

# Electoral Prophets and the Christian Faith in Nigeria: A Moral Theological Concern

*Benjamin Yakubu Bala*

## **Abstract**

This article raises a moral theological concern over the phenomenon of electoral prophets in Christianity and its negative impacts on the Christian faith. The phenomenon plays out at every election circle in Nigeria. Some of their prophesies come true while others do not, thereby, raising the question of whether God contradicts himself. A most likely conclusion is that they merely usually predict winners of elections contrary to their claims of receiving a specific revelation from God. At best, such predictions only have a way of cajoling their followers into voting the candidate of their predictions. The article shades light on the concept of democracy and election, the essential functions of an authentic prophet and the legitimate prophetic role expected of a Christian prophet in within the Christian faith and principles. It makes it clear that since in the modern understanding, democracy involves an expression and exercise of a people's freewill to choose their leader, the authentic Christian prophetic role should be to educate and equip the people with the right knowledge to discern a capable person they can vote for.

**Keywords:** Electoral, Prophets, Christian, Moral, Concern

## **1. Preamble**

In Nigeria, the phenomenon of electoral prophecies gained an unprecedented popularity in the 2015 and 2019 elections. Attractive as the phenomenon appeared to be, it raises some serious moral theological concerns. Some "men of God" have made themselves prophets who specialise in predicting election results every election year. One person surely emerges a winner in an election. On one hand, the "men of God" whom the election results favour their predictions are highly celebrated. Visual excerpts of their predictions are played back in their places of worship, uploaded online and circulated on social media and they sometimes make Newspaper headlines. On the other hand, those whose predictions failed try to give justifications.

In an audio cassette titled; "This Wicked Generation", the renowned Rev. Fr. Ejike Mbaka, swore to renounce his priestly oath and remove his cassock should

Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani win a second term as Governor of Enugu State (Ezeani ed., 2018, 18 June). This phenomenon came to play on the eve of the Nigerian 2015 general elections. Apostle Suleman of the Omega Fire Ministries in his 2015 New Year message saw Jonathan coming back to power and El-rufai not winning the Kaduna election. He also saw Tambuwal leading Sokoto State, a Christian leading Lagos State and that the 2015 elections were bringing a repeat of June 12 (Ameh, 2018, 18 June). After the elections, only his predictions on Tambuwal and Lagos State came to pass.

Similarly, Prophet Joshua Iginla of Champion Royal Assembly, Dr. Chris Okafor of Mountain of Liberation and Miracle Ministry, Primate Elijah Ayodele of INRI Evangelical Spiritual Church, Prophet Michael Olubode of the Celestial Church of Christ, Pastor Mathew Ashimolowo of Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC), prophesied that Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was going to win the election. However, Prophet Korede Marcus Tibetan of the Celestial Church of Christ and Rev. Fr. Ejike Mbaka, declared that Jonathan was going to lose the election (Okonkwo, 2018, 18 June). Prophet Joseph Oladipupo, founder and general overseer of Faith and Victory Church in Akure also claimed that it was revealed to him that Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was going to lose the election (Ojo, 2018, 18 June). Of course the 2015 Presidential election was won by Muhammadu Buhari of the APC.

Nigerian politicians are notably smart people constantly looking for any avenue that give them chances of winning. Hence, it is common to see those patronizing “popular” and crowded Christian places of worship run by “popular Men of God” and make donations. Somehow, it appears to have paid off some of them as it would seem they got “favourable prophecies”. The phenomenon of electoral prophecies with counter results raises very serious moral theological questions such as: Does God contradict himself? Can we actually speak of these as prophecies or mere predictions or campaigns in favour of the prophet's preferred candidates? Are these prophecies for the good of the people or meant to boost the prophet's fame? Do their followers really understand what a prophet is and what his functions are? Do these electoral prophets do Christianity any good other than bring it to ridicule? What is the place of such prophecies in a democracy? Are they not usually merely moving with the tides? The article provides answers to these and many other moral theological questions using a moral critical methodology. The key concepts in the article are: democracy, election and prophet.

## **2. Democracy and Election**

### **Democracy**

Abraham Lincoln, according to dictionary.com gave the simplest definition of

democracy as “government of the people, by the people, and for the people”. But more elaborately, it is defined as “A theory of government which in its purest form, holds that the state should be controlled by all the people, each sharing equally in privileges, duties, and responsibilities and each participating in person in the government” (www.dictionary.com, 2018, 13 July).

The Encyclical letter, *Centesimus Annus* of John Paul II expresses the Church's preference for democracy over and above other systems of governance. The reason is that principles of other systems of governance like totalitarianism and authoritarianism involve the predominance of force over reason. Their practices are ruler-subject oriented. Their principles compel subjects to submit by coercion. They infringe on the dignity of the human person and his right to participation in governance and in bringing about the good of the person's society (*Centesimus Annus*, no. 29).

The Pope rejects these leadership systems in favour of a new political order – Democracy. He believed that total recognition be given to the rights of the human conscience in line with natural law and revealed truths (*Centesimus Annus*, no. 29). Democracy ensures all of these. The Holy Father submits that the Church is in favour of, and values democracy because it ensures the right of citizens to participate in making their political choices. The people participate in electing those who govern them. It also offers them the possibility of being elected. Democracy empowers the electorates to hold their leaders accountable and to replace them through peaceful means when it is appropriate (*Centesimus Annus*, no. 46).

The Pope speaks of an “authentic democracy” where the rule of law is the guide; a democracy characterised by ultimate truth and direct political activity. He points out that the absence of these values can lead to manipulation for reasons of power (*Centesimus Annus*, no. 46). In a democracy, the control of the state is vested on elected representatives of the people. And the people exercise their will in choosing their leaders through the process of election. Election is therefore, an indispensable ingredient in a democracy.

### **Election**

An election is “the formal process of selecting a person for public office or of accepting or rejecting a political proposition by voting” (Gibbins, Webb and Heinz, 2018, 11 July). Election involves voting or a referendum in one way or the other which is the “formal expression of opinion or choice either positive or negative, made by an individual or body of individuals” (www.dictionary.com, 2018, 13 July). This expression is made by means of balloting, ticketing, raising hands, casting of dice, lining up, etc., and the act of such an expression is referred to as voting. As a judicial concept in the Church,

election has a broad sense and a strict sense. In the broad sense, it means a choice among many persons, things, or sides to be taken. And in the stricter sense, it means the choice of one person among many for a definite charge or function ([www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org), 2018, 11 July).

### **3. The Prophet and His Essential Function: A Terminological Consideration**

In ordinary usage, a prophet is one who makes predictions under divine influence (*Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of English Language*, 2004). He makes statements about future events with religious or magic powers; one with the ability to see what will happen in future (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007). In Christian understanding, a "prophet", from the Greek *prophetes* translates the Hebrew *nabi* meaning "to call" and "to speak aloud". A prophet therefore, is one who is called by God to speak for him; be his mouth piece (Komonchack, 2003, p. 808). He is one who communicates divine revelation; someone who has received a divine call to speak God's word to his people (McCarthy, 2005, p. 234). Note that "He is first of all called by God" (Armellini, 1998, p. 229).

He is a human being, a weak person, mere mortal. His authority to speak in God's name does not come from any extra ordinary ability of his or because he has some special faculties but by the simple and singular fact of being chosen and called by God. A biblical prophet is not basically meant to work miracles, foretell the future, or to do strange things. Rather, God expects him to do just one thing and that is 'to broadcast his word' (Armellini, 1998, p. 229).

The prophet is expected to first of all listen to God in the depth of his heart and to faithfully transmit same to the people he is sent to without changing or adding anything of his (Armellini, 1998, p. 229). Simply put, a prophet is God's servant, chosen and appointed by God to pass his message" ([www.christiantruthcenter.com](http://www.christiantruthcenter.com), 2018, 7 June). His utterances must therefore be intelligible and relevant to the situation of the people (Komonchack, 2003, p. 808). In one sense, the prophet is a preacher. In another, he is a whistle-blower particularly to a people that have turned away from God.

### **4. Prophets: A Biblical Perspective**

Biblical prophets were remarkable. Their loyalty was to God who chose, called and sent them ([www.theologyofwork.org](http://www.theologyofwork.org), 2018, 10 July). Their main preoccupation was to bring the people back to God's ways and in a good relationship with God. They spoke primarily in defence of the true worship of God and in favour of the poor; the oppressed, the orphans and widows, the aged, and the strangers, to save them from extortion. God raised his prophets when the priests, who should teach God's law failed or deviated, and when the

Kings of Israel and their judge failed to govern the country justly (theologyofwork.org, 2018).

A prophecy could be conditional or unconditional. A conditional prophecy is when the fulfillment of the prophecy depends on compliance with certain conditions mostly predicated by the word "if" (e.g. Lev. 26:3-4; 2 Chro.7:14; Jer. 18:7-10) or the conditions are clearly stated (e.g. Jonah 3:2-4). An unconditional prophecy is one that is not predicated on any condition and must come to pass no matter what humans do (e.g. Gen. 3:15; Ez. 25-32). All prophecies about Christ's coming were unconditional.

Noteworthy in the bible is the fact that there existed some groups who operated as professional prophets referred to as court prophets or cultic prophets. This category of prophets had their distinctive character and purpose in contradistinction to the individual prophets chosen, called and sent by God. The groups were characterised by a strong nationalistic patriotism. Their loyalty was not to God but to the nation and her leaders. And being professional prophets, they earned their living by prophecy (McKenzie, 1998, 696). Their prophecies were in favour of Kings and the rich in society who in turn paid them for their services. Amaziah, who opposed Amos in defence of King Jeroboam (Amos 7:12) is a good example. Also, the prophets of Baal served Jezebel's interest (1 Kgs 18). These kinds of prophets are also called false prophets and Jesus warned that we shall know them by their fruits (Mt. 7:12; 24:24, 25). Professional prophets attribute their utterances to God but clearly speak against his will. Their target is to impress their pay masters.

Also, the concept of election is not completely strange to the biblical culture even though not in the advanced form we have it today. Notwithstanding Israel being a theocratic nation, God sometimes heeded to their choice of who governed them as long as it was not opposed to his will and plan. Instances abound where God decided to approve of the demands of the people. A number of examples abound both in the Old and New Testaments.

The most obvious instance in the Old Testament is perhaps where the elders of Israel came to Samuel to demand for a king (1 Sam 8). Their demand was necessitated by three possible reasons. First, Samuel's children, whom he had appointed as judges over the people of Israel, were unfit to lead Israel (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2007). They deviated from his ways by turning towards the pursuit of gain; they took to bribes and perverted justice (vv 1-3). Secondly, the twelve tribes of Israel continually had problems working together because each tribe at this time had its own leader and territory. Their hope therefore, was to have a king who would unite the twelve tribes into one nation and one army. Thirdly, they wanted to be like their neighbouring nations (*Life Application*

*Study Bible*, 2007) who had their kings that organised and united them and from whom they took instructions especially at war times (vv 19-20). Israel found it fascinating and desired to have their king just like them.

In his zealous defence of God's kingship over Israel, Samuel declined to grant their request. He persuaded them with two strong arguments. First, he saw their demand for a human king as a rejection of God's personal kinship over them. Second, having a human king was going to impose a demand of loyalty upon them with implications that were going to be quite burdensome (vv 11-18). However, after turning to God in Prayer, God directed Samuel thus; "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you" (vs. 7). God respected the voice of the people. This singular act shows God's disposition in respecting the people's right and liberty to participate in the choice of their leader.

It is very important to point out that the demand of the people was not intrinsically evil or against God's Will. After all, he had promised them a king from among them after they have settled in the land which he would give them (Deut 17:14-20). Perhaps, Samuel saw their request as coming either too early or an exhibition of impatience to wait for God's time.

### **5. God and Human Freewill: A Moral Theological Perspective**

Christianity recognises and respects human freedom. This freedom is the basis for all our moral decisions. In the garden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve the freedom of choice to eat freely of any tree except of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:15-17). God did not infringe on their freedom. They eventually chose to eat of the forbidden tree (Gen 3:1-6). Moses put the choice between life and death, blessing and curse, before the Israelites (Deut 30:19). Joshua also asked the Israelites to choose whom they will serve (Josh 24:14-28).

Freedom is a factor that defines the sublime dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:27) (*Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church*, no. 199). Hence, the right to exercise one's freedom of choice especially on religious and moral matters is inalienable. No one must therefore do or say anything that will impair or sway anyone's right to exercise this freedom. Doing so will be an infringement on a person's moral rights. Freedom however, does not suggest self-sufficiency just as it does not mean arbitrary autonomy. It must be guided by truth and justice. These are two fundamental moral theological principles that guide the exercise of freedom in every decision. Every person's freedom to seek the truth and profess his religious, cultural and political ideas freely must not be hindered under any guise (*Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church*, no. 200). We find traces of God respecting the biblical people's freedom in the choice of their leaders, although not exactly in the same fashion as in modern time.

In the New Testament, the expression of the people's liberty to choose their leaders is even clearer. The first two disciples of Jesus Christ, Andrew and another not mentioned, were originally disciples of John the Baptist. They left him and followed Jesus after John introduced Jesus to them as "the Lamb of God" (John 1:35-37). They freely chose to follow a new master and neither John the Baptist nor Jesus had an issue with their choice. Also, a large number of his followers chose to end their loyalty to Jesus' and stopped following him. Peter and the remaining eleven chose to stay with him (Jn 6:66-69). Later on, the early Christians decided to use elections in the choice of people for service when the need arose.

The apostles replaced Judas Iscariot by process of election. The process involved the naming of the requirements for the office, the proposing of two names - Barsabas and Matthias, prayers and the casting of lots. Matthias emerged as the replacement (Acts 1:12-26). It is worthy of note that the casting of lots was a commonly acceptable means of settling crucial matters in which a choice of one over the other was extremely difficult in ancient times (biblestudy.org, 2018). This practice dates back to the time the prophet Samuel (1 Sam 14:40-42; Prov. 16:33; 18:18; Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-25). Depending on the place and local customs, varying means such as coins, polished sticks, cards, dice, etc., were used to cast lots. A decision made by casting of lots was considered free of accusations of human intervention like nepotism, politics, favoritism, etc. Once lots have been cast, the ancient people believed that God had spoken.

The seven deacons in Acts 6:1-6 were also chosen by election. Increase in the number of believers came with the challenge of uneven distribution of food. The apostles mandated the community to select from among themselves, seven people to be charged with this responsibility. The people were required to select from among themselves, men of good standing, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

Over the years, the appointment of Popes in the Church has always been by the process of election in a conclave (Hordon, 1985, p. 85). Bishops are also selected through the process of election though in a peculiar way. The process of the training and ordination of priests and deacons also involves election. The choice of lay leaders in church communities as well, involves election. Election avails the people the opportunity of participating in the choice of their leaders. It is therefore a moral privilege which must not be taken over by so-called men of God under some guise of prophesying.

## **6. Christian Thoughts on Civil Elections**

Colson, in an article titled; "Two Cities: St. Augustine's City of God", shows

how Augustine argues that Christians are citizens of two cities. The first is the "City of God" which is heaven, our final and permanent destination; our true home. The second is the City of Man which is the earthly City on which we live only for a while. According to St. Augustine, we are like strangers on a sojourn in a foreign country in the City of Man and despite the blessings we enjoy in it, we are always ready to move on to our permanent home, the City of God. Therefore, whatever we do here in the City of Man is to be guided by the values of the City of God (www.virtueonline.org, 2018, 18 July).

St. Augustine however, maintains that this is not a reason for withdrawal from affairs in the City of Man. His position is that since we enjoy the blessings offered us by the City of Man such as the protection of our fundamental and other human rights, our sustenance and security, we must assume responsibility of its citizenship for as long we live in it. In doing this nonetheless, the Christian is to be propelled by obedience to God and love of neighbour. Drawing from this understanding, Colson maintains that "Being a good citizen means doing our civic duty and, of course voting" (Colson, www.virtueonline.org, 2018, 18 July). He insists that we cannot retreat into our sanctuaries and neglect our civic responsibilities. Christians are to bring to bear the influence of the values of the City of God to the City of man by the full exercising of their civic duties (Coslon, www.virtueonline.org, 2018, 18 July). One of the remarkable ways of achieving this is by an active participation in elections where the Christian exercises the right to vote and be voted. Christians are however to ensure they vote candidates that will guarantee the practice of their faith in freedom without prejudice to subscribers to other beliefs.

The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace maintains that the exercise of our civic responsibilities is a participation which is an implication of subsidiarity. By this, Christians, either as individuals or groups, directly or indirectly, contribute in a series of activities to the cultural, economic, political and social life of the civil community to which they belong. The Council asserts that civic participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all and sundry with a very high sense of responsibility and for the common good. Participation in civil activities is one of the pillars of the democratic order which is participatory in its very nature (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 189).

### **7. Dynamics of Vox Populi, Vox Dei in Election**

*Vox populi, vox Dei* is a Latin maxim meaning, "the voice of God is the voice of the people" (www.merriam-webster.com, 2018). It is believed that God has spoken when the people have spoken by a process of a free, fair and credible election. When men, enlightened by truth, have collectively exercised their freedom in the choice of a good leader in an election free of manipulation, it is considered that God has spoken. The process of the choice of Saul as first king of

Israel, the choice of Mathias as replacement of Judas Iscariot, the choice of the seven deacons, all show God's respect for the *vox populi*. In all these, we see that God shows respect for the fundamental right of human freedom. None was done through prophetic declaration.

The Church similarly, encourages citizens to participate actively in the election of those who govern them and to present themselves to be elected. Participation in elections is a fundamental human right. This is the education the so-called prophets need to acquire to transmit same to their members rather than campaigning under the guise of prophecy. If God has chosen to recognise, respect and approve the people's choices of leaders in the scriptures, the so-called men of God should equally respect this freedom by avoiding any acts that will undermine it in relation to elections.

What every religious leader simply needs to do is to honestly educate his/her followers to exercise their voting right in good conscience in line with the values that promote national interest and cohesion. They are to vote those candidates that have respect for human and religious freedom, that will bring peace and security in our nation, provide quality education across the poles of the nation. They are to educate their members to elect only leaders who are God fearing and have the courage to defend truth and justice for all. They are to vote in good conscience "in accordance with the highest human values without allowing themselves to be pressured or influenced by anyone through bribes, threats, self-interest, etc" ("Vedemecum for Electors in Nigeria," 2018, p. 56). The people are expected to have good knowledge of the candidates and their track records from those who know them, the internet, credible media sources and debates. They are never to vote a candidate who supports or is tended towards policies that are intrinsically evil ("Vedemecum for Electors in Nigeria," 2018, p. 60). The people's individual choices at elections must be made out of freedom. it must be done out of the conviction that the candidate has the capacity to harness the resources of the nation towards the provision of the basic human needs of food, clothing and shelter and the other social amenities.

The people must not be cajoled under guise of prophecy into voting a candidate. That is a moral infringement on the freedom of the individual. It also a direct affront on the wisdom of God who made each human being in freedom and did not take it away even after the fall. Electoral prophecy is an indication that the person prophesying does not understand the concept of moral freedom and the mind of God towards it. In his divine wisdom, God decided to endow men and women with the precious gift of wisdom, and by the exercise of it, he shall hold men and women accountable at judgment.

## **8. Moral Theological Concerns on Electoral Prophecies in Nigeria**

The phenomenon of electoral prophets has very dire moral theological implications on Nigerian Christian electorates and Christianity itself. There are serious damages this phenomenon bears on the faith of followers of such prophets and the integrity of Christianity as a whole. And these should be a source of concern for all well meaning Christians.

Some of the electoral prophets down play the place and right of freedom of choice among their followers in matters of elections and in general decision making. Electoral prophets know that their followers are ignorant of this right or that they are gullible and they do not make effort to educate them. They simply feast on their ignorance and gullibility to sway them into voting along the trends of their so-called prophecies. Christianity brings liberation and emphasises the centrality of freedom of choice under the guide of an illumined conscience. The version of Christianity practiced by these electoral prophets is an affront on this fundamental Christian value.

Very worrisome is the situation where some of these electoral prophets expose their ignorance about God's respect for human freedom and the fact that God does not wish that this freedom is not infringed on under any guise. A true prophet who is enlightened by the truth of God's Word gets liberated from his ignorance and in turn liberates his followers from the shackles of their ignorance. It is evident that some of the Christian electoral prophets cannot be said to have adequate understanding of the meaning and functions of a prophet. Electoral prophets need to open up to knowledge so as to conquer their ignorance and help their followers achieve same.

In most cases, the so-called prophets only speak in favour of their preferred candidates. It is noteworthy that some of the contestants visit some ministers or their places of worship and make donations and thereby endear themselves to the so-called men of God. So, what the so-called man of God does under the guise of electoral prophecy is actually a declaration of personal approval, support and open campaign for his/her preferred candidate(s) to gullible followers. Such declarations make their gullible followers believe that the candidate "prophesied" in favour of is the one anointed by God. Surely, it gives the candidate an advantage since the gullible voters will naturally follow the direction of their so-called Man of God. The followers feel guilty of disobeying God if they do not vote according to such "prophecy". In Nigeria, it is common to see "so called prophets" who prophesied for a particular candidate struggling to be close to the corridors of power. Some, whose expectations got dashed complained of supporting a candidate to win elections but abandoned him and his people without coming to show appreciation (www.proshareng.com, 2021, 20 May). It is morally unjustifiable to deceive the

people into voting a preferred candidate for personal interest under the guise of prophesy.

There is no gainsaying that most of the so-called men of God use their electoral prophecies to attract popularity and legitimacy. For those whose predictions come true, we see playbacks displayed in their places of worship and circulated on social media. The motive is to get people to believe in them as “authentic prophets of God” and attracts new members to their Churches and thereby swelling their income base. In this case, the so-called prophet does not speak for God but for his or her pocket. This is morally condemnable.

Electoral prophecy is a form of electoral inducement. It sways the wills of the electorates by inducing them toward a particular candidate. It is closely related to vote buying. Whereas vote buying involves the use of money as the factor of inducement, electoral prophecy uses divine claims as the factor of inducement. It sways the electorates into voting for the anointed candidate of the so-called man of God. This is a dangerous ill which both the electoral prophets and the electorates don't seem to understand its far reaching implications.

Electoral prophets clearly exhibit their lack of understanding and appreciation of the God-given capacity inherent in human beings to make good choices. This capacity is by virtue of the fact that each human being is the image and likeness of God. What each person simply needs is the knowledge and guidance to make credible decisions in truth and justice. The capacity in every human being to independently make choices and decisions is inherent and needs to be enhanced. It is not to be overridden by personal claims of divine revelation that are inconsistent with God's purpose and intent. The genuine prophet enlightens and strengthens people's capacity to make personal decisions. A minister that does not recognise this capacity and plays the electoral oracle keeps his people gullible.

A number of elections in Nigeria are won using foul means like rigging, vote buying, intimidation, etc, is morally illegitimate and legally contestable. The phenomenon of electoral prophets introduces confusion in this kind of situation in the event that the candidate prophesied in favour of is the beneficiary of the dishonest victory. The gullible followers are left with the belief that the win was divine whereas it came by dishonest means. It is a Christian moral principle that the end does not justify the means. They two must be good. Electoral prophets jeopardize this principle.

The situation where different men of God give conflicting electoral prophecies introduces another confusion, perhaps more serious because it is damaging on the Christian faith. It casts doubt on the possibility of such prophecies coming

from an all wise God who cannot contradict himself. In the event that an electoral prophecy does not come to pass, it casts doubts in the mind of the gullible Christians on the reliability of both God and the so-called prophet. In this way, electoral prophecies cause grave injury to the faith of gullible Christians. Conflicting prophecies constitute a grave scandal and expose the Christian faith to ridicule. This is scandalous.

Most worshiping congregations comprise members of different political affiliations and parties with their preferred candidates for each election. The declaration by an electoral prophet is a decision for a particular candidate. A declaration by an electoral prophet in favour of his/her preferred candidate is a declaration against those in other political parties and thereby create tensions and division. Such declaration surely leaves those he/she does not favour their candidates bitter. Those who venture to show disagreement with the man of God are looked upon as rebels and disloyal subordinates.

The phenomenon of electoral prophets brings the ministers' credibility to question. Christian ministers are supposed to play a fatherly role to all. That is why the Church has always insisted that her ministers should maintain a position of neutrality on the choice of candidates. Ministers who constitute themselves into electoral oracles take sides by their declarations in favour of a particular party or candidate thereby jeopardising their neutrality. Also, the electoral prophet who favours a candidate for certain gains is nothing different from professional prophets.

Reasonable questions could be asked as to why electoral prophets give the impression that God should be so much preoccupied with issues of who wins an election in a democracy after giving man the freedom of choice? Why will God choose to undermine man's freedom of choice in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century of enlightenment when he did not do so in biblical times? Furthermore, the phenomenon raises the question on why God could possibly preoccupy himself with affairs such as choosing a leader for men after giving them the capacity to accomplish same?

## **9. Conclusion: Setting an Agenda for the Nigerian Nation**

This article does not in any way argue that God approves of the people's choice at all times. The case of David's choice as king of Israel (1Sam 16:1-13) is a clear example where God went ahead to make his choice for Israel, different from human conjectures. The article rather argues that God, at certain instances, showed respect for the will of his ancient people in the choices of some of their leaders. This is a clear indication that God respects the capacity and freedom of choice he gave human beings. If God could recognise and respect this human freedom of choice in those ancient days, then it cannot be any different.

Moreover, humanity has grown far more advanced and enlightened and has developed leadership models overtime. Christian ministers must recognise this reality in today's democratic world. They must make efforts to conquer the vestiges of their exaggerated theocratic leadership model in modern day. They must listen to God speaking in a new way through the people in the ballot boxes. Such ministers must, in line with the recommendations of Vatican II, learn the act of "scrutinizing the signs of the times" in the light of the gospel and move appropriately.

Religious leaders must realise that their duty is to enlighten their followers on those qualities to look out for in a candidate to be elected. These include; honesty, intelligence, courage, creativity, competence, fairness, trustworthy, respect for human life and fundamental human rights, tolerance, sense of consultation, listening ear, etc. They are also to expose the people to the techniques and steps to use in identifying credible candidates for elections such as; gathering information about a candidate, analysing a candidate's stand over issues, inquiries about a candidate's leadership abilities, public perception of a candidate, etc. After the enlightenment, church ministers should allow their followers to exercise their freedom at the polls. Church ministers need to endeavour to conquer their ignorance and in turn help their followers to conquer theirs. They need to stop feeding on the ignorance of their followers.

This article therefore, challenges all those charged with the duty of leading God's people in Nigeria on the need for them to realise that their work goes far beyond rhetoric and predictions. It requires them to guide the people in the light of the moral theological principles of the Christian faith which basically involves the building up of the faith of the people and calling them to a conversion of heart. Hence, they must seek to be enlightened by the divine truth of the Word of God based on authentic interpretations. This was the agenda of the biblical prophets and that is the agenda of the authentic prophets of God in Nigeria.

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