

The Role of Christian Clerics in Promoting Good Governance and Development in Nigeria: Prophet Amos as a Model

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Abstract

Religion has been part of socio-political movements from the dawn of human consciousness. Thus, religion is a veritable tool for shaping and stirring of the human society. Therefore, clerics who invariably wield so much influence on adherents occupy key place in nation building. This is evident in both biblical era and the present-day Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the most religious countries in the world with Christianity forming about the largest religious group, yet the realities in the socio-political landscape of the nation leave much to be desired. This paper examines the role of Christian clerics in promoting good governance and development in Nigeria in the light of the prophetic engagement of

Amos in the eighth century Israel. The study adopts historical, comparative and evaluative approaches. The paper submits that the Christian clerical vocation in Nigeria is not effective in checking socio-political actions and the promotion of good governance and development due to partisanship and self-aggrandizement. The paper advocates the prophetic paradigm of the eighth century biblical prophecy which separated clerical vocation from partisan politics in order to function effectively in contributing to good governance and development.

Keywords: Clerics, Prophecy, Governance, Development Christianity.

Introduction

Nigeria is undoubtedly going through serious socio-political crisis. The currents in the socio-political space of the nation are such that if a drastic corrective approach is not taken there might either be failure of the state called Nigeria or a state of total anarchy in the very near future. These socio-political problems are midwifed by ungodly and anti-people leadership by the politicians and all those vested with the responsibility of governing the people and controlling the resources of the nation. The situation of Nigeria is a far cry from what befits a nation that is globally acknowledged as the most naturally endowed black country in the world. Apparently, there is leadership failure much as there is insensitive and irresponsible followership. Yet the leaders claim to be followers of one religion or the other, particularly Christianity and Islam.

Galadima and Turaki (2001,85) have rightly alluded to the fact that Nigeria ranks among the nations with the highest number of churches in the world. Christianity is not just one of the dominant religions in Nigeria but indeed one of the major religions in the world.

Generally, religion has proven to be one of the most powerful social forces in the world. It sits deep in human consciousness, potent enough to influence and shape the actions of people, including those in the realm of leadership. Adogbo (2005,1) has rightly captured the efficacy of religion in human affairs when he observed that the nexus between religion and the society is such that the history of the major socio-political and economic trends in many societies could be traced through the episode of their religious history. Christianity in particular has been a veritable tool for social, political and economic reengineering. Right from the time of its birth in Palestine, through its propagation in Europe down to the present age, Christianity has been manipulated as a factor in the socio-political space of different societies. For example, the history of ancient Israel revolved around religion; it was the hub of socio-political life

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of Europe from the time of the early Church Fathers, and the ill-manipulation triggered the Protestant Reformation. Also in the middle ages, the integrative force of Christianity was demonstrated in the Crusade against the Islamist invaders of Jerusalem. Similarly, Max Webber in his work titled *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* has demonstrated the extent to which religion, Christianity in particular, served as an impetuous factor for the economic advancement of Europe through the invigoration of the capitalist ideology. The influence of Christianity in the socio-political and economic engineering of societies cannot be undermined.

Like the situation was in Europe before the Protestant Reformation, championed by Martin Luther in the 16th century, the Church is mixing preposterously with politics in Nigeria and this has vitiated the watch-dog role of Christian clerics/prophets. The tendencies for rulers and even the ruled to become unscrupulous and self-seeking, thereby subjecting the masses to some form of social, economic and political misfortune have always existed in human history. The example of the people of ancient Israel is well documented in the Holy Bible just like other nations have their records of such scenarios too. In this regard, the socio-religious and politico-economic landscape of the eighth century Israel had much to share with the Nigerian situation. But prophecy or clerical vocation as an instrument of socio-political control was a different practice in ancient Israel from what it is in Nigeria, as indeed other parts of Africa. The eighth century Israel presented an era of radical apolitical prophetism as a means of checking the excesses of the rulers of the land and the people as well. One would have expected that Christian clerics/prophets would also imbibe the culture of the biblical prophets like Amos and engage in the promotion of good governance.

Against this backdrop, the paper examines the role of Christian prophets or clerics in promoting good governance in Nigeria in the light of the clerical engagement of the eighth century prophets, particularly prophet Amos in Israel. The historical, comparative and evaluative approaches were used in the study. The paper examines the concepts of good governance and development as well as the essence and imperatives of prophecy. The realities

of the Nigerian socio-political and economic situation are also examined. The social, political and economic background of the eighth century Israel is also discussed to show its similarity with that of present-day Nigeria. Then the political dimension of prophecy in both Israel and Nigeria are critically studied. The essence is to recommend a paradigm shift for Christian clerical/prophetic engagement vis-à-vis politics and governance in Nigeria.

Conceptual Understanding of the Term 'Prophet'

This study deliberately uses the term 'prophets' and 'clerics' interchangeably or as synonyms. This is because of the fluidity in the use of the term 'prophets' as a title for a wide range of religious leaders in the Old Testament. Those titled 'prophets' in the Old Testament were preeminent religious leaders across time, whose insightful teachings and principles were impactful in the historical development of the nation Israel and later Judah. There are three Hebrew words associated with the meaning of prophecy and the office or role of a prophet. They include נָבִיא (*navi'*, prophet) which is usually used in its simple understanding to mean one who is skilled or set apart for the act of foretelling events. Ugwueye (2014,1-2) explains that נָבִיא (*navi'*, prophet) refers to one who is called by God to serve as His mouthpiece or one who calls out to others in the name of God. In the context of the Old Testament or Israelite prophets, the phenomenon of calling is predicated upon Yahweh's action and volition. The second word is רֹאֶה (*ro'eh*, to see). It is an active participle of the Hebrew verb רָאָה (he saw). It applies to one who has the ability to see that which the ordinary man cannot see. Thus, it is appropriately translated as 'a seer'. The third word is חֹזֶה (*hozeh*,). This word does not have a particular English equivalent. It is sometimes rendered as 'prophet' as in Isaiah 3: 10 or as 'seer' in I Chronicles 29: 29. Apart from these strict senses associated with the three terms, they are so nuanced in the Old Testament that they applied to those outstanding religious leaders that Yahweh used to lead the Israelites. For example, Abraham and Moses were regarded as prophets of God in the Old Testament just as Jesus Christ was classified as a Jewish prophet.

Thus, prophets were clerics in a broad sense.

According to Ejenobo (2009: 138), prophets are identified by five basic roles, namely, interpretation of divine will, prediction of the future, advocacy, social criticism, and inspired leadership. Old Testament prophets were uniquely characterized by a sense of vocation or divine calling. This sense of calling is referred to as prophetic consciousness, which is the awareness that they are instruments, agents or messengers of יהוה (Yahweh). A prophet, therefore, is an individual who has or claims to have a divine contact and is thus commissioned or set apart to serve as a conveyor of divine will to the people or nation(s) which he has been sent to by the divinity. The view of Ugwueye (2014, 4-5) concerning the phenomenon of prophecy is apposite. He maintained that a prophet does not only concern himself with foretelling (prediction), but also engages in preaching, proclaiming, maintaining and developing the knowledge of the divine law and the consequences of disobeying it (forth-telling). He further submits that although prophets are divinely inspired, they equally preach some truths from what they know naturally from reason and experience. Prophetic proclamation revolves around the divine law as it applies to the human realm towards establishing god-fearing and stable society, even if the ultimate objective is eschatological.

In this paper, the term prophet is used to refer to Christian clerics who claim to have been called by God to communicate His message to the people. There are two categories of prophets, namely, the true and the false prophets. Both categories of prophets may claim to have been appointed by certain divinity, perhaps the same deity like Yahweh, but the major criteria for determining their genuineness are divine calling, operational ethics or principle, mode of operation, the prophetic agenda and the fulfillment of their prophecies. True prophets may deliver messages just like other false prophets, but what differentiates them is that true ones proclaim considerably more judgment, usually very stern judgment, on Israel's kings, leading citizens and the nation at large. Thus, genuine prophets are fearless, selfless, blunt and consistent and they operate under the penumbra of prophetic consciousness which is rooted in the aura of divine inspiration. False prophets on the other hand are self-seeking, inconsistent and may be motivated by

political and material interests rather than divine inspiration; hence the prophecy may not be fulfilled. The realities of the world of a prophet provide the context of the prophetic proclamation and underscore the essence. Thus, prophecy has a social dimension.

The Concepts of Good Governance and Development

The phrase 'good governance' may not have a straight-jacketed definition; but there are indices, features and elements that characterize it. Governance as used in this paper is in the context of mobilization, control and management of human and material resources of a state or nation for and on behalf of the people of that state or nation who vested the power and authority to do so on the person(s) acting in such capacity. The concept of good governance according to Ekundayo (2017: 154) stands on a tripod. The first leg of the tripod is the kind of political regime in place; the second is the process and manner of the exercise of authority in managing the socio-economic resources of the state in the light of developmental objectives; while the third is the ability of government to make policies and effectively implement them. When these principles are closely examined in the context of the Nigerian experience, it would be clear that the governance debacle in Nigeria is mainly associated with the second principle and partly the third.

Good governance is something that has to do with how people are affected generally by governance, not based on individual or personal gains. Idada and Uhunwuangho, (2012,51) believe that the ideological foundation of good governance is democracy. Thus, good governance is essentially people-oriented; it is directed, in policy and action, towards actualizing a stable and progressive economy and a viable state. Good governance is a product of good leadership. Nwagboso and Duke (2012, 236) refer to leadership as something naturally involving the exercise of social [and political] power and it is not only the capacity to make good policies but also to get the policies implemented. This is the beacon of good governance.

UNDP (2007, 796) lists eight indices, attributes or principles of good governance to include citizen

[political] participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability. Ekundayo (2017,157) adds strategic vision to the list, and this is fundamental to effective delivery of good governance for a good leader should be visionary. Good governance must deal with the menace of corruption as a key element of economic prosperity framework. From the above pigmentations of good governance, it may suffice to posit that it is a holistic leadership action that holds the objective of creating a socio-political and economic framework within which citizens can have a sense of belonging and effective participation as well as actualize a stable and progressive economy. The hallmark of this is development.

Development may be erroneously conceived as economic growth based on structural changes, savings and investments leading to bogus Gross Domestic Product (Otto & Ukpere 2012,.6767). But if such approach is given to the conceptualization of development, then Nigeria at some point could be listed among developed economies, especially during the periods it fared as the largest economy in Africa and one of the fastest growing economies in the world. But given the realities of the avalanche of problems related to human welfare, survival and security such as unemployment, hunger, poverty, disease and mortality rate, crime rate and insecurity, corruption and misrule, poor education and illiteracy, and the deplorable state of social infrastructures among others, development as a concept has to be redefined from a people-based or humanistic perspective, as Ake (2001,9) rightly thought.

Development is a holistic and a multifaceted concept that encapsulates the totality of established culture and processes that do not only mediate good living and create a viable economy but also plant institutions that defy time and are stronger than individuals, which makes it possible to have an ideology-driven society in which potential could be harnessed to the fullest without the interventions and interruptions from selfish and corrupt leaders/ leadership. A few definitions or explanations aptly capture the meaning of development in line with the mindset of this writer. Nnoli in Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013,287) think that, as a dialectical phenomenon, development has to do with the

interaction of humans and the society with their physical, biological and inter-human environments in order to transform and harness them for the improvement of their lives, the society and humanity in general. This culminates in the elimination or reduction of such human problems as inequality, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy among others (Okolie, 2009,37-38). As Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013,287) posited,

Development therefore, could be seen as the process of empowering people to maximize their potentials and the ability to exploit nature to meet daily human needs. It can also be seen as a process by which [the] quality of human lives and capacity to surmount daily needs are considerably improved.

Conceptualizing development as a holistic phenomenon should take cognizance of the factor of freedom. Sen (1999,3) makes sense in his view that development can only stand when the inhibitors of human freedom are pulled down. Some of the major freedom-related barriers to development include poverty, tyranny and social deprivations. Thus, development hinges on the tripod of political, economic and social settings or realities which embody the value system of a given society (Nwogu, 2013,272). Development, therefore, is systemic. The moment a system is sick and the population of that system becomes infected with the disease, development becomes a mirage for that system. This is why the issue of political culture, leadership, education, economic opportunities, security, value orientation and of course religious manipulation become key factors to the development of a society. In a nutshell, development is an all-embracing concept that has to do with ensuring the overall wellbeing of the people and the society through appropriate use of political power and the deployment of human and material resources of a state. Hence, development and good governance are inextricably interlaced.

From the above conceptual overview of good governance and development, the Nigerian situation is clearly cast in one's mind; and given the parameters of good governance and development, the question as to whether Nigeria is in good stead or not readily pops up.

The Socio-Political Situation in Nigeria

The story of Nigeria is obviously that of a failing state. The socio-political realities in Nigeria are deplorable with multifaceted problems strung to misrule. Good governance and development are shadows of themselves in Nigeria. Democracy which is purported to be the harbinger of good governance in some climes is in shambles in Nigeria due to flagrant disregard for the rule of law and due process occasioned by the quest for personal or selected group advantage. As Omosor (2013,84) averred, democracy is a mere political ideal which its principles when religiously upheld and reflected in the political actions of a state would mediate good governance to the people and evolve a stable egalitarian society where developmental prospects can be actualized. There are two aspects of democracy, namely, that leaders rule by popular mandate (the fact of being chosen through the process of free and fair election) and ruling according to the norms of the land and in accordance with the interest or the demands of the people (the fact of legitimate political decisions actions taken in the interest of the generality of the citizenry) while government and social institutions are empowered to function without interference. The democracy that is practiced in Nigeria lacks social and economic responsibility and this has emasculated development.

Elections are marred with irregularities of varying forms and degrees in Nigeria. Rigging, violence and vote buying have characterised elections in Nigeria. Parties that have more formidable means of malpractice seek to perpetuate themselves in office or grab power by all means at the expense of the wishes of the masses. Politicians are unaccountable, corrupt and overbearing. The Judiciary which ought to be the hope of the common man has literally become an organ of the executive arm of government, such that justice swings according to the dictates and the whims and caprices of those cabals in the corridors of power. The various government institutions are catalysts and accomplices in the subversion of governance in Nigeria. The security agencies, the judiciary, government agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and even some civil society organizations are willing tools for bad governance in Nigeria. This has made the living

conditions of an average Nigerian despicable. The description of the Nigerian politicians by Ogundiya (2010,23) is apt. He maintains that:

Nigerian political elites, almost without exception, have an insatiable capacity to steal from the commonwealth and leave the people more impoverished. Unrestrained by any real accountability to the electorates, many of those who come to power in fraudulent elections have committed abuses against their constituents and engaged in the large-scale looting of public resources.

The implication is that the economic gulf between the rich and the poor is bewildering. An average Nigerian is a beggar; for begging is not only the reserve of the *Almajiris* on the streets in the northern part of Nigeria; indeed, many Nigerians beg in various forms and places to survive. Poverty rate is alarming due to large scale unemployment. The economy is not viable and entrepreneurship is not encouraged with the deplorable roads, dead power sector and insecurity. The issue of insecurity in Nigeria is disheartening and hopeless. Researchers and scholars like Abogunrin (2007,5-9) and Ogundiya (2010,203) have linked the restiveness and security debacle in Nigeria to government abysmal performance. Nigerian leaders have abandoned their responsibility of creating a viable society and delivering quality and selfless services to the people for their personal interests. Education at all levels is comatose with an untold number of school dropouts. Militancy in various forms, rooted in socio-economic and political deprivations, is on the increase while political terrorism as manifested in the *Boko Haram* insurgency is blossoming. Omosor (2013,91-93) has elucidated the fact that failed governance and the attendant poor living conditions of people is the interface between religious fundamentalism and political terrorism in Nigeria.

One of the greatest problems of leadership and governance in Nigeria is the virus of corruption. Corruption has become so rampant and prevalent that it has become a norm in the society. It is difficult to adequately capture the dimension and extent of corruption in Nigeria. C. S. Momoh in Eze (2002,1) aptly speaks of the endemic nature of corruption in

Nigeria thus:

If there is anything which operates efficiently, uniformly and smoothly all over the country, it is the twin engine of the machinery of corruption and bribery. The phenomenon of corruption seem to be out unofficial ideology, our lingua franca, the universal language which is spoken and understood in every nook and cranny of Nigeria.

Corruption is a dent on the image of Nigeria. The global community, political leaders, public and civil personnel and even the police and other security agencies see bribery and corruption as a legitimate means of survival. It is now openly and brazenly practised.

Corruption is inextricably associated with materialism. Materialism drives individuals into the way of inordinate ambition to acquire massive wealth. The core African values and moral principles which place good name above riches have been eroded by materialistic ideology. Today, prestige, fame and recognition are predicated upon wealth. Those who direct the affairs of the society are those who have amassed wealth by any means. Political leadership is no longer by integrity but a function of affluence. This is why notorious criminals dominate the political domain and even at the level of community leadership. Prestigious titles are bestowed on the rich, no longer on those with approved moral credentials. Thugs, hooligans, murderers, thieves and all sorts of morally debased and demented persons grab power and perpetuate themselves on the seat of governance. What we have is a jungle kind of leadership. People are harassed in various forms, the public treasury is looted, violence is orchestrated, poverty is entrenched, diseases break out from malnutrition and unhealthy environment, death toll rises to an alarming level, quality education is aborted, crime in its multiple colours has assumed a dangerous spate, freedom is illusive, conscience is imprisoned and justice is manipulated, leaving developmental prospects a shadow of reality.

In fact, if the socio-political and economic realities of Nigeria were to be visualized or depicted physically as an image, it would be a terrible

monster to behold. Leadership is a fiasco with corruption as its main stay and the effect is disastrous as the future is bleak and uncertain.

Christian Clerics/Prophets in Nigerian Socio-Political Context

The church in Nigeria has been a very key factor in the socio-political experience of the nation. As stated earlier, the population of Nigeria is substantially, if not predominantly Christian. The major task of the Christian Church is evangelism, propagating the gospel of Christ. Apart from the mandate of harvesting the heathen into the kingdom of God and preparing 'souls' for everlasting life, the gospel is also directed or is meant to repair and improve the society and offer humanity good living here and now. Clerical vocation of which prophetism has become a viable and veritable dimension is therefore, placed with the obligation to drive the process of social change and political sanity that would lead to development and enhanced human welfare. This ought to be by conveying the will of God to the people particularly the leaders and checking the political leaders and the citizens through criticism and moral recipe.

It should be pointed out that the roles played by some churches and clerics/prophets in trying to ameliorate the suffering of the people and finding ways of dealing with the problem of survival cannot be undermined. Many churches are also instrumental in mobilizing their followers to participate in political activities, especially during elections. Religious leaders such as Archbishop John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan (Nigerian Prelate of Roman Catholic Church), Archbishop Nicholas Okoh (Primate of the Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion), Bishop Ayo Oritsejafor of Word of Life Bible Church (former CAN President), Bishop Matthew Kuka of the Roman Catholic Church, Pastor Enoch Adeboye of The Redeemed Christian Church, Bishop David Oyedepo of Living Faith Gospel Church (Winners Chapel), Pastor Paul Eneche of Dunamis International Gospel Center, Apostle Johnson Suleman of Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, Rev. Fr. Ejike Mbaka of the Roman Catholic Church, among others too numerous to mention have been very active in engaging and mobilizing Christians particularly their denominational members across the globe to

participate in the political life and activities of the nation. More so, the philanthropic gestures and the economic empowerment of most of them are in the records. The programmes of Prophet T. B. Joshua of The Synagogue Church of All Nations in reaching out not only to his members or Christians alone but troubled people across the world with relief and empowerment materials including sums of money and scholarships have earned the admiration of people home and abroad.

However, in view of the socio-political currents and realities in Nigeria and the involvement of Christian clerics/prophets, there is much that taints the clerical vocation and undermines the charisma and prestige associated with prophetic calling. The reality in Nigeria with respect to the proclamation of the word of God is that it is fanned by the desire for wealth. The church has incurably become a wealth creation industry. This is due to the materialistic ideology that has given birth to opulent and ostentatious culture and life style among Christians, especially the founders/general overseers. Dada (2004,97-98) in his critical examination of the phenomenon of prosperity preaching in the Nigerian context has traced its origin to the influence of the American “faith-healers and televangelists like Kenneth Hagin, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copland, John Avazini, T. L. Osborne and others” who directly or indirectly modeled some Nigerian neo-Pentecostal preachers such as the late Benson Idahosa who is widely acknowledged as the father of neo-Pentecostalism in Nigeria, David Oyedepo, Uma Okpai, Wale Oke, Simeon Okah, Ayo Oritsejafor, among others.

The quest for wealth and prosperity has taken center stage in Christian preaching and practice and this is why its association with politics is inherent. The phenomenon of prophecy has given impetus to this reality. Prophetic engagement in Nigeria has prosperity as its basic agenda as it revolves around the quest for 'breakthrough'. As Dada (2004,99) rightly observed, the harsh socio-economic conditions of the people orchestrated by those who have misled the country since independence became the promoting factor. Having raped the economy and shortchanged the people, Christians now turn to divine help to break away from the curses that have perpetuated them in poverty and prophecy stringed together with prosperity

preaching became an instrument for public delusion and personal aggrandizement. Today prosperity preaching and prophecy is no longer the reserve of the Pentecostal or neo-Pentecostal churches but now prevalent in most of the Christian denominations. Ugwueye (2002, 222) rightly comments that many of the preachers and prophets are apparently driven by the quest for personal wealth and power and this is one of the reasons for the proliferation of the Pentecostal churches.

This power and wealth syndrome associated with Christian clerical/prophetic vocation today diffuses menacingly into the political realm. The clerics/prophets who have become so influential now meddle in politics and hobnob with politicians with the implication that prophetic oracle is now more often than not swayed in line with the sentiments and political affiliations of the so called 'men of God' or prophets. It is one thing to be called by God and another thing for you to separate the calling, which is a divine appointment and commission, from your personal material wishes and desires; for a true prophet of God does not speak of his own volition but by the inspiration and direction of God. Recently, some high profile 'men of God' in Nigeria have associated with politics and politicians in a manner that many consider untoward. The media widely reported the role played by Bishop David Oyedepo and Bishop Matthew Kuka in the reconciliation of the former Nigerian president, General Olusegun Obasanjo (Rtd) and his vice, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar who is the presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2019 general elections. They were in company of the later when he visited his former boss in his Ottah residence in Abeokuta to beg him to support his presidential ambition against the incumbent president, General Muhammadu Bahari (Rtd). Whatever defense clerics may throw to the public for such actions, the fact remains that it is somewhat a partisan action that betrays their sentiments and political affiliation which is unbecoming for their ecclesiastical calling. It is important to note that their followers are certainly not members of the same political party and so such action is divisive.

Very recently, the 2018 harvest thanksgiving video of Rev. Fr. Ejike Mbaka went viral. In that video, he embarrassed and sent out the former

governor of Anambra State, Mr. Peter Obi, who is the running mate of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party in the 2019 general elections on the grounds that he and his members belonged to the ruling party, All Progressives Congress (APC). He openly campaigned for the APC governorship candidate in Imo State, Hon. Hope Uzodinma and the APC presidential candidate, President Muhammadu Buhari who sent a delegation to that thanksgiving service. He unequivocally expressed dissatisfaction that President Muhammadu Buhari has not supported the church financially since he won election through his prayers in 2015 after which he sent the president's emissary to tell him to send money to his ministry to avoid losing the 2019 elections. Mr. Peter Obi left the scene embarrassed. Similarly, the print media in Nigeria is not scarce of predictions and counter predictions about the outcome of the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria by self-styled and self-acclaimed prophets of God. A particular minister of the gospel was captured in a video predicting with categorical certainty that Nigeria would elect a youth as president come 2019 as God has revealed to him.

In September 2014, an aircraft stocked with about ten million US dollars allegedly meant for the purchase and supply of arms and ammunition to Nigeria was intercepted and confiscated with two Nigerians and an Israeli in South Africa and upon investigation the aircraft was traced to Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor, founder and president of Word of Life Bible Church and the then CAN president. The famous cleric did not deny ownership of the private jet; rather he claimed that the jet was leased to a certain Green Coast Produce Limited by the Eagle Air Company which operated the aircraft for him. It was further claimed that the jet had been chartered by some persons (*Premium Times*, 2014). No matter how strong and convincing the defences may be, it is curious that it was the CAN president's jet that was chartered for such deal. It leaves some veneer of scandal on the body of clerical vocation.

The history of elections in Nigeria is the tale of massive rigging and violence. The scenario has become worse since the inception of the fourth republic in 1999. Yet these corrupt riggers go to churches for elaborate thanksgiving to God for the victory at the polls. The question one asks is 'would

God be happy and receive such thanksgiving?' The 'men of God' presiding over such churches gleefully receive them and eulogize them for their achievements. A principled prophet or 'man of God' would decry the rigging and killing and reject such thanksgiving. But because such occasion attracts dignitaries and the rich who give huge sums of money as offerings and thanksgiving token, prophetic voices are not raised against them. It is the case that prophets/clerics deliver prophecies predicting the winner of elections across the various states and the nation at large and the different men of God or prophets often contradict one another. In many cases, their predictions do not come to pass.

Most of the politicians finance the building of the gigantic and ostentatious church auditoriums. More so, stupendous amounts of money are paid as tithes, offerings and donations and the clerics do not care about the sources of the money, even when it is obvious that such persons are mismanagers of commonwealth and corrupt politicians. When these things happen, it becomes very difficult for the 'men of God' to speak ill of the leaders/politicians and attack their socio-political vices. The prophet/clerics are divided along political sentiments. There is no uniformity, conformity and consistency in the prophetic proclamations of the 'men of God' in Nigeria. Prophecy is swayed by sentiments and material interests. Ashewolo and Maren (2015,2-8) apparently had this kind of developments in mind when they averred that religion, albeit Christianity, has become a political tool.

The (Eight Century) Background of Amos Prophecy in Israel

When the background of the eight century Israel is well examined, it would be discovered that there is so much that it shares with the Nigerian nation in terms of social, economic and political realities. During the era of the monarchy, there was relative economic progress and political centrality. But, there was arbitrary spending of state resources in a manner that historians of ancient Israel consider selfish (Knight, 2011,63). This was beginning to lay the foundation for a serious macro sociological problem as inequality in all its ramifications began to be entrenched. As Wax (2013,114) recorded, apart from the royal family, the Israelite nation consisted of a ruling stratum that was not more than

2% of the total population of the land possessing enormous politico-economic power. This minority class of people included high profile bureaucratic officials, military personnel, landlords, merchant and priests among others who enjoyed special recognition with the gift of land, political appointments and other sundry privileges. Thus, "the manner in which the monarchy managed and commercialized agriculture [and other sectors of the economy] set the tone for a devastating clash of social values with very serious political and religious overtones".

Following the division of the United Kingdom of Israel, the economic flux associated with the reigns of King David and Solomon his son and successor waned and there set in a period of unending struggle and rivalry for political ascendancy both in the northern and the Southern kingdoms, Ephraim (Israel) and Judah. Both kingdoms of the south and the north were caught up in the web of the political maneuvering of the great powers of Syria, Assyria, Mesopotamia and Egypt who contested among themselves for the political and economic domination of the territories around them. Assyria held sway in power for many years and Syria, Israel, Judah and Philistia were her vassals (Marrs, 2003: 1). There was not much economic prosperity for the Israelites at this time and politically, there was bottled up yearning for emancipation from obnoxious rule and diplomatic domination waiting to find a vent.

The religious perversion of the time was ostensible. In the north, the religious decadence clichéd as the 'sin of Jeroboam', which is apostasy owing to flagrant idolatry, had persisted. The religious dimension of the nation of Israel is quite significant in any discussion of the socio-political and economic development of the people because the people understood history, society and the universe from the lens of religious dynamism. Wax (2013: 109-110) wrote in this regard that:

The pre-exilic religious tradition of ancient Israel determined that Yahweh was the national deity and Lord of Israel who directed Israel's history. The relationship between Israel and Yahweh was based on a political ideology that sought to maintain harmony as opposed to chaos. This ideology

was, in many respects, manifested in political battles that the Israelites had to fight against foreign chaotic forces of evil. He relationship between the king, as the representative of the people, and Yahweh as Lord of the universe, placed a special duty on the king to ensure that the people were governed in terms of the same laws that Yahweh used to regulate the cosmos.

The implication of the idea conveyed in the above submission is that god's idea of leadership or governance is that the law is realized through the principle of social justice as a measure to protect the weak from the overbearing and oppressive excesses of the violent ones. Thus, politics and socio-economic engagements ought to be predicated on divine ideal of the society and human life.

The socio-political situation of the eight century Israel is significantly tied to the dynamics of the reign of Jeroboam II (786-746). He ascended to the throne of Israel when the political power of Assyria was diminishing due to internal challenges. So, he embarked on campaign for territorial expansion and eventually expanded Israel's borders and extended her dominions. Consequently, Israel waxed stronger politically and economically. Wealth was created and Israel's prosperity was restored. But as Marrs (2003,1-2) pontificated, 'this socioeconomic boom carried tragic consequences. If we accept the prophetic records as reliable witnesses to the period, we realized that the prosperity was not equally distributed'. The privileged class lived in extreme opulence, the lands were owned by the nobles and the masses were subjugated and subjected to impoverishment. There was moral degeneracy as manifested in bribery and corrupt arts, drunkenness and amorous indulgences including sacred prostitution. Injustice became the hallmark of the society. Religious perversion was in its state of flux. This was what set the stage for the calamitous fall of Israel, a fate shared by Judah as well.

It was within such religious, social, economic and political contexts that the eight century prophets emerged and frontally engaged the corrupt and ungodly people and their perverse rulers. Heater (2014) names Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah and Jonah as the prophets who ministered during this period. They are variously known as the classical,

writing or literary prophets. However, the first four are remarkable and outstanding in addressing the situation of the time. But Prophet Amos who is the focus of this study is peculiar and more holistic in his prophetic response to the prevailing social, religious, economic and political conditions of Israel as it relates to Nigeria. It is therefore imperative to briefly consider his prophetic occupation in Israel in the Nigerian context.

The Prophecy of Amos in Nigerian Socio-Political Context

The Prophetic engagement of Amos is quite significant for present-day Nigeria. He was a foremost social critic who lived at the time Uzziah reigned in Judah and Jeroboam II ruled Israel. During this time, there was economic and political prosperity as it is in Nigeria. But this was attended by religious misdemeanor, socio-political disintegration and moral degeneracy. The people indulged in brazen perversion of the official faith of Israel, so that there was outward religiosity without inward godliness or true religion. There was oppression and injustice. Wasteful luxury and self-indulgence characterized the lifestyle of the rulers and the privileged citizens. The righteous were sold for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes (Amos 2: 6). They turned aside the way of the afflicted, which is an allusion to the perversion of justice by judges who received bribes and gratifications from the affluent and then concealed the truth and repudiate the righteous (Amos 5: 7). Though they engaged in rigorous religious observances, they dealt deceitfully in business with false measures (Amos 8: 4-5).

The prosperity of Israel dazzled the people so much that they became blind to morality. Amos confronted the nation with a direful prophetic oracle. He did not care about status and power and neither did he prophesy for material gain. He condemned the reckless opulence of the people. Amos chose the time of their harvest to address the people. He first threatened the foreign nations for their hostility towards the people of God with the rhetoric of the 'Day of the Lord' and as the people thumbed up for him he frontally took a swipe on them, charging and condemning them like the heathen nations and alerted them of the impending doom of exile. Amos, famously known as the

prophet of doom, called for justice without which God would visit the people with calamity. He told the people not to glamour in their expectation of the 'Day of the Lord', for it would be darkness like other heathen nations and not light (Amos 5: 16-17). God's dealing with the people would be on ethical basis. In Amos 6: 1-7, the prophet lampoons them thus:

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come! ... Woe to those who lie upon the beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the midst of the stall; who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David invent for themselves instruments of music; who drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph! Therefore they shall now be the first of those to go into exile and the revelry of those who stretch themselves shall pass away (RSV).

Situating Amos and his prophecy in Nigerian context would reveal the anomalous and dysfunctional prophetic/clerical engagement in Nigeria vis-à-vis the realities in the socio-economic, political and religious spheres of the nation. Like the eight century Israel, Nigeria is very rich and endowed with enormous natural resources. Nigeria is equally rich in human capital or resources. But unfortunately, the quality of life of an average Nigerian does not reflect such classification. All that Amos attacked in Israel are prevalent in Nigeria. There is economic hardship for the downtrodden in a rich nation. Social disintegration, moral decay, political oppression and abuse of power, wasteful luxury, corruption both in business and governance, embezzlement of public funds, judicial malpractice and a host of other socio-political vices are the features of the Nigerian society.

Unlike Prophet Amos, the Nigerian clerics dine and wine with the politicians. They visit government houses at the local, state and federal levels for selfish reasons under the pretence of

prodding the people in authority to act in certain ways. But the fact is known to Nigerians that the clerics are usually seen off with 'fat envelopes'. Ethnic sentiments are sometimes the determiner of the support for the leader at the moment. It is unrealistic to imagine or expect any critical prophecy when the prophet is a member of a political party. Amos had deep moral nature with stern temperament. He gave his message with austere severity. Like other typical Israelite prophets, Amos was not materialistic. On the contrary, the ambition of Nigerian prophets/clerics is to acquire wealth and live in opulence. This naturally draws them into political affiliations and adventure.

Some of them aspire to be elected into political offices. For example, Pastor Tunde Bakare of The Latter Rain Assembly was the running mate to General Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd) in the 2011 general elections which they lost under the platform of Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). Similarly, Pastor Chris Okotie of the Household of God International Ministries serially stood for elections in 2007, 2011 and 2015 under the platform of Fresh Party. In 2007 and 2015 he quoted God as having anointed him to rule Nigeria. Ishiekwe (2018) wrote in the Vanguard Newspaper that the pastor has once again announced that God has chosen him to rule Nigeria in 2019. Such claims amount to false prophecy. One of the criteria for true prophecy is fulfillment. The materialistic ideology that has crept into the church has the church to a business enterprise and this is the bane of prophecy. Some of the clerics and prophets bid for contracts. When that is the case, such 'men of God' would not be independent and objective to function effectively as social critics.

The office of a prophet should not be intertwined with partisan politics. Prophets are the mouthpiece of God who should endeavour to speak the truth at all times without fear, bias or favour. Prophets are watchdogs of the society. The leaders and politicians in Nigeria are manifestly corrupt and mean. It is surprising to see 'men of God' endorsing politicians to run for elections even when it is obvious that the politicians have looted the nation dry and now spend their ill-gotten wealth to secure political fortune. Prophetic oracle should serve as instrument for social reconstruction and

reengineering. The institution of prophecy and clerical vocation must not be tainted with political decadence. They must not speak to please the leaders but rather their ills should be exposed.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to establish that development is a product of good governance which is also a predicate of responsible and selfless leadership. Responsible leadership is in turn partly a function of critical and conscientious followership. Christian leaders – clerics and prophets – in Nigeria have the capacity to influence and prod political leaders to offer good governance and bring about development. This is possible when they engage the leaders critically as mouthpieces of God and promoters of morality based on divine law and ethics. The Christian prophets/clerics have vitiated the potency of prophecy in socio-political reordering by associating with the politicians and seeking personal material gains. The pursuit of affluence by Christian clerics/prophets, who own private jets and properties without adequately helping the needy, is not exemplary. The distinguishing characteristics such as severe austerity, strict morality, political neutrality and 'prophetic consciousness' associated with prophetic/clerical vocation in ancient Israel as demonstrated by Prophet Amos is lacking among most Nigerian prophets.

Rather than becoming partisan in politics, clerics should pursue the agenda of good governance and as such function as the watchdog of the society. They should constantly seek the face and mind of God to know which way the leaders and the people should go. With the overwhelming populations in the various Christian denominations, the people can influence political opinion by exposing the vices of those in power. Prophets should speak the mind of God and not according to their interests and desires. They have to consider and imbibe the prophetic virtues of Amos in the eighth century Israel particularly the dissociation of his calling from political partisanship.

Prophets/clerics do not have to stand for elections as that would betray the primary purpose of their calling. Yes, they could vote their candidate of choice but not to the extent of dining and wining

with them. Many Christians are politically apathetic because they have lost confidence in the leadership of the nation by the politicians. The clerics should vehemently influence and mobilize their congregations to participate in elections either to be voted for to offer good leadership or to vote out corrupt leaders. They should learn to reject the act of politicians coming to give thanks to God in their churches for electoral victory after rigging elections, killing and maiming citizens. The church is the conscience of the society and this conscience should not be smeared with political sentiment, partisanship or materialistic tendencies.

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