
**AN EXAMINATION OF SELECTED MISSION CHURCHES AND FIGHT AGAINST
ELECTORAL MALPRACTICES IN NIGERIA**

Dr. Friday Ifeanyi Ogbuehi

Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

Christianity is a religion that is against cheating, malpractice, exploitation, corruption, stealing and falsification. It is worrisome that despite the involvement of the church (mission churches: Anglican Church and Roman Catholic Church) in politics, the elections conducted in this country have been marred by electoral malpractice. This has created erroneous impression in the minds of the critics that church is irrelevant in regard to politics, especially political elections in the country. Consequently, the paper examined the role played by the selected mission churches in fighting electoral malpractice in Nigeria. This research used historical and phenomenological methods. The data were described and analyzed for them to be more meaningful. Again, data were derived from the participant observation owing to the fact that the writer is a Nigerian and has voted in several elections in the country. Other sources include books, internet materials and periodicals. It was discovered that the mission churches have made significant efforts in containing the high rate of electoral malpractice by sensitization, public condemnation, Sermons, Pastoral letters, Communiqués, Prayers, setting up political Observers and have championed movements that have ensured that justice and fair play were restored in this country. By so doing, the church has contributed its quota in making sure there was good governance in the political space. However, the mission churches were advised to adopt radical and proactive approaches in bringing lasting solution to the incessant electoral malpractice by inculcating discipline in the minds of the Christian politicians and the Independent National Electoral Commission's officials that constitute the membership of these churches.

Keywords: Election, Malpractice, legitimate government, democracy, politics.

INTRODUCTION

Sequel to the survey conducted on the sixteen organizations in 2007, it was discovered that Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was the fourth most corrupt organization in Nigeria after the police, Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) and Ministry of Education (Alala, 2018). Electoral Malpractice has continued from the colonial period to the present democratic dispensation. It is believed that these churches (mission churches) paved way for the colonial rule in Nigeria and since then have been active in electoral processes; yet, the elections conducted in this country have been marred by electoral malpractice. Perhaps, these have resulted in some people's perception of the mission churches as collaborators with the government to entrench electoral malpractice or are redundant and dormant in fighting electoral malpractice which has resulted in producing illegitimate governments that have made bad leadership in this country a common phenomenon. It is believed that if the church is active in politics, electoral malpractice would have been a thing of the past. This has created curiosity in the minds of the people to know what the church is doing in curtailing the high rate of electoral malpractice in the country. Previous writers have written so much on the necessity for the church to participate in politics, but not much has been written on the contribution of the church, particularly the mission churches in fighting against electoral malpractice. So, the paper will examine the role played by the selected mission churches (Anglican Church and Roman Catholic Church) in fighting against electoral malpractice in Nigeria.

Conceptualization of Electoral Malpractice

The adjectival word 'electoral' is derived from the English noun, election. It is an activity or practice that is connected with the process of choosing candidates for political positions through voting (Akanji, 2011). Electoral malpractice generally "is an immoral, illegal or unethical professional conduct or neglect of professional duty or any instance of improper professional conduct" (Ukah and Abodunrin, 2013). Electoral malpractice is the act of changing electoral process with the aim of favouring oneself, party candidate or another political aspirant either by the electoral official, political aspirant or his or her agent (Aluko, 2011). It is the deliberate disregard of electoral procedures with the ulterior motive of gaining an undue advantage over others. Electoral malpractice is any unlawful or illegal act that gives a political candidate an undue advantage over other political aspirants before, during or after the election (Anyacho, 2009). There is an idea shared by some people that electoral malpractice is intrinsic which is further supported by the view that elections cannot be perfect due to the people that officiate and participate in elections are not perfect and are prone to make mistakes (Akanji, 2011). Of course, this has ruled out the possibility of having free and fair elections no matter how the church tries to eradicate electoral malpractice. Perhaps, it has resulted in people expecting better elections and not perfect elections. However, this pessimistic view on free and fair elections may be accepted on purely secular grounds, but as far as Christianity is concerned optimism borne out of faith supersedes pessimism that marks a faithless generation.

Theoretical Framework

The Elitist theory is a theory that states that society is controlled by the privileged few that make major decisions that control the masses. These elites wield political, social and economic influence in society.

The proponents of this theory are Vilfredo Parato, (1848-1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941), Robert Michels, James Burnham, Joseph A. Schumpeter, Raymond Aron, Giovanni Satori and Karl Mannheim (Aluko 2011). The elite theory “emphasizes that relatively unrestrained power is in the hands of a few who rule the masses who, in turn, are apathetic and not capable of self –rule elites as the highest achievers in society; who govern through physical coercion (the “lions”) and through cunning and intellectual persuasion (the “foxes”)” (Akoji 2013). Some of the features that distinguish the elites are political and social influence, affluence, literacy, rich family background, few in number, make or influence political decisions, domination of political leadership, domination of electoral process, hijacking of decision-making process, control of government, social status and determination of who takes over power (Osakwe (2002). The elitist theory is applicable to political leaders in Nigeria that have distinguished themselves as the elitist class in Nigerian politics. It is observed that “with Independence in 1960, Nigeria political elites assumed leadership positions hitherto reserved exclusively for their former colonial masters.... One must bribe or lobby to get a contract, secure political appointment, or be voted for in an election” (Anugwom 2002). Before the Independence in 1960, the colonialists were the political elites that wielded tremendous powers on the people they ruled. Having being influenced by the colonialists that were respected as political elites, the Nigeria political leaders like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello and Tafawa Belewa, assumed the political positions of their else while colonial masters as the political elites. Some political elites from Independence till the present have used their influence to manipulate election results, perpetrate electoral malpractice to their favour as well as domination of powers and determination of who occupies any political position. This accounts for the political cabals and political ‘fatherism’ that have constituted nuisance to good governance in Nigeria.

Electoral Malpractice in Nigeria

Electoral malpractice dates back to the colonial period when the colonialists imposed an imperial government on the people (Ekwunife, 1995). The Macpherson Constitution paved way for the regional elections held in 1951. They were the first elections and the elections that marked the beginning of the formation of political parties in Nigeria. Not only the elections of 1951 kicked off electoral process, but they also marked the beginning of electoral malpractice in Nigeria (Kastfelt, 1994). Colonialists aided and abated electoral malpractice by manipulating election of 1951 to suit communal interests. This was evident in the election held in Kano in 1951 in which the colonialists did everything to frustrate opposition to the candidates of the emirs. They resorted to intimidation and victimization of the opponents of the emirs’ candidates in order to impose the emirs’ candidates on the people (Nnoli, 1978). This was followed by 1965 elections that were massively rigged, that led to death of many people and breakdown of law and order and government as well (Ogbuehi, 2018). It is observed that electoral malpractice is inimical to the survival of the nascent democracy and realization of good governance in Nigeria. Sequel to that “Electoral malpractice has been responsible for the breakdown of law and order, leading to military intervention in 1966, 1983 and aborted June 12, 1993 presidential election in Nigeria” (Ndoh, 1997).

Ezirim and Mbah (2013) aver that in the elections held in 2007, the gubernatorial and presidential elections did not follow INEC guidelines and the Electoral Act. Rather, fictitious results were artificially created in

government houses and collation centres. Again, vote buying, vote rigging and other electoral irregularities marred the elections of 2007. The same elections were characterized by filling of the voters' registers with fictitious names, unlawful printing of voters' cards, unlawful possession of ballot boxes, multiple voting and illegal voting by children under voting age. Ezirim and Mbah (2013) wondered why credible men had conducted elections in Nigeria since independence, yet almost all the elections were replete with electoral malpractice. For instance, Eyo Esus was the chairman of the electoral body that organized the 1964 and 1965 elections that were rigged to the extent that two of his commissioners resigned in protest for the electoral fraud that was rampant at the elections. Michael Ani served as chairman of the electoral body that conducted the elections that were held in 1979 which were full of irregularities; this led the Supreme Court to resolve the irregularities. Also, Victor Ovie- Whiskey organized the worst elections in 1983. Ezirim and Mbah (2013) disclosed that other chairmen that served the electoral bodies include, Eme Awa, Humphrey Nwosu, Okon Edet Uya, Summer Dagogo- Jack, Ephraim Akpata, Abel Guobadia, Maurice Iwu who conducted elections in 2007 that were known for enormous electoral malpractice. He handed over to Attahiru Jega who conducted elections in 2011 and 2015. Even the present chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has conducted elections that are being challenged, including the presidential election that was conducted on 25th February, 2023 at the Election Petition Tribunals. Ariri-Chidomere (2013) gives a vivid description of elections since independence thus:

Governance in Nigeria is characterized by corruption and Machiavellianism. Since the Independence of Nigeria in 1960 the principle that has informed all political activity is that of win at all costs and winner takes it all. Consequently, rigging, bribery, gangsterism and outright murder has (sic) become common features of elections in Nigeria. Politicians will go to any length to ensure 'victory' at the polls.

The electoral malpractice is committed in various ways which include, buying of ballot papers and ballot boxes, thumb printing ballot papers before the commencement of election, and unauthorized printing of voters' cards, announcement of electoral results of polling units or wards where elections are not held, illegal disqualification of candidates for election, declaration of wrong person the winner of the election, announcement of results that are higher than the number of accredited voters, deliberate disfranchising of people that have reached voting age, vote buying, stealing of ballot boxes, false declaration of electoral results (Aluko, 2011).

Nigerian electoral system is known for its involvement in electoral malpractice. The high level of electoral malpractice that featured in the general elections that took place on 14th April, 2007 is a good example. Consequently, the electoral results announced in some states like Anambra, Adamawa, Delta, Edo, Enugu, Kogi, Nassarawa, Ogun, Ondo and Rivers States were rejected as a result of irregularities that were associated with the elections. Not only that the electoral results were rejected, people openly protested against massive electoral malpractice that was perpetrated at the polls across the country. The aggrieved political aspirants had no option than to challenge the outcome of the elections at the Election Petition

Tribunals. Five governors out of the governors who were reported to the tribunal for committing electoral malpractice had their elections nullified in 2008 the following year (Akanji, 2011).

Causes and Effects of Electoral Malpractice

Electoral malpractice is not carried – out on Election Day alone. More often than not, election malpractice is done before or after elections. Echeta (2011) notes electoral malpractice can take the form of denying members of the opposition parties the opportunity to register for their voters' cards. This was the case in elections held in 2011 where members of the opposition parties were denied registration to vote at the elections. Echeta further states that election malpractice deprives the citizens of the opportunity of electing people of their choice as well as voting out incompetent ones Echeta (2011). Onah (2011) argues that incessant electoral malpractice poses a disruption of free and fair elections that could have produced credible and patriotic political leaders that will make the welfare of the citizens a priority. Election malpractice has caused electoral violence such as hiring of thugs that snatch electoral boxes, intimidation and harassment of political opponents and their supporters, political assassinations, arson, blackmailing and character assassination. It helps rigging elections and falsification of results to flourish with its attendant turning out of unpopular candidates.

Electoral malpractice thrives owing to the endemic corruption that has turned elective positions into commodities that can be bought and sold at will. It has become common among the incumbent President, Federal law makers, governors, house of assemblies and local government chairmen to hoard staff salaries, pensions, constituency allowances and public funds for re-election into second tenures (Okere, 2005). Olusegun Obasanjo, the then President of Nigeria spent much money (tax payers' money) in installing people into power in Elections of 2007. For instance, 820,306,727.10 were spent on election of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua alone that succeeded him as the President of Nigeria. Again, it is said that he sent the military to harass and scare away voters that came to exercise their franchise. The faceoff between the electorate and the military resulted in the death of 300 persons (Odey, 2014). Some Christians run away from politics which they describe as dirty due to political assassinations and electoral violence that characterize Nigerian elections (Okere, 2005). It is discovered that no genuine Christian will like to soil his or her hand in politics considering the impure and defiling manner in which voting exercises are conducted in this country.

Corrupt politicians see political powers as do or die affair. There is hardly any spirit of sportsmanship that ought to have been one of the criteria of vying for elective posts that is found in them. This partly accounts for their unquenchable thirst to clinch powers at all cost. Worst ill, some politicians are not vying elective positions as a means of making democratic dividends available to the poor masses; their preoccupation is to amass wealth, award contracts to their cronies, site industries and projects to compensate their political associates and ethnic groups, offer employment opportunities to the relations of those that help them to win elections out of fraud. In a bid to control powers and share the 'booties' associated with them; such politicians go to every length in manipulating the electoral process to their favour (Odey, 1999).

In a democratic setting, legitimate authority is grounded on the consent of the majority of the people. So, authority is ordained by the people and not God. For Christianity, authority is ordained by God; whether a leader emerges through free and fair election or not, his or her authority is ordained by God which Christians must obey. In Christianity, legitimate government is not determined by the electorate, rather no matter how every government is set up, it is also approved by God. In most cases, the supposedly legitimate government is capable of deviating from divine plan which the so-called illegitimate government may strive to accomplish. That a government is approved or chosen by God does not mean that it must lead according to God's will since the leader has freewill to choose God's plan or go contrary to his will (Toryough, 2007). Dike maintains that the biblical stand on exercise of authority is every authority is ordained by God and Christians must obey it. The Pauline view of government whether religious or secular government is ordained by God was reached irrespective of the fact that Christians were under pagan Roman Government that persecuted them severely. It shows that Paul was not against the emperors that ruled the people at one time or the other (Dike, 2015).

Reasons for the church's decline in fighting Electoral Malpractices

The opponents of the relationship between religion and politics argue that the primary assignment given to the church by Jesus Christ is mission and not involvement in politics. They further say that, if the church mingles itself with politics, it will render the church vulnerable of being manipulated by the political elites in perpetrating corruption, electoral malpractice, discrimination and nepotism, rather than fighting electoral malpractice and other social and political ills that have become rampant in the country. It is true that the church is expected to be above board, but that has not ruled out fear that the political elites can influence the church and use it to achieve its selfish ends. There is suspicion by some people that the church is corrupt which makes it susceptible to electoral fraud that has ravaged the electoral system in the country (O' Donovan, 2000).

The Roman Catholic Church's position on church participation in politics has been refusal to allow Catholics that are in full time mission to participate actively in politics. This is contained in canon law, 317 numbers 4 that prohibits the clergy and the laity that are serving the church to participate in politics (Chepkwony 1999). The Anglican Church shares similar view with the Roman Catholic Church on clergy participation in politics. It has become the tradition of the Anglican Church not to allow their clergy to belong to any political party. Consequently, Peter Jatau, the then Catholic Archbishop of Kaduna and T. O. Ogbonyomi, the then Bishop of Kaduna warned the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) to abstain from politics. The then Bishop of Kaduna, T.O. Ogbonyomi made it clear that any of his priests who was interested in contesting for a political post, would first of all be defrocked by the Diocese, after which he could apply to the Diocese that would consider whether to reinstate him or not, at the end if he was accepted, he would be posted to another church (Kukah, 1993). The denominations differed on church participation in politics which has affected unity of purpose and team work in fighting electoral malpractice. For instance, some churches in the country and outside the country are against church participation in politics which can pose an obstacle in fighting against electoral malpractice. Some of these churches include, Seventh Day Adventists; Salvation Army, Society of Friends, Africa Inland Church,

African Gospels Church, Pentecostal Assemblies of God, and the Church of God (Chepkwony, 1999).

The local government elections held in December, 1987 were dominated by religious sentiments to the extent that Islam and Christianity were used as instruments of winning the elections. In Kaduna and Middle Belt, Christians under the auspices of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) made sure it defeated its Muslim opponents. The desire to win elections at all cost by the Christians made the Muslims to suspect them of perpetrating electoral malpractice (Kukah, 1993). Kukah further maintains that before the formation of political parties for the local government elections started, Christians and Muslims had already provided religious platforms - churches and mosques where names of Christians and Muslims screened for the elections were announced respectively. It became notorious that it attracted the attention of National Electoral Commission (NEC) that warned the religious bodies concerned that further display of religious sentiments by the two parties could attract disqualification of the candidates (Kukah, 1993). It seems that the public have lost confidence in the church as an impartial faith based organization expected to play the role of unbiased observer to ensure that elections are conducted according to the electoral rules and regulations. The unholy alliance between the church and the political aspirants has resulted in people suspecting the church of taking sides already before the commencement of the elections. In corroboration with this view, Dovlo (2003) remarks thus:

During elections, religious leaders and bodies extend the use of their pulpits and lecterns to political parties, as they invade congregations, synods, conferences and religious festivals, especially, during election year to present their manifestos. The bold religious leaders predict and prophesy at times openly about who will win the elections. Some do so secretly then come into the open when their candidate wins. The 'potent' religious leaders either Christian, Traditional or Islamic, face a seasonal influx of influential clients who demand their prayers, and other forms of help to win elections.

There is always fear that the church in the course of sinking deep into electioneering may be tempted to compromise its integrity and be a willing tool in the hands of the political elites to perpetrate electoral malpractice. Dovlo further says that the political elites can manipulate religion to serve their political ends. Election malpractice is perpetrated by some political aspirants that lure the electorate to vote for them under oath. In this case, the electorate are compelled to take an oath, either to vote for the candidates or face the wrath of the deity invoked to deal mercilessly with the defaulters (Dovlo, 2003). In Abia State, it was alleged that a popular politician carried a coffin to the polling units where he shared money purportedly brought out from the coffin, so that if any person collected the money and refused to vote for him would be killed by the deity. Of course, the person became the Governor of the state against the wish of the people.

Church and Fight against Electoral Malpractices

The divine theory of the origin of the state states that state is not created by man or governmental agency, rather it is believed that state is created by God for the realization of his purpose in the world. Consequently, the state is no longer regarded as a secular state; it is a theocratic state. Sequel to this view, the state is an

institution ordained by God and leaders are not seen as political leaders, but the emissaries of God saddled with the responsibility of actualizing the will of God on earth (Oyediran 2003). Nigeria is a secular country which has awakened the consciousness of the populace on the separation of religion from politics. The crux of the matter is in a secular country, religion and politics are two parallel lines that cannot meet. It is not so in African traditional societies, where the influence of religion cuts across every fabric of society, especially political sector. Irrespective of the secular nature of this country, the mixture of religion and politics has formed the bedrock of Nigerian Democracy (Nkwoka 2006). In other words, Nigeria is neither secular nor religious country. It is best described as a 'religio-secular' country. Peter Jasper Akinola, the former Primate of Church of Nigeria, said that it is true power is ordained by God, but it is not enough for Christians to allow corrupt political leaders to impose people of questionable character to be their president, governors, federal and state law makers and local government chairmen. The church as the watchdog of society involves keeping watch over elections to make sure the unscrupulous politicians are not given any opportunity to commit electoral malpractice. The church's role in making sure free and fair elections prevail is premised on the sensitive and critical nature of Nigerian elections. Election period is always a time of choice, renewal, preference, trust, confidence and determination of the fate of the masses in the next four or eight years. Therefore, it behoves the church to sensitize their members on the necessity to register for their Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) and vote according to their choices. The church is expected to make sure the votes of the electorate count at the end of every election (Akinola, 2013).

Prior to the elections held in 2011, the elections conducted in Nigeria by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) at both Federal and state levels were adjudged not to be free and fair. Therefore, elections have been below international standards. The election of 2011 was better than previous elections. Though, there was electoral malpractice at the elections and those suspected of committing electoral fraud were not given rigorous prosecution (Akinola, 2013).

In the political annals of this country, there have been public outcries for electoral reform. It shows that all is not well with the electoral system in the country. The church has made contribution to electoral reform. Matthew Kukah, a Catholic priest then had served as the secretary of the National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) and also a member of Mohammed Uwais Electoral Reform Commission (MUERC) (Udoh, 2013). Nigeria is known for changing the names of institutions when they have become too corrupt in order to redeem the image of such institutions and restore public confidence in them. It is evident in the changing of the name of National Electoral Commission (NEC) (1987-1993) to National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) (1996-1998) and finally from National Electoral Commission of Nigeria to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (1998 till date) (Oyediran, 2003). In Nigeria, non-governmental organizations are formed to challenge injustices that are rampant in the country. They challenge electoral fraud based on the principles of honesty, equity, fair play, Justice and impartiality inculcated into their minds by the church through their enlightenment campaigns, social teachings, seminars, retreats, sermons, communiqué and pastoral letters. Oke (2012) insists that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) challenged Moris Iwu led Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for substituting the names of female political aspirants with male political candidates

in elections conducted in 2007 unlawfully. Fabunmi (2012) quips that civil societies' groups like National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), African Centre for Democratic Governance (ACDG), and Campaign for Democracy (CD), have fought against electoral malpractice and violence with the aim of restoring free and fair elections in the country.

Babs and Akanbi (2012) put it that the General Overseer of Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Enoch Adeboye warned the then chairman of INEC, Attahiru Jega not to allow the elections to be rigged. He handed the warning at the RCCG's annual convention held at the Redemption camp situated at Lagos/Ibadan Express way in 2011. Enoch Adeboye made it clear that if the elections were rigged the masses would fight and defend their votes. Apart from that, the RCCG would invoke the wrath of God on the perpetrators of the electoral malpractice. Consequently, Folarin (2012) asserts that the Elections that were held that year became the best elections ever held in this country.

The mission churches are not dormant in condemning electoral malpractice. Francis Arinze, the then Archbishop of Onitsha, in his Lenten pastorals circulated to the Diocese, condemned electoral malpractice that was committed at that time (Ekwunife, 1995). It is believed that church's participation in politics is one of the measures of addressing electoral malpractice. If Christians are involved, it will be difficult for genuine Christians to rig elections due to the Christian teachings that dishonesty, cheating, stealing, falsehood are detestable to God. Besides, a Christian politician will find it difficult to sit tight in power even when his services are no longer required by the electorate (Ekwunife, 1995). The assumption that Christian politicians are immune from entanglement with electoral malpractice may be obtainable outside the shores of this country, but here some Christians have thrown Christian virtues to the wind which has caused them to pervert the electoral process to their favour. It is partly caused by the government policy of secularism in which religion is separated from politics and they cannot intermingle again.

The Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) is an arm of the Roman Catholic Church that is responsible for fighting injustice in the country. It trained people specifically to monitor elections and report any act of electoral malpractice in the elections of 2003. These people called observers from the JDPC worked with INEC to ensure that there were free and fair elections in 2003 at all levels (Achunike, 2004). The Catholic Bishops of Nigeria (CBN) envisaged that there would be electoral malpractice in 2007 Elections in Nigeria directed all Catholics to pray for "upright voting, accurate counting and impartial announcements of Election Results" in the 2007 forthcoming elections (Ekwunife, 2007). Achebe (1984) points out that, Jonathan Onyemelukwe, the then Anglican Bishop of Diocese on the Niger, said on the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) news that politicians should "spare us violence and threats of violence at this year's elections. After all ...you have told us that you want our votes so that you can serve us. If we get killed while you are getting the vote, who then will you serve?" The church directly and indirectly has contributed to the amelioration of the high rate of election malpractice in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The advocates of church participation in politics justify their position by referring to the theory of divine king, which states that every power is ordained by God. It is God who chooses who will be king over his people for the accomplishment of his purpose. There is no way God's purpose of instituting government will be realised if Christians shun politics. It is argued that whatever God has ordained nobody should call it evil and dirty. Democracy in Nigeria and Africa becomes foreign and irrelevant if it is allowed to wear foreign garb that is known for separation of religion and politics. It might be why democracy is not working and is always referred to as nascent and politicians capitalize on it to exploit the masses. When politics and governance is 'africanize', it will reflect African worldview in which religion and politics are dovetailed. Theologically speaking, Jesus Christ participated in politics of his day, yet he did not soil his integrity. Therefore, the Faith Based Organization (FBO) needs not to fear of losing its integrity if politics is played according to the rules. It is based on Jesus' trust in the church that he sent it to the world for mission, which cuts across ensuring that there, is credible polls. The church as salt and light of the world is expected to conduct free and fair elections through its members that officiate and participate in electoral process in this country. With the prophetic role of the church, the church is in a better position to denounce electoral malpractice and makes sure justice takes its course no matter whose ox is gored. It is discovered that the corrupt political aspirants no longer have consciences; even if they have, they are dead. This necessitates the church to be the conscience of society by pricking it until it comes to the realization of its faults and makes amends. The church needs to work in partnership with civil society organizations and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to be watchdog of society by making sure electoral malpractice is reduced to the minimum in this country. Experience has shown that changing of names of electoral commissions without changing the contents like electoral fraud, cheating in polling units, manipulation of electoral results, electoral violence, bribing of electoral officials and the electorate amount to nothing. It was discovered that the mission churches have made significant efforts in containing the high rate of electoral malpractice by sensitization, public condemnation, Sermons, Pastoral letters, Communiqués, Prayers, setting up political Observers and have championed movements that have ensured that justice and fair play were restored in this country. By so doing, the church has contributed its quota in making sure there is good governance in the political space. However, the mission churches were advised to adopt radical approach in bringing lasting solution to the incessant electoral malpractice by inculcating discipline in the minds of the politicians and the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) officials that constitute the membership of these churches.

REFERENCES

- Achebe, C. (1984). *The Trouble with Nigeria*. Edinburgh: Heinemann Educational books.
- Achunike, H.C. (2004). "Developing the Nigerian Nation Through "Justice, Development and Peace Commission" of the Catholic Church" in Religion and Societal Development (Ed) Okwueze, M. I. Lagos: Merit International Publications, Pp.131 – 141.
- Akanji, T.A.A. (2011). "Implications of Election Tribunals for Electoral Violence Prevention in Nigeria" in *Challenges of Democratic Governance in Nigeria* (Eds), Akanji, T.A.A, Danjibo, N.L. and Eselebor, W.A. Ibadan : John Archers Publishers Limited, , Pp. 1-15.

- Akinola, P.J. (2013). *Nigeria: A Call for Moral Cleansing*, Volume 2, Number 3. Abeokuta: Peter Akinola Foundation.
- Akoji, O. (2013). "Basic Social Institutions" in *Fundamentals of Sociology: An Introduction* (Eds) Okau, A, Metiboba, S and Tinuola, F. Ado – Ekiti : Apex Publishers Limited, Pp. 28 – 44.
- Alala, I.M. (2018). "The Role of the Church in the Fight against Corruption in Nigeria". *Religions Journal of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions*, Volume 28, Number 1, Pp 42- 62.
- Aluko, J.O. (2011). "Local Government Elections and the Challenges of Democratic Governance in Nigeria" in *Challenges of Democratic Governance in Nigeria* (Eds), Akanji, T.A.A, Danjibo, N.L. and Eselebor, W.A. Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Limited, Pp. 37-51.
- Anyacho, E.O. (2009). *Ecumenism Inter – Religious Dialogue and Peace Education*. Calabar: Kenjoel Business Enterprises.
- Ariri – Chidomere, A.C. (2013). "The Mosaic Social Ethics and Good Governance in Africa: The Nigerian Case" in *Selected Studies in the Humanities* (Ed) Ayodele, S.O. Ibadan: Zeniths Creations, Pp. 116 – 124.
- Babs, M.S. and Akanbi, J. (2012). "The Roles of Religious Leaders in the Actualization of Good Governance in a Multi- Faith Nigeria" in *Religion and Governance in Nigeria* (Eds) Ayantayo, J. K., Dada, O.A., Labeodan, H.A. Volume 4. Ibadan: Samprints, Pp.233 – 244
- Chepkwony, A. K. A. (1999). "Political Pluralism in Africa" in *Theology of Reconstruction* (Eds) Getui, M.N and Obeng, E. A. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, Pp. 243-257.
- Dike, A.F. (2015). *Church, Society and Globalization*. Jos: Challenge Publications
- Dovlo . (2003). "Civil Religion in Ghana". *Orita Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, xxxvi (1-2), Pp.36-56.
- Echeta, U.F. (2011). "The Role of the Christian Church in the Development of Democratic Governance in Nigeria". *Nsukka Journal of Religion and Cultural Studies*, Volume 4, Number1, Pp. 33-48.
- Ekwunife, A.N.O. (1995). *Spiritual Explosions*. Enugu: SNAAP Press Limited
- Ekwunife, A.N.O. (2007). *What Will be, Will be Why Pray*. Lagos: Priceless Prints.
- Ezirim, G.E. and Mbah, P.O. (2013). "Electoral Process and Political Violence in Africa: A Preview of the 2015 Elections in Nigeria". *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences*, Volume 6, Pp 282 – 297.
- Fabunmi, S.K. (2012). "Christians' Participation in the Sustainability of Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria" in *Religion and Governance in Nigeria* (Eds) Ayantayo, J. K., Dada, O.A., Labeodan, H.A. Volume 4. Ibadan: Samprints, , Pp.233 – 244.
- Folarin, G.O. (2012). "The Challenge of Romans 13: 1-7 to Civil Governance in Nigeria". in *Religion and Governance in Nigeria* (Eds) Ayantayo, J. K., Dada, O.A., Labeodan, H.A. Volume 4. Ibadan: Samprints, , Pp.262 – 386
- Igbo, E.U.M and Anugwom, E.E. (2002). *Social Change and Social Problems*. Nsukka: AP Express Publishers
- Kastfelt, N. (1994). *Religion and Politics in Nigeria*. London: British Academic Press.
- Kukah, M.H. (1993). *Religion Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*. Lagos: Spectrum Books Limited,
- Ndoh, C.A. (1997). "Democracy and Crisis in Nigeria" in *Nigerian Politics* (Eds) Ndoh, C.A. and Emezi,

- C.E. Owerri: CRC Publications Limited, Pp.112 -124.
- Nkwoka, T. (2006). "The Nigerian Nation and the Christian Church in the Context of Jesus's Dictum in Mark 12: 13-17" in *The Humanities, Nationalism and Democracy* (Eds) Akinrinade, S, Fashina, D and Ogungbile, D.O. Ille-Ife: np, Pp327-345.
- Nnoli, O. (1978). *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company Limited.
- O'Donovan, N. (2000). *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa*. UK: Paternoster Press.
- Odey, J. (2014). "Religion and Politics in A Multi – Ethnic Society: The Amalgamation of 1914 and the scapegoat mentality" in *The Politicization of Religion in Nigeria Since the Amalgamation of 1914* (Eds) Anyanwu, S.O. and Nwanaju, I. U. Abakaliki : Directorate of Communication , Pp. 1-45.
- Odey, J.O.(1999). *Christians, Politics and the Nigerian Dilema*. Enugu: SNAAP Press Limited.
- Ogbuehi, F.I. (2018). "Ethno – Religious Pluralism and Restructuring in Nigeria". *Nsukka Journal of Religion and Cultural Studies*, Volume 6, 78 – 87.
- Oke, R.O. (2012). "We are all Children of God: An Exegetical Analysis of Galatians 3: 26 – 28 in support Women's Participation in Active Governance" in *Religion and Governance in Nigeria* (Eds) Ayantayo, J. K., Dada, O.A., Labeodan, H.A. Volume 4. Ibadan: Samprints, Pp.167 – 178.
- Okere, T. (2005). *Church, Theology and Society in Africa*. New Haven: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company Limited.
- Onah, N.G. (2011). "Religion and the Challenge of Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria". *Nsukka Journal of Religion and Cultural Studies*, Volume 4, Number1, Pp. 87-103.
- Osakwe, A.A. (2002). "Application of Elite Theory to Corruption in the Nigerian Society" in *Corruption in Nigeria: Critical Perspectives* (Ed) Ugwu, C. O.T. Nsukka: Chuka Educational Publishers, Pp. 175 -190.
- Oyediran, O. (2003). *Introduction to Political Science*. Ibadan: Daybis Limited
- Toryough, G. N. (2007). "A Biblical Perspective on Christians' Development in Politics" *Orita Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Volume xxxix (1), P. 77-96.
- Udoh, M. (2013). "The Contributions of Theological Education to Leadership and Advocacy". *Journal of Theology, Religious and Cultural Studies*, Volume 1 Number 1, Pp.104 -120
- Ukah, E.E and Abodunrin, A.O. (2013). "Examination Malpractice – A Threat to the Workability of the Educational Reform in Kwara State College of Education, Oro- Kwara State Nigeria" in *Selected Studies in the Humanities* (Ed) Ayodele, S.O. Ibadan: Zeniths Creations, Pp. 190 – 196.