

**“Salt and Light” in a Decaying and Darkening World:
Accentuating a Life of Integrity for Christian Politicians
in Nigeria in the Light of Matthew 5:13-16.**

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Abstract

Politics is the machinery of governance, by which nations are administered. Naturally, political leadership is expected to provide good governance for the masses, whereby they will enjoy the good of their land. However, this has not been so in Nigeria as the political domain is infested with series of abnormalities typical among which are corruption in high places, electoral violence and malpractices, political assassination, deception, mediocrity and mischief to mention a few. Ironically, many of the Christians who have operated within this domain, especially in the last twenty years of the new civilian dispensation, have demonstrated the “if you cannot beat them, join them” mentality. In this regard, this paper explores how Christian politicians can be salt to help preserve and season a decaying world such as ours and be light in the middle of the political darkness that presently envelopes the nation. It reiterates that only a deliberate exemplification of the word of God, especially as it obtains in Matthew 5:13-16 can boost integrity among Christian politicians. In this context, they must strive to demonstrate love to God and their fellow humans, imbibe the culture of accountability, shun materialism, eschew selfishness and hate violence. The paper adopted the descriptive approach, coupled with qualitative analysis of existing literature.

Key Words: Salt and Light, Decaying and Darkening world, Accentuating, Life of Integrity, Christian Politicians, Matthew 5:13-16

Introduction

Politics as the machinery of governance, by which nations are administered, is an integral and indispensable part of every nation. It is put in place to provide good governance so as to enable the greatest number of the citizenry enjoy the greatest good in the land. Whenever it is nobly practiced, it affords the populace a time of peace, tranquillity and prosperity, but the reverse is always the case whenever it is shabbily handled. Naturally therefore, it is always the aspiration of the people to have good governance and enjoy the best of life from it. Omoregbe, speaking along this line underscores the importance of political leadership providing dividend of democracy for the masses. According to him, both Plato and Aristotle agreed that the purpose of the state is to provide man with what he needs to enable him live “the good life” and be happy.²⁶⁸ However, this has not always been so, especially in Africa, as governance in the continent has presented the common man with more of harrowing experiences, thus making life more difficult for the people on a continuous basis.

Specifically in Nigeria, the political domain is infested with series of abnormalities typical among which are electoral violence, corruption in high places, deception, unfulfilled promises, treachery, mediocrity and mischief to mention a few. This has over the decades created the impression of politics being a dirty game in which only dirty people should be involved. Consequently, many well-meaning Nigerians who should be involved for the benefit of the nation have distanced themselves from it. The result today is that mediocrity thrives within

²⁶⁸Joseph Omoregbe, *Social-Political Philosophy and International Relations*, Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited, 2007, 19

the Nigerian political space, foisting much privation on the masses that they presently yearn for responsible leadership.

Ironically, many of the Christians who have operated within this realm, especially in the last twenty years of the new civilian dispensation, have demonstrated the “if you cannot beat them, join them” mentality, that presently, it is quite difficult to distinguish between Christians and non-Christians within the political space in Nigeria. In the observation of Danladi Musa, Christian politicians have performed below expectations. According to him, “one would have expected to see more openness and honesty being displayed in politics and see improved performance and impact of government agencies and ministries being headed by committed Christians, but instead of making a difference, many of these Christians have aligned with those who corruptly enriched themselves.”²⁶⁹

In the same vein, Samuel Kunhiyop baring his mind on the issue describes it thus:

Many Christians seem to accept or even benefit from corruption. For example, although some 50% of the Nigerian population claims to be Christian, corruption is still rampant. Christians in high places in government have been accused of corruption and a number of Christians have been found guilty of corrupt practices. A panel report indicated that between September 1988 to June 1991, \$12.4 billion in Nigerian oil reserves disappeared into dedicated and special accounts. The late head of state General Abacha and his cronies stole billions of naira. Many Christians were implicated in this naked theft and ruin of the Nigerian economy. ... One might conclude that

²⁶⁹Danladi Musa, *Christians in Politics: How Can they be Effective*, Bukuru: African Christian Textbooks, 2009, 58,

the church has lost its ability to be salt and light of the world.²⁷⁰

The scenarios as described by Musa and Kunhiyop above had left the populace disillusioned and wondering whether the country will ever come to enjoy responsible leadership. However, the biblical injunction on such issue is clear, especially as it is spelt out in Matthew 5:13-16. This scriptural portion admonishes Christians to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. In this context, Don Fleming explains that just as salt can be used to preserve food from decay and give good flavour, so also Christians are to influence their world for good. They should have similar effect upon the world as they resist the corrupting influence of sin. Similarly, they are to be light for God in this dark world.²⁷¹ In the light of this, this paper explores how the Christians can be salt to help preserve and season a decaying world such as ours and light in the middle of the political darkness that presently envelopes the Nigeria nation by exemplifying the words of Christ as obtainable in Matthew 5:13-16. It adopted the descriptive approach, coupled with qualitative analysis of existing literature.

Nigeria: Politics Devoid of Integrity

The political space in Nigeria is riddled with vices of various degrees and dimensions. First is electoral violence and malpractices. Democratic election is the beacon upon which a genuine democracy flourishes. Scholars in the field of political science have continually underscored the importance of election within democratic process. Dowse and Hughes defines election as a procedure recognized by the rule of an organization, be it a state, club, voluntary organization or whatever, where all, or some, of the members choose a smaller number of persons from among them to hold an office or offices of

²⁷⁰ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, Nairobi: Hippo Books, 2008, 169

²⁷¹ Don Fleming, *Bridge Bible Commentary*, Brisbane: Bridge Publications, 1994, 415

authority within that organization. Specifically as it has to do with democratic governance, it is the process of reaching consensus on the representation of the citizen of a particular state in public offices. Elections are not only democracy's ceremonial events; they can also be its most definitive and character defining events.²⁷²

Powell in his view explains that the mainstay of democracy is competitive elections taking place at regular intervals. According to him, citizens engage in elections for seven reasons: as a means of appointing people to political offices; holding politicians accountable; expressing discontent; pointing the route they want policies to take; placing issues on the public agenda; occasioning public debates; and choosing delegates or trustees. Powell therefore describes elections as the most viable instruments for the perpetuation and survival of democracy.²⁷³ In the words of Oyesomi and Oyero, it is a formal decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office and it has been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracies operate since the 17th century. It is the means or a vehicle by which people make choices about who should represent them, as well as express preference for given policies.²⁷⁴

Elections are generally conceived as a means of peaceful change of leadership in societies. In democratic societies, elections empower ordinary citizens to choose among contestants for offices and as well encourage participation in governance. The issue of election has become very important in political discourse because it constitutes the pivot upon which rest the survival of democracy. Election therefore is an important element of democracy because it enables the individual

²⁷²Dowse, R.E. & Hughes, J.A., *Political Sociology*, Toronto: John Wiley & Sons., 1983, 322

²⁷³ G. B. Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, 60

²⁷⁴ K. Oyesomi, & O. Oyero, "Newspaper Coverage of Women's Participation in the 2011 General Elections in Nigeria", *The Nigerian Journal of Communication*, Volume 10, No. 1. 2012, 146.

to express a sense of belonging to a political system; provides forum for the discussion of public opinion on important issue and allows an exchange of influence between leaders and the electorate.²⁷⁵ In a democratic society, elections are mostly the conventional means of promoting some citizens to positions of leadership in a republic. Presidential campaigns and elections are more vigorous as they determine who is selected as the head of state and to whom the majority of people would entrust guardianship of their sovereignty.²⁷⁶

With this crucial role of election within the democratic process, one would have expected that leaders would ensure that it is always free and fair, but the reverse is the case in Nigeria. In a free and fair election, the masses should be given the freedom to elect their representatives. There should be no intimidation or harassment of any sort. In the same vein, electoral officers must be honest and allow the will of the people to prevail. However, this cannot be said to be the case in Nigeria since 1999, as the do-or-die mentality introduced into the conduct of elections by politicians had turned it into a tug of war, where lives and properties are destroyed. Consequently, the Nigerian masses usually look forward to the period of election with apprehension.

Virtually all the elections so far conducted have been characterized by violence and malpractices. Violence and electoral malpractices cannot be divorced one from the other, as the former is the tool by which the latter is perpetrated. Electoral malpractice could be said to have occurred when acceptable standards, principles and procedures that generally bestow credibility on elections are violated and replaced with falsehood, cheating and manipulation. In the words of Ezeani, electoral malpractices are illegalities perpetrated either by government, officials responsible for the conduct of elections,

²⁷⁵B. O. Nwaozuzu, *Election in a Democracy: Significance and Strategies*, Enugu: Omega Publishers, 2009, 18-22.

²⁷⁶S. I. Lindberg, *Democracy and Elections in Africa*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006, 1-23

political parties, groups or individuals with sinister motive to influence an election in favour of a candidate(s) or a political party.²⁷⁷

Scholars who have written on democratic elections in Nigeria attested to the fact that they were mostly marred with malpractices. Moses Aluaigba in his assessment of the five elections conducted up till 2015 reports that despite the fact that these elections were closely monitored by domestic and international observers, they arouse varied contestations from Nigerian politicians and voters, and they were all marred by varying degrees and calibres of malpractices.²⁷⁸ In other words, one principal anomaly within the political space in Nigeria is malpractices usually connected with the electoral process. These include intimidation of voters, vote buying, snatching of ballot boxes and stuffing of it with illegal votes.

Corruption is another abnormality within the Nigeria political space. The return to civil rule in 1999 was greeted with widespread euphoria. However, in its over twenty years of uninterrupted democracy, the country has witnessed an upsurge of corruption which has continued to undermine national development. Corruption is a term difficult to define as it means different thing to different people. In the words of El-Rufai, corruption covers a wide range of social misconduct, which ranges from massive fraud, extortion, embezzlement, bribery, nepotism, bestowing of favours to friends (using official machinery and resources), rigging of elections, abuse of public property, the leaking of official government secret, sale of expired and defective goods like drugs, food, electronics and spare parts to the public.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷E. O. Ezeani, "Electoral Malpractice in Nigeria: The Case of 2003 General Elections," *Nigerian Journal of Social Sciences (NJSS)* Vol. 3, No 1, (July 2005), 31

²⁷⁸Moses T. Aluaigba, "Democracy Deferred: The Effects of Electoral Malpractice on Nigeria's Path to Democratic Consolidation", *Journal of African Elections*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2016, 142

²⁷⁹N. A. El-Rufai, "Is Liberal Democracy Encouraging Corruption and Corrupt Practices: The Privatization Process in Nigeria" *The Nigerian Social Scientist*. Vol 6 No. 2, 2003.

Ogunewu citing Dike identified the forms of corrupt activities prevalent in Nigeria to include political, bureaucratic, and electoral corruption; embezzlement and bribery. According to him, political corruption takes place at the highest levels of political authority. It is corruption of greed and affects the manner in which decisions are made. Such manipulates and distorts political institutions and the due process in order to achieve personal gains. Bureaucratic corruption occurs in the implementation of policies. This is corruption at the local level. It is a type of corruption the citizens encounter daily in places like the hospitals, schools, local licensing offices, with the police, and tax authorities. It includes petty corruption of needs that occurs when one obtains a business from the public sector through inappropriate procedure. Electoral corruption includes purchase and sales of votes, snatching of ballot boxes, promises of office or special favours, coercion, intimidation and interference with freedom of election. Corruption in the offices involves sales of administrative positions, judicial decision, or governmental appointment, either for cash or any other considerations. Other forms of corruption include embezzlement (theft of public resources by public officials) and bribery (persuade to act improperly by a gift of money).²⁸⁰

This paper however speaks more of “financial corruption.” This is the act of embezzlement of public funds, self-enrichment or in simple term, the siphoning or theft of public funds into private pockets. Financial corruption also manifests itself in lack of accountability, an atrocity which has perpetually bedevilled the Nigerian political space. Accountability in this sense “implies that politicians and other public-office-holders voluntarily give account of their stewardship to the

²⁸⁰Michael A. Ogunewu, “Repositioning Religion in the Campaign Against Corruption in Nigeria, ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies, Vol. XLVII/1&2, June and September 2015, 92; see also V. E. Dike, “Managing the Challenges of Corruption in Nigeria”, Centre for Social Justice and Human Development (CSJHD), Sacramento, California, (2003)
http://www.bribenigeria.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/managing_corruption_in_Nigeria.pdf.- accessed on 17 July, 2020.

populace who have elected them into office and whom they have sworn to serve in whatever capacity.”²⁸¹ It implies that one reports to or informs an individual or a group about ones actions, thought and attitudes. It also carries with it the idea of submission. To be accountable is to be responsible and the Bible indicates that God expects accountability from his people on a regular basis.

Accountability is highly necessary within our national polity for our economic survival as a nation, because without it, the “hue and cry” about eradication of corruption will amount to mere illusion.²⁸² Also, the much expected dividend of democracy will forever remain a mirage if those in power at any point in time cannot be held accountable for their acts, decisions, policies and expenditure while in office.²⁸³ However, this virtue of accountability has been relegated to the background today within the Nigerian political space, as politicians go in and out of offices without giving account of their stewardship. This has in a way entrenched a culture of corruption within our national polity. In his bid to tackle the alarming and embarrassing trend of financial corruption by politicians the Obasanjo administration initiated two anti-corruption agencies - the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). Today, despite the existence of these two agencies, financial corruption had continued unabated within the Nigerian political space.

Lastly, is the phenomenon of political deception, which has become the stock-in-trade of many politicians in Nigeria. This often manifested through outright lying, failed promises, trickery and malicious manipulations of the masses by the political elite for personal gains. Naturally, politicians seeking elections into political

²⁸¹ Michael Ogunewu & Abiodun Adesegun“ Biblical Teachings on Accountability: A Challenge to Christian Politicians and Public Office-Holders’’, *Asia Africa Journal of Missions and Ministry*, Vol. 4, 2011, 28-29

²⁸² *ibid*, 29

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 29

offices will during electioneering campaigns make promises to the electorates; however it has become the habit of Nigerian politicians to renege on their promises, after winning elections.

The anomalies hereby discussed have foisted series of privation on the populace. Today social structures are collapsing and home life deteriorating. The citizens groan under various forms of service failures. The power sector is epileptic, health sector is sick; the roads are in shambles; education is in disarray, and provision of housing is next to nothing. There is hardship, insecurity, and poverty is widespread across the land. Treasury looting is fast becoming the norm among the political class and the sufferings being foisted on the masses is unimaginable. Ironically, while some are struggling to make ends meet on a meagre \$2.00 dollar per day, others are being reported on daily basis to have stacked and continue to stack billions of naira, dollars and other foreign currencies in private buildings, water tanks, and other awkward places within the country.²⁸⁴ More than ever before, ethnic and religious tensions are heightening by the day and observers are seriously warning that the nation is on the brinks of collapse and something concrete needs to be done to avert the disaster.

Integrity, its Demands and the Nigerian Politicians

In the face of this disenchantment, we cannot but ask the question again and again, what then is the problem with Nigeria? Why has the political realm and by extension the entire public sphere degenerated so badly? The answer is simple. Nigeria is a victim of irresponsible leadership. Without wise leadership, a nation is in trouble; but with good counsellors there is safety (Proverbs 11:13 TLB). Chinua Achebe lamented that “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. According to him, “there is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong

²⁸⁴ Michael Adeleke Ogunewu, “Fair Distribution of National Resources for Wealth Creation and Healthy Living through Stomach Infrastructure Programme”, *Journal of Creation and Environmental Care (JCEC)*, Vol. 5, 2018, 27.

with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership”.²⁸⁵ Speaking further he explains that “Nigeria is not beyond change, (it) can change today if she discovers leaders who have the will, the ability and the vision”,²⁸⁶ because “to pull her back and turn her around is clearly beyond the contrivance of mediocre leadership. It calls for greatness”.²⁸⁷

The emphasis of Chinua Achebe here is that Nigeria suffers because of the dearth of credible and committed persons at the helms of affair of the nation and Nigerians should not expect any change for the better under the present crop of leaders. If we expect a change for the better, there is need for a shift from the present style of mediocre, self-centred, and insensitive form of leadership, into a more responsible, selfless, focused and competent form. In other words, the nation needs credible leaders to bail her out of the present predicaments. Such leaders would be people with integrity who possessed the will and sincerity to turn the nation around and change the prevailing dangerous trend for the better. However, since charity is expected to begin at home, this paper places the responsibility of spearheading this noble task at the door steps of Christians within the political space. This is borne out of the fact that having encountered the Lord, they are expected to be dependable and their lifestyle worthy of emulation. The Bible is emphatic of the fact that there is expected to be a visible difference between Christians and people of the world. 2nd Corinthians 5:17 read thus: When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun (TLB).

²⁸⁵ Chinua Achebe, *An Image of Africa and the Trouble with Nigeria*, London: Penguin Books, 1983, 22

²⁸⁶ *ibid*, 23

²⁸⁷ *ibid*, 31

It is imperative that leaders lead with integrity, honesty and values. What then is integrity and what do we expect from a man or woman of integrity? Means in his description of integrity states that, “integrity comes from the Latin term *integritas*, meaning soundness . . . the quality or condition of being whole or undivided . . .’ Integrity embraces uncommon devotion to truth, unyielding opposition to falseness, and unvarying commitments to ethics, morality and virtue.²⁸⁸

According to Huberts, integrity is seen as the quality of acting in accordance or in harmony with relevant moral values, norms, and rules. He explains that “in judging the integrity of a government minister, one should concentrate on his or her behaviour as a politician; hence, a first element of integrity is whether the minister is consistent and whole, not changing viewpoint every day or saying one thing and doing something else.²⁸⁹ Bauta Motty citing Henry Clouds defines integrity as the quality of being honest; having moral principles and moral uprightness. He states further that it is the quality characterized by honesty, reliability, and fairness, developed in a relationship over time. As a moral or ethical strength, it is about character, honesty or sound principle. It is the quality of honour, honourableness, incorruptibility and uprightness. It is also about being free from (moral) defects or flaws: durability, firmness, solidity, soundness, stability, strength and wholeness. Most simply, integrity is a synonym of honesty and an antonym of hypocrisy.²⁹⁰

The above explanations point basically in the direction of moral values. Consequently, one could conclude that integrity has to do with the individual holding moral values in high esteem in the ordering of his life or whatever he has to do. It is aspiring to be of good behaviour

²⁸⁸ James E. Means, *Effective Pastors for a New Century*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, 17.

²⁸⁹ L. W. J. C. Huberts, “Integrity: What it is and Why it is Important”, *Public Integrity Journal*, 0: 1–15, 2018, 3-4

²⁹⁰ Bauta D. Motty, *Dividends of Integrity*, Jos: Yakson Printing Press, 2016, 35,36

and doing the right thing at all times, even when nobody is watching. It is a practice of being honest and showing a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values. Integrity is all about the character of the individual. It consists of those characters of an individual which are consistently considerate, compassionate, transparent, honest, and ethical. Individuals that have integrity build trust in their relations with others; they will not twist facts or falsify financial records for personal gains; they are willing to stand up for and defend what is right; and they will be careful to keep promises. They are those who can beat their chest and say “my hands are clean” or “I have no skeleton in my cupboard.” People of integrity means what they say and never say what they do not mean; they are those who will not soil their fingers in whatever is committed to their care. Such people naturally win the respect and trust of others.

Two models will suffice here. The first from the biblical, while the other is from historical account. Samuel functioned as a prophet and judge in Israel throughout his lifetime. When he came to the leadership, Israel was at its lowest moral and spiritual level. Under the Judges everyone felt free to do as he pleases and this with its attendant moral decadence plunge Israel into chaos. However, under Samuel, a healthier spiritual climate developed in Israel. He sincerely served Israel that at the end of his service, he expressly challenged the people, to testify against him, should in case he had defrauded or oppressed anyone. He asked thus:

Let me ask this, Have I ever taken anyone’s ox or donkey or forced you to give me anything? Have I ever hurt anyone or taken a bribe to give an unfair decision? Answer me as the Lord and his chosen king can hear you. And if I have done any of these things, I will give it all back. “No,” the Israelites answered. “You’ve never cheated us in any way!” (1st Samuel 12:3-4).

The Israelites responded to Samuel's challenge with a 'no'. They proclaimed that he never defrauded anyone in any way. Such is the life of integrity and accountability expected of every Christian politician and public office holder.

The middle ages is being referred to as the dark ages of the church because of the level of corruption, worldliness, errors and atrocities that attended the lives of church officials of the time. Popes, Bishops, Cardinals all did as they pleased and as many as dare point out the errors were maltreated and some exterminated. One of such was John Hus of Bohemia (1373-1415). Hus falls within the group being referred to as the earlier or pre-reformers. These were people who appeared on the scene before the Protestant Reformation. They tried to point out the errors of the church with the aim of bringing her back to the path of honour, but their efforts availed little or nothing. Hus preached against the errors of the church and was summoned to Constance to explain his teaching, which the church considered heretical. He came to Constance relying on the 'safe conduct' granted by Emperor Sigismund. A safe conduct is an assurance that the accused would be allowed to return home, if not found guilty. However, the safe conduct granted by the emperor was violated. Some powerful officials prevailed on the emperor convincing him that he was "perfectly at liberty not to keep faith with a heretic," and that the council, being above the emperor, could free him from his word."²⁹¹ The emperor therefore reneged on his word and John Hus was burnt.

Such a scenario would have played out at Worms in Germany during the trial of Martin Luther, but the emperor of the time, Charles V saved the situation. When Luther was summoned to Worms, like Hus, the Emperor gave him a safe conduct – an assurance that nothing evil will happen to him if he is not found guilty at the end of the trial.

²⁹¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, Phoenix: Inspirational Books, 1978, 95

Luther was not found guilty and he was to be allowed to return home. That notwithstanding, Aleander the papal legate preferred to have Luther burnt at Worms and he would have had his way, but for the integrity demonstrated by the Emperor. As it was in the case of John Hus, Aleander tried to coarsen the emperor into believing that “no faith need be kept with heretics”, but the emperor was resolved to be a man of his words. If the emperor had agreed with him that would have been the end of Luther because he would have been burnt, just as it happened to John Hus at Constance. However, the emperor in resolving to maintain his integrity said: “No, I cannot agree to that. If honour be banished from the hearts of all men, it must remain with princes. I would not like to blush like Sigismund at Constance.”²⁹² In other words, if people refused to be honourable or uphold their integrity at all times, those within the ruling class should endeavour to be. Though the emperor was not in agreement with Luther, he chose to uphold his integrity, by not withdrawing the safe conduct extended to him.

This is integrity of a high order, the type that is expected of politicians in this dispensation. In this context, if politicians are always resolute to be people of their words, they would have shunned the habit of renegeing on promises made during electioneering campaigns. However, it is glaring that defaulting in electoral promises has become the ‘logo’ of many of Nigerian politicians, including the Christians.

Matthew 5:13-16 as Potential Tool

This scriptural portion is part of the Sermon on the Mount and the very fact that it represents Christ’s first sermon recorded in the Gospel of Matthew underscores its uniqueness. According to scholars this sermon laid bare what is expected to be the norm in the kingdom of God which Jesus Christ came to initiate and which he expects his disciples to practically apply to their lives. This portion because of its

²⁹² Virgil Robertson, *Luther the Leader*, Accra: Adventist Press, n.d., 64

uniqueness had attracted the comments of many Bible scholars. However, all the commentators points in the same direction. The emphasis is that Christ in using the metaphor of salt and light as a lifestyle for his disciples underscores the fact that there is expected to be a marked difference between them and the people of the world.

Kunhiyop in his contribution states that Christians in many poverty-stricken countries have failed to obey Christ's call to be salt and light, and have instead contributed to the exploitation of the poor. However, that as it may be, we need to hear what Christ's call means and it is that Christians are to be fundamentally different from non-Christians; we must permeate and influence non-Christian society by retaining our distinctiveness. This is because, we cannot bring good news to the poor unless we ourselves are good.²⁹³ Another author Stanley Haver speaking along the same line also emphasizes the need for Christians to function as agents for God in the world. He explains that to be called salt and light is a call for the believer to be visible. A community of Jesus that wants to be invisible cannot be considered disciples of His. Christians are to be distinct from the culture around them. This does not mean that those who follow Jesus should do so for mere show off, neither are they to be different just for the sake of it, but they are to be different to reflect the glory of Christ, who has brought them out of darkness into the marvellous light of God.²⁹⁴ What Haver is saying here is that Christians should endeavour to act as salt and light, preserving the world from decay and shining for God wherever they find themselves.

According to Dummelow, Christ in this text solemnly warns the believers that their manner of living must be higher or better than that of the world. They are to be salt of society. Salt preserves food from corruption, and seasons it, making it wholesome and acceptable. So the disciples are to purify society in which they live, setting a good

²⁹³Kunhiyop, 154

²⁹⁴Stanley Haverwas, *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible*, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006, 62-63.

example and counteracting every corrupt tendency. Invariably, for this purpose their Christianity must be genuine. Again, the disciples are to be the light of the world, being the representative of Him who is the world's true light (John 8:12). They are to enlighten the world as its teacher, through practical examples.²⁹⁵ Tokunbo Adeyemo in his comment is of the same mind with the rest. He states that the emphasis of this scriptural portion is that Christ's disciples are like salt, which purifies, preserves and enhances the flavour of food. They are expected to influence society and make the earth a better and more wholesome place. However, a disciple who refuses to live lives that are true to their calling will have no influence and will become unserviceable, worse than useless. Jesus disciples are also to be like light. It is the nature of light to illumine, to give guidance in darkness. In the same way, the disciple has to be visible and positively contribute to the well-being of the society.²⁹⁶ The emphasis of all the authors here is that Christians are to be people of unwavering integrity, making positive contributions to the world.

Christian Politicians Expected as Exemplars of our Time

For Christian politicians to function as salt and light in a decaying and darkening world such as ours there is the need for them to be consistent within their realm of service. This entails the cultivation of certain virtues. First, they must be people of high sounding spirituality. The term spirituality has been described variously as it means different thing to different people. Many view it in a religious context, while other does not. Oyemomi citing Mary N. MacDonald described it from both the secular and religious perspectives. From the secular perspective "spirituality is the concern of human beings with their appropriate relationships to the cosmos. It has to do with how the cosmos is conceived and what is considered appropriate in interacting

²⁹⁵J. R. Dummelow, *The One Volume Bible Commentary*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1936, 641.

²⁹⁶Tokunbo Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary*, Nairobi: World Alive Publishers, 2006, 1119-1120.

with the different worldviews of individuals and communities. Speaking further he states that spirituality is also regarded as a dimension of religious expression, which may be described by the sensibility and practices of schools, orders, or denomination within a tradition. That is to say each religion has a characteristic way of living in the world. Each embraces an attitude, and a set of disciplines that assists devotees in pursuing their relationship to the cosmos.²⁹⁷

Elkins et al, explains that spirituality comes from the Latin word *spiritus* meaning “breath of life.” It is a way of being and experiencing that comes through the awareness of a transcendental dimension and is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life, and whatever one considers being the ultimate.²⁹⁸ F. Antonisamy depicts Christian spirituality as a life led or influenced or guided or moved or inspired by the Spirit of Christ. It is the manner of living a totally religious existence, under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, in which the life of the Spirit of Christ in the individual shows itself in the historical conditions of concrete life. Citing John Ponnore he identified five essential characteristics of Christian spirituality, one of which he describes as the moulding of an entire person so as to give a concrete shape to his faith-life, his relationship with God and with men.²⁹⁹

In these definitions, spirituality is identified with certain core values which enhance quality of life for the individual and invariably extended to people around him. In other words, spirituality is conceived here as a process of acquiring values that enhances a disciplined life, which engenders cordial relationship of the individual with others within the society. In this context therefore it dictates that

²⁹⁷ Emmanuel Oyemomi, “Spirituality and Biblical Theology for Theological Education in Africa”, *OJOT: Ogbomoso Journal of Theology*, Volume XVI No. 2. 2011, 95

²⁹⁸ D. N. Elkins, L. J. Hedstrom, et al., “Toward Humanistic Phenomenological Spirituality”. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 28 (4), 1998, 5-18.

²⁹⁹ F. Antonisamy, *An Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, Bombay: The Bombay Saint Paul Society, 1999, 20-22

a man of sound spirituality must be such who should learn to be at peace with self and others. Such an individual if appointed into position of authority must be able to demonstrate commendable degree of performances which will produce the greatest good for the greatest number within the community.

However, this paper looks at spirituality basically from a purely Christian perspective. In this regard, Alister McGrath, explains that Christian spirituality describes how the Christian life is conceived and lived out. It is a full appropriation of the reality of God and a reflection on the whole Christian endeavour of achieving and sustaining relationship with God. According to him, this type of spirituality arises from a creative and dynamic synthesis of faith and life, forged in the crucible of the desire to live out the Christian faith authentically, responsibly, effectively and fully.³⁰⁰ It is the desire and practical effort of the individual to live in a manner considered acceptable to God and which by extension is a blessing to others.

In this context, Christian politicians should see themselves as minister of God to the people and see their offices as ministries committed into their hands by God as a means of caring for the masses who voted them into power. They are to be servant-leaders. Servant-leadership means a fundamental commitment to serving others with integrity and humility. However as explained elsewhere, the challenge of abysmal performance at work by some Christians always stem from the fact that they dichotomize between the work place and the Christian life. To them the world of work belongs to Caesar, while the Christian life belongs to God and they have the misconception that there is no meeting point between the two.³⁰¹ Wright speaking along this line disclosed that, such misconception had resulted in many living a

³⁰⁰A. E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999, 9

³⁰¹Michael Adeleke Ogunewu, "Godliness in the Marketplace: Bridging the Dichotomy between the World of Work and the Christian Life", *Practical Theology: Journal of Baptist College of Theology*, Vol. 7, 2014, 138.

dichotomized Christian life divorcing God and biblical values from issues of everyday affairs, especially the work life.³⁰²

This is an erroneous way to live. Christians should always see whatever is committed to their hands as ministry for the Lord. They should do their best to stand for that which is right on a continuous basis. Being in politics should be seen by them as being in the ministry for God and the people. They should endeavour to be God's representative wherever they find themselves at any point in time, by exemplifying Christian living as entrenched in the Bible. According to Winkie Pratney, the Bible gives laws for human relationships that have never been excelled or equalled and whenever it has been taught and lived, they have transformed nations. It has brought consideration for others, tenderness and compassion for the elderly, sick and needy. It has dignified womanhood and guided childhood.³⁰³

In this regard therefore, they are expected to be men and women of sound character. This entails being disciplined, organized in thinking and living, orderly, and modest. They should be above board in everything and their manner of living should be worthy of emulation. Zenas Bicket observes that character is never proved by a written or oral statement of beliefs, but rather it is demonstrated by the way one lives, by behaviour, by choices, by decisions. It is virtue lived.

Bad character or unethical behaviour has been compared to body odour. We are offended when we detect it in others, but we seldom detect our own. Spiritual leaders must always be sensitive to the fact that their actions speak a much louder sermon than their words from the pulpit.³⁰⁴ Speaking further, he states that we do not define a

³⁰²Chris Wright, "Following Jesus in the Globalized Market-place", David Parker (Ed) *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Volume 31, Number 4, October 2007

³⁰³WinkiePratney, *A Handbook for Followers of Jesus*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1977, 71

³⁰⁴Zenas J. Bicket, The Character of the Lord's Servant, in Thomas E. Trask , Wayde I. Goodall, and Zenas J. Bicket (ed) *The Pentecostal Pastor: A Mandate for the 21st Century*, Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1977, 110.

person of character as one who keeps the Ten Commandments, one, who does not murder, steal, or commit adultery, because these basic moral commitments are assumed. Instead, character involves practical demonstration of a life of integrity, forthrightness, and utter fruitfulness in relationships with all humans of God's creation. Christian character begins with honesty and openness before God.³⁰⁵ What is expected of spiritual leaders who serve on the pulpit is also expected of Christian politicians, because they are people of the spirit functioning for God in the secular domain.

Christian spirituality is usually a product of intimate relationship with God, which naturally produces many virtues in a believer. The first is that he/she will be engrossed in genuine love for God and fellow humans. This is the beginning of selfless service to humankind.

Genuine love for God will create in the individual a perpetual desire to obey God and care for fellow humans. In the words of Don Fleming, faith and obedience are just and basic to a relationship with God. If people claim to love God but do not trust in him or obey him, they are deceiving themselves. He explains that likewise, they are deceiving themselves if they claim to love God but do not love their fellow human beings. He thereby enjoins Christians to have the same loving concern for others as they have for themselves.³⁰⁶ Naturally, no-one will want to offend or occasion suffering for someone he loves, rather he would want to please him and make him comfortable from time to time.

Aspiring to please God and make fellow humans comfortable will invariably translate into selfless service to humanity, which will in turn ensure the welfare of the down trodden in the society. Observably, many of the acts of callousness perpetrated by politicians against the masses issues out of lack of love and concern for them.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 110

³⁰⁶ Don Fleming, *Bride Bible Directory*, Brisbane: Bridgeway Publications, 1990, 267

Today, we have a situation in Nigeria whereby leaders cannot patronize the health institutions which they established for the masses. This is obviously a product of a loveless heart. However, God expects Christian politicians to demonstrate love for and show concern for all people, not only because they want their votes, but also because this is what God expects of them.

Another value that will issue out of a heart of love is sincerity of purpose, as no one dare deceive someone he loves. Many vices issue out of dishonesty. Corruption, electoral malpractices, vote buying and selling; stealing of public funds, political deception and lack of accountability are all products of insincerity. According to Danladi Musa the attributes of love include: patience, kindness, lack of envy, humility, politeness, self-sacrifice, not delighting in evil, rejoices with the truth, and protection of the poor and innocent.³⁰⁷ It is the opinion of this paper that if Christian politicians will allow their hearts to be saturated with all the qualities identified above, through loving God and fellow humans, abnormalities within the Nigerian political domain will be reduced to the barest minimum.

Conclusion

The paper explores how integrity can be promoted among Christian politicians in Nigeria with Matthew 5:13-61 as reference point. Politics is an unavoidable part of the life of nations around the world. By it nations are administered for law and order to prevail. However, this indispensable part of a nation's life which is initiated purposely for administration and the comfortability of the masses had occasioned more of traumatic experiences for the people, as a result of the dearth of credible people at the helms of affair. This had resulted in the political space being infested with varying degrees and dimensions of anomalies. Observably however, the situation would probably have been better, if Christians who are expected to act as salt and light in a decaying and darkened world like ours had been faithful

³⁰⁷ Musa, 42

in their positions. The paper identified anomalies of the political realm to include electoral violence and malpractices, financial corruption, lack of accountability and political deception. It discusses how Christian politicians can imbibe biblical values to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world as contained in Matthew 5:13-16, so as to enable them demonstrate integrity in the execution of their assignments. It concludes with the emphasis that only by clinching to the word of God will they be able to mark themselves out from other politicians within the Nigerian political space.

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