). Nigeria which happens to endowed with both human and natural resources; it has all it takes to make the citizens the happiest people on earth ("Hope in a Hopeless Situation" 4). However, due to wrong perception and active Christians participation in deepening democracy, essential Christian values are left out in bringing the true face of God in a bitter politics like ours today. Hence man is the only rational being capable of deciding about himself and with tendency to self realization (Adah 16). But many Christians failed to actively participate and deepen democracy in contemporary Nigeria based according unchanged perception.

Furthermore, another worrisome scenario is the lackadaisical attitudes and lack of unanimous support and encouragement of fellow Christians to participate in politics by deepening democratic in contemporary Nigeria has become worrisome till day. It is interesting to reiterate further that, politics, which cuts across all facets of human life, which Christians ought to actively involved in deepening and re-sharpening its fruits for collective efforts has a long way to the Promise Land (Gbadamosi 365). Politicians have simply exalted fraud, to art and succeed in former enviable economic structure to ship load of wreck, which has continued unabated



(Ojakamnor 90). Hence, ungodliness found in democratic governance ravishing Nigerian democratic system today is lamentable and until it's addressed by Christian active participation for the consolidation of democratic governance in contemporary Nigeria, the institution will continue to be without being injected without religious vitality for democratic consolidation in contemporary Nigeria (Joy, Oral Interview). Christians owed it a duty to actively participate in politics in order to change its encapsulated negative narrative which constitute an impediment to Christian political participation in deepening democracy in contemporary Nigeria. The crus of this research is centred on exploring Christian political in deepening democracy with the view of proffering some recommendations to shaping the face of democracy by Christian involvement in politics.

### Elucidation of Key Terms:

- i. **Democracy:** Democracy is delivered from O. Greek words 'deµos' 'demos' the people and "Kpateiv" 'Kratein' to rule, which translates to mean a form of political system in which the people of a country rule themselves. It is basically a system of Government where free and equal rights of participation of every person are unhindered by sex or state of birth (Chidili 9). Abraham Lincoln defines it as "The Government of the people, by the people and for the people, under the rule of law (Jumma 2-3). Fairchild also defines democracy as "philosophy or a social system that stresses participation in and proportional control of, the affairs of the community by the individual members, on the basis of his personal selfhood (9.v) as a human being, regardless of his qualities, rank, status, or possession (89). Democracy further suggests conditions of equality and liberty which supports individualism. In addition, it suggests also the majoritarian devices by which society reaches conclusions about the programmatic content of its day-to-day practices (Lenkin 71).
- ii. **Politics:** Politics from the Greek word 'πολις', 'polis' which literally means City (Bryan 202). In another word also politics means the theory, art and practice of Government (Fairchild 224). Vernon further sees politics "as a struggle among actors pursuing conflicting as government, like in voting, forming political parties or in exerting influence (27). Politics in Gbenda' definition "is the means through which governance is made possible and effective (365).
- iii. **Christian:** A Christian is a servant/follower of Christ. The word was first given to believers in Christ in Syria Antioch by non Christians because they see people following the teachings and way of Christ. The word 'Christian' appeared three times in New Testament in Acts 11:26, 26:28, 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:16. In Acts 26:28, Herod Agrippa II used it satirically to Paul saying, "Almost thou persuaded to be a Christian/a follower of Christ. While in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:16. Apostle Peter wrote to warn the elects in parts of Asia Minor to not be ashamed if called on to suffer as Christians (Julius 68-69). Anyacho went further to buttress similarly on who a Christian is in this excerpt "A person who follows the teachings of Jesus Christ or one who believes in Jesus Christ" (192). A Christian is also seen as that individual who having decided personally, acted upon his decision by accepting Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior in response to God's love towards mankind, assumed the responsibility for life in the world imitating Christ (Julius 69).



### **Biblical Origins of Political Thought**

Many people think that politics is not a Biblical term or has its origin from the creation. God is the architect of creation and made men the care taken of all He Has created. The Bible is full of politics ranging from theocracy to monarchy, etc. even the trinity is not found anywhere in the Bible yet it is one of our Central Christian belief in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Olatunde 52). The book of Gen 1:1-12 did re affirm the power God gave man to subdue and conquer the earth.” Power was created and embedded in man and woman by a sovereign or most powerful God. It is in this context that the man and woman are able to gain knowledge, express ideas, reasons, and critically make decisions, choices and exercise free will. God charged man to reproduce babies in order to increase the population of human beings on earth. Haven completed his work of creation of political society, God exercise His devolution of power and delegation of duties. The sovereign God directed the couple saying ‘Subdue’ the earth and have ‘dominion’ over it. This means that it is politics that determines the quality, quantity and houses, electricity, road construction, transport, communication and business (Dzurgba 43&40).

God Himself is the Ordainer and Initiator of politics. He conducts the selection of leaders, approves, ordains, dethrones leaders or kings. No one can ascend to a throne, post, or an office without His approval (Julius 72). As earlier reiterated, man was given power to exercise over things in the world. God endows man with ruling ability (Gen 1:26-28). Hence the whole earth is a political society, with man a political and rational being at the helm of affairs. In another instance again, God also appointed Abraham to be the father of a multitude generation (nation) (Gen 12). In Gen 20:1-8 also, God is vividly seen controlling the political affairs in Gerar where Abimelech was King. In Gen 41:37-46, we were meant to understand how God sponsored Joseph, a slave that was sold by his brothers and he rose to the rank of a minister in charge of food in Egypt during Pharaoh. The ascension of Solomon to the throne in Israel’s history was as a result of political scenario (1 Kgs 1:28-48). The political election and ordination of Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel was dramatic as instructed by the prophet (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 9:1-13).

The book of Esther (2:1-9) vividly expounds the divine program of a political agenda of Persia and media with over 127 provinces. Stretching from India to Cush under the Kingship of King Xaviera whose royal throne was the citadel of Susa became Queen not by chance, magic but by divine and political Inter-Play for the modifications of some political roles. Furthermore, man is a social being who receives perfection from God as the origin of nature and political formulations to guard man in his dealing with his fellow beings (Okeke 116).

In another enticing episode to buttress the origin of politics from the Biblical perspective, the mother of John Zebedee came to Jesus and requested for a political appointment for her two sons in Jesus’s cabinet. Her request was this “Let one of my sons sit on your right hand and the other one on your left (Matt.20:20-28), (Julius 573). From all these instance having here, they buttress that politics has its origin from God since the creation of man to govern the whole universe. There are many Biblical instances that prove the origin or foundation of politics.

### **Democracy as Governance Method and Model for Efficacy in Contemporary Society**



In this except, Democracy is viewed as a method and a Model for Efficacy in Contemporary Society. It is indeed very important that every start on the aspects of democracy. These democratic process; and democracy is considered as a model of government that is democratic stand. Democracy as a new method or process of government refers to how Democracy functions in other words the basic principles involved in the operation of domestic system. Thus, it vividly states the way democratic Government works as opposed to dictatorship.

Democracy as a model for Efficacy in Contemporary Society refers to the actual structure or shape that democratic Government takes. Modern political scientists talk to socialist democracy. Therefore, Marxism and communism, conservative democracy typically obtainable in Great Britain and Liberal Democracy typically also obtained in the United States of Africa (Ukpong 101-102).

### **Barriers to Christian Democratic Deepening in Contemporary Nigeria**

Christian participation for Democratic deepening in Nigeria are hindered by the following factors:

- i.** Many Christians see venturing into politics as a dirty game that only those who are greedy occultically quest for power and money, or even those who are morally corrupt and dishonest dable into it (Innocent, Oral Interview). Hence, Nigerian politics has been perennially bedeviled by lies, deceit, bribery and corruption, nepotism; sit tightism, rigging and electoral malpractice and power intoxication. These summed cogent reasons constitute a big obstacle to their political participation for democratic deepening in contemporary Nigeria (Ojo 145). Politics is an ungodly affair considered by many Christians as a secular and non Christian perspective (Yams at 65).
- ii.** Many Christians consider political participation as factor to spiritual derailment. Thus, instead of Christians to see joining politics as an activity to change its ugly face for the better political democratic realization of its dividend that has been bedeviled by immoral practices (Yusuf, Oral Interview). For these reason, Christians consider not joining politics as a spiritual derailment; where people search for occultic powers to secure seat or eliminate their opponents using charms and hired killers. Thus, because of these factors which constitute in declining their spiritual state, they fear to join politics which they ought change its dirty facets impacts for good. Hurera furthermore maintains that, "bad and dainting of notion of politics makes Christians to stay of the game" (Oral Interview). There is also difficulty associated with politics. In like manner also, Godfrey reiterates that, "some people resort to corrupt practices, abuse of the mandate poor masses, as well as violation of electoral laws, recruitment of ethnic militias, thugs, kidnappers, hooligans and assassins for the purpose of using violence to deal with rivals outside constitutional and lawful political processes" (Oral Interview). Hence, Christians feared participating in politics for this reason (Julius 74).
- iii.** Another reason of not joining politics by Christians is for the maintenance of true discipleship and total submission to loyalty and obedience to God, so that they are precluded from participating in any political activity (Haniel, Oral Interview). Thus, for such Christians, they see their non participation in politics as way of maintaining themselves for the services of God. Others refused participating in politics due to



- distraction from following the will of God if they ventured into political participation (Julius 75).
- iv. In spite of all other problems bedeviling Christian political participation in deepening democracy, there is also a challenge of separating the wheat from the chaff [good from the bad] (Ojo 152). Augustina further observed that, "Christian feared unnecessary tension that might catch up with them" (Oral Interview). In view of the above, Yusuf captured that, "this posed a serious challenge to active Christian political participation in consolidating democracy in contemporary Nigeria"(Oral Interview). Our political landscape has also remained dominated by unnecessary acrimony and tension existing among political leaders today (Mujah and Udoma 10).
  - v. Attainment of political positions by our leaders today depend on violent financial strength, occultic promises to retain power, also posed a serious challenges to full Christian political participation in democratic deepening in contemporary Nigeria. As exhumed Kotasori," one to succeed in today, politics he or she must have the financial muscles to compete and even contest for any political position because of the high cost of political party forms and campaigns" (Oral Interview). Money is a legal tender that lack of it impedes fellow Christians from venturing into politics talk more of deepening it in contemporary society for the betterment of humanity.
  - vi. There is lack of unity among the various Christians denominations of unanimously support Christians vying for any political position (Martina, Oral Interview). Furthermore as maintained Davoro, "many Christians are divided, and they only attached support of relevance to their church or denominational membership" (Oral Interview). Denominational rivalry is on the rise among Christians, which has posed a big challenge to full Christian participation in consolidating democracy in contemporary Nigeria. Helen laments sentimental statements like "Is he from our Church or which church does she worship?" often exacerbate discrimination against supporting a unanimous candidate to vote for any political position (Terence, Oral Interview).

### Recommendations

Despite the challenges of Christian political participation for democratic deepening in contemporary Nigeria, the paper has the following recommendations:

- i. Politics is in the Biblical, and Christians should get actively venture into it. Christians are expected to function as harbingers of peace, love and justice for better realization of development (Lami, Oral Interview). Hence, authentic Christian participation in political can bring about genuine and desired resolution for a true humanistic governance in the country (Yamsat 6). Also Christian politicians should fulfill all godly promises, and political mandate in accordance with developmental program of enhancing the realization of equality, peace and justice an love which should be respected by all people (Esthons and Ima-Abaking 92).
- ii. The church therefore should encourage the unity of all Christians despite varying denominations existing. She should unite, support and encourage faithful Christians, irrespective of sex, gender upon who God has bestowed the gift of political leadership to



- actively partake in politics and making genuine representation of God in the world of human affairs for the betterment and deepening of democracy in contemporary Nigeria (James, Oral Interview). Furthermore, the church should continue to educate and enlighten its members on the need to politically and actively join in the rescue mission of deepening democratic governance in contemporary Nigeria.
- iii. Christians must eschew denominational sentiment when it comes to selecting and electing leaders to represent the people in governance. Ben further reiterate that, "Christians should choose leaders who possessed high moral virtue in order to bring positive development in the country and not to comprise their quest for true humanism for mere material and selfish aggrandizement (Oral Interview). As Dabot further reiterates that, Christians should as chew political unhealthiness rivalry which is an impediment to full delivery of Christ's face in politics. Hence, its good to always embark on positive projects for an overwhelming majority (115).
  - iv. The Church should continue to give moral support where and when necessary for the success of Christians who join politics to emulate and x rayed. Thus, let them be guided by the genuine love of Christ and service to humanity (Dasat, Oral Interview). Christians who participate in politics should also truly represent the image and figure of God as the Ordainer of just politics which should reflect in their lives in milieu.
  - v. The Church should continue to give educational services and moral services apart from spiritual education is the bedrock to any development, and development can only be realizable when unnecessary ingredients are cooked and consumed via education ( Gamsari, Oral Interview). Education also as we have seen already is an important cornerstone in democratic polity, and while the lack of it corrodes the basic foundation for true and active participation in democratic dispensation. Christians should make adequate use of educational attainment for liberation from intellectual poverty (Ukong 116-117). Just as the early missionaries' strife and brought education, contemporary Church should be saddled with the responsibility to reinvigorate the educational institutions for the benefit of the masses. Christians should regard education of their Children in institutions of their choice as a major responsibility which must not be compromised under any hardworking circumstance (Asaph, Oral Interview). Hence parents should corporate with relevant authorities to ensure education is given place in their midst (Ojo 148).
  - vi. Christians must be actively prayerful, lovable and never to compromise the ethics of their faith as heralds of God's kingdom here by engaging immorality. They should be spiritually charged so as not to summon to any search for cultic powers to unethically deepening of democracy in contemporary Nigeria which will be a total failure (Gabriel, Oral Interview).
  - vii. Christians should allow their religious principles to guide their right resolutely and relentlessly for truth, justice and peace in the country so that respect for the love of God and the dignity of man would be firmly established. Hence, Christians should have it as a duty to remain firm and be inspired by the plan of God's purpose to save mankind from sins by actively participating in political participation for deepening of democracy in contemporary Nigeria (Mujah and Udoma 10).



- viii. Equal opportunities should also be given to those who want to aspire to leadership positions in the political field (Paschaline, Oral Interview). Hence, such candidates should be known to be persons of proven moral integrity, who possess general leadership qualities and who put God first in their attitude to deepening democracy (Ojo 147).
- ix. Christian political leaders should exhibit sense of honesty and God fearing, responsible for the ethical probity of the entire citizens whom they come to serve (Cukwurah 91). They should also be role model after Christ in sharpening the true face of Nigeria politics with the need of giving it a purpose in a world of uncertainties will, and giving Gods people the chance to be the *Imago Dei* (Image of God) as the world watched to be humanly and spiritual reformed for good. y. Hence, they are called upon to a lacritily participate in politics in order to exercise their true Christian apostolate. A stand of disengagement from politics by Christians is unrealistic, futile and self-defeatist. Hence, Christians should actively participate in politics by injecting ideal humanistic a value into it for better deeping of democracy in contemporary time(Patricia, Oral Interview).
- x. There should be contextualization of Biblical interpretations for informed political participation and deepening( Paschaline, Oral Interview).
- xi. In another vein, as maintained Slyvanus, "there should also be strategic partnership between Faith based organisations and democratic institutions"(Oral Interview).
- xii. Capacity building with God fearing initiative for Christian leaders in political deepening should be encouraged and sustain by relevant authorities(Augustina Augustine ,Oral Interview).

## Conclusion

Politics frantically involved how to organize and govern the society for the interest of all. It is an urgent necessity which revolves around people, power distribution, application as well as control and management of labor, works and material resources, diplomatic relations and calls for social welfare, justice, emancipation, respect for dignity of all men as created by God. Christian political participation in deepening democracy in contemporary Nigeria is a welcome development. As further observed, "over the years, there has been lackadaisical attitude by Christians in political participation and democratic deepening in contemporary Nigeria has been very poor indeed" (Ben, Oral Interview). Virtuous teachings of Christianity ought to have been a sign post to directing Christians in bringing immediate picture of a just, religious and orderly system which has failed on the project by aloofing herself from participation (Ben, Oral Interview). Hence, the face of politics today has remained battered and lacking virtuous ingredients due to Christian participation to salvage the system, politics cannot be separated from human behaviour of groups as well as individual in matters that have to do with the course of Government and existing influence (Raphael 27).

Christians should participate actively in politics as ordained by God and must fulfill their political promises, carry out their mandate in accordance with justice, righteousness, peace, love devoid of any rancor. Hence their coming into politics as agents of moral and spiritual change, who will give a democracy a better humanistic shape amidst the evil rocking its true expression of love and consolidation in contemporary Nigeria. Furthermore, Christian political participation



for deepening of democracy in contemporary Nigeria is one of the most vital activities which could foster the realization of peace, love, justice, and remedy to the battered image about balanced democracy which when integrated with godly vitality will necessitate greater efficiency and betterment of the masses. Hence, sharing in the mission and agenda of Jesus Christ was not just left in the hands of the apostles chosen and formed. Christian participation in deepening democracy and in contemporary Nigeria is a step in the right direction for humanistic and Godly sustenance of democracy in contemporary Nigeria which is ravished by moral ills.

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