

CHRISTIAN YOUTHS AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The failure in the political, economic, democratic and moral life of the state of Nigeria has been attributed to lack of development and poor governance. The transition from military dictatorship to civilian government in 1979 made many people to believe that democracy had finally arrived and there was a ray of hope that would serve as a means to relieve the pains and sufferings of Nigerians. The sustenance of democracy and good governance is the responsibility of the citizens of every nation in Africa through its various social groups. Leadership of Nigeria in the first, second, third and fourth republics have failed because of the inability to sustained principles that would provide for the needs of future generations of life in Nigeria. Good governance which has to do with the common good of the citizens, pays attention to the wellbeing of the people, such as food production, eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achievement of universal primary education, Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, reduction in child mortality, improvement of maternal health care, combating of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring of environmental sustainability and Developing a global partnership for sustainable national development. The paper observed that the hopes and prayers of Nigerians alone cannot ensure the realization of the dreams of our people, unless the youths are involved in partisan politics of the nation. It recommends among others that, *the participation of the youths could enhance positively in the rebranding campaign of the political process in Nigeria.*

Keywords: Christian, Youths, Politics, Sustainable Development and Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The uncertainty about the future of Nigeria is unfortunately tied to poor democratic culture, which is an important ingredient of political life of every nation. Nigeria has been tagged, a failure in all fronts: political, economic, social and moral. Despite an abundance of economic resources, attempts to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development have not become a reality in Nigeria. Lack of political will, corruption, a deficiency of proper coordination for sustainable development programs, and wasteful patterns of production and consumption have hindered any meaningful progress in Nigeria. The implementation of sustainable development that are dependent on the political will of the government in power makes difficult for Nigerian citizens to legally compel the government to pursue it with available state resources as a result of the non-justifiable nature of the fundamental objectives and principles of state policy enshrined in Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Thus, the government's failure to implement sustainable development is usually considered a political question that should be decided by the citizens through elections.

As such, the power of citizens to compel their government to implement sustainable development may only be exercised during political elections. The government's failure in this regard is not subject to any legal consequences. However, unsustainable development exacerbates poverty, environmental crises, social and political disintegration, and national security challenges. To avoid these eventualities, it is necessary that citizens are legally empowered to enhance the implementation of sustainable development. This article explores the role of Christian youths in enhancing the implementation of political process in sustainable development of Nigeria. The major constraints to sustainable development are economic recession, social unrest, environmental degradation, and youth's unemployment, lack of functional and political education and lack of freedom for the youths to participate in partisan politics. The absence of these amenities have accounted for ambivalence of youths restiveness, political violence and anti-social behaviors in contemporary Nigeria.

The non-involvement of youths in politics, monetization of politics and predentialism (popularly known as God-fatherism and God-son syndrome), violent behaviors of youths such as political thuggery, political motivated assassinations, molestation of innocent citizens, seizure of ballot boxes, and wanton destruction of properties (ARSON), intimidation of political opponents, political sycophancy, looting, prevalence of cult's activities and incitement of religious crisis in the name of politics, are negative behaviors exhibited by the youths in the name of politics in Nigeria. These aforementioned anti-social behaviors portrays the youths as having no more fear of God, nor respect on their parents, elders and human life, because money has been introduced into politics in Nigeria. This however, has put us (Nigerians) in a tight jacket within which we do not have room for any movement whatsoever. Under such a situation, our degree of freedom is very narrow and restricted in excising our constitutional rights as citizens of Nigeria. In this paper, therefore, our task is to examine the role of Christian youths in Nigerian politics.

DATA AND METHODS

Both qualitative, oral interview and participant observation research methods were used in this study, which is mainly longitudinal. The former involved focus group discussions, data collection from books, journals, newspaper clippings on politics and sustainable development in Nigeria. The principal documents used for the collection of data include documents dealing with national and international rules and regulations on the society generally and Christian factor in Nigerian politics in particular, such as the United Nation Millennium Declaration on sustainable development, the World Commission on Environment and Development, political authority and democracy in Africa, between democracy and development, African political system, radical theories of development and underdevelopment in Nigeria. Participant observation was also used as the author drew upon personal experiences and interviews on youths and politics in sustainable development of Nigeria.

Data collection was also done by the use of interviews guides in formal and informal settings. The ages of the respondents ranged from 25-80 years of age. In addition, youths political forums provided a useful source of information on the role of Christian youths in politics and sustainable development in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Christian Youths

The concept Christian youths has been variously defined by scholars. These definitions are diverse and they all convey the singular meaning of a person who is the follower of Christ. To Kukah (1999), a Christian youth refers to a person who is young at heart. This is a generation of people who are on their way to adulthood. To Osawe (2006), youth is a time of life when one is young, especially the period between childhood and maturity, Little and Others (1970), further describes a youth as a person who is in the early period of existence, growth or development. This is a period between childhood and maturity. Crowley (1999), looks at the concept of Christian youths to mean a young person, especially a young male between the ages of adolescence and maturity. From the above, it can be inferred that youthfulness is the quality or state of being youthful. That is, “young person who profess Christianity and is Christ-like or resembles Christ in heart, character, spirit and action (Nwaochei, 1991).

Politics

The term politics lends itself to a more definite and precise explanation. Its original Greek roots are “polis”, meaning “city”, and “techne”, which mean art, skill or method”. Etymologically, the word “politics” refers to the “art of governing a city (Nwoko, 1988). Thus, it was believed that political life as an organized mode of living started in the city and spread to the neighborhood. In this classical sense, politics is held to be the art of organizing men in a society to live and interact with one another for the art of organizing of social structures such as the establishment of legal and governmental systems of facilitate this interaction (Nwadike, 1999).

In its wider extension, the term politics applies to different forms of organization and direction of human interest at various levels of the society, including the family, village, church and university with some purpose in view. Since politics is

essentially about governance, it primary involves the structuring of power for achieving some articulated goals (Sigo, 1995). Political scientists usually distinguish two levels of operation, namely: external and internal levels of operations. The external level of operation concerns with the administrative organization of governance. While the internal level of operation refers to the under girding ideology which informs policy, hence the two broad fields of organization and theory in political analysis (Ejizu, 1998). Fortes and Evans-Prichard (1940) had classical notion of politics when they grouped African political system into two narrow categories of centralized and segmentary societies.

The centralized state system is characterized by administrative hierarchy, presided over by the paramount chief or king. While in non-centralized or segmentary system, power and authority are in the hands of lineage heads and elders (Brown, 1957). Recent studies however, have added a third category, the stateless society in which powerful association rather than segmentary lineage system dominates the regulations of political relations (Ojo, 1991). Thus, the various indigenous African societies, including those of Nigeria are among the three fold patterns, instead of two fold patterns. In this paper, our illustration of wide ranging patterns in the interaction of religion and politics in traditional setting will be drawn from the three major types of political organizations which different ethnic groups in Nigeria cultivated as their political system in modern times. From the above definitions, it stands clearly that politics has to do with power over people, to make the world a better place. In the context of this paper, therefore the term politics simply refers to:

The science or art of influencing or guiding government policy, including areas of religion, economy and socio-political responsibility of the state or nation to adjust or order relationship between individuals and groups in a political community. That is to politics is the art of winning and holding control over a government in both internal and external affairs (Sigo, 1995). Sigo's definition of politics incorporates many aspects of political governance which involves the masses including the youths. It is pertinent for us to give a background to youth participate in politics for better understanding of our discussion.

Sustainable Development

Sustainability can be defined as the practice of maintaining processes of productivity indefinitely-natural or human made-by replacing resources used with resources of equal or greater value without degrading or endangering natural biotic systems (Fortes and Evans Pritachard, 1940). According to Jere (2001), sustainability is a function of social, economic, technological and ecological themes. Sustainable development ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social, political, and economic challenges faced by humanity. As early as the 1970s, the concept of "sustainability" was employed to describe an economy "in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems" (Diamond, 1999). Scientists in many fields have highlighted *The Limits to Growth*, and economists have presented alternatives, for example a 'steady state economy'; to address concerns over the impacts of expanding human development on the planet (Salim, 2002).

Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is that of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in its 1987 report which defines sustainable development as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Under the principles of the United Nations Charter the Millennium Declaration identified principles

and treaties on sustainable development, including economic development, social development and environmental protection. Broadly defined, sustainable development is a systems approach to growth and development and to manage natural, produced, and social capital for the welfare of their own and future generations. The term sustainable development as used by the United Nations incorporates both issues associated with land development and broader issues of human development such as education, public health, and standard of living. It contains within it two key concepts:

- The concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

Sustainable development as a road-map and action plan is focused at achieving sustainability in any activity that uses resources and where immediate and intergenerational replication is demanded. It organizes principle for sustaining finite resources necessary to provide for the needs of future generations of life on the planet. This means that sustainable development is a process that envisions a desirable future state for human societies in which living conditions and resource-use continue to meet human needs without undermining the "integrity, stability and beauty" of natural biotic systems. The concepts of sustainable development and sustainability derive from the older forestry term "sustained yield", which, in turn, is a translation of the German term "nachhaltiger Ertrag" dating from 1713 (Kukah, 1999). Sustainability science is the study of the concepts of sustainable development and environmental science. There is an additional focus on the present generations' responsibility to regenerate, maintain and improve planetary resources for use by future generations. All definitions of sustainable development require that we see the world as a system-a system that connects space; and a system that connects time.

Sustainable development is maintaining a delicate balance between the human need to improve lifestyles and feeling of well-being on one hand, and preserving natural resources and ecosystems, on which we and future generations depend. According to the WCED, sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." It implies economic growth together with the protection of environmental quality, each reinforcing the other. The essence of this form of development is a stable relationship between human activities and the natural world, which does not diminish the prospects for future generations to enjoy a quality of life at least as good as our own. Many observers believe that participatory democracy, nominated by vested interests, is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development. The guiding rules of sustainable development are that people must share with each other and care for the Earth. Humanity must take no more from nature than nature can replenish. This in turn means adopting lifestyles and development paths that respect and work within nature's limits. It can be done without rejecting the many benefits that modern technology has brought, provided that technology also works within those limits. The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defined sustainable development as:

- Development achieving economic and social development in ways that do not exhaust a country's natural resources.
- A process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with the future as well as present needs".

- The development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development respects the limited capacity of an ecosystem to absorb the impact of human activities.
- The development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Some people also believe that the concept of sustainable development should include preserving the environment for other species as well as for people.

The term sustainable development rose to significance after it was used by the Brundtland Commission in its 1987 report *Our Common Future*. In the report, the commission coined what has become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Wamthalika, 1995). The United Nations Millennium Declaration identified principles and treaties on sustainable development, including economic development, social development and environmental protection (United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000) . Development in this term has done with labor and improvement on the implement and technology employed by labor. That is why youths need functional creative education for Nigeria's technological take-off. The faster way work is done or things are produced connotes the concept of development. This vitiates the idea of equating quantity of goods with development (Kumu, 1987).

National development in the above context involved a multidimensional process that normally connotes changes from less desirable to a more desirable state. National development therefore is a normative concept, which has no single accepted definition. Some see national development as relative to time, space, circumstances and thus cannot be reduced to one universal application formula (Ajani 2003). The concept of "sustainable development" has its roots in forest management as early as the 12th to 16th centuries. However, over the last five decades the concept has significantly broadened. The first use of the term sustainable in the contemporary sense was by the Club of Rome in 1972 in its classic report on the "Limits to Growth", written by a group of scientists led by Dennis and Donella Meadows of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Describing the desirable "state of global equilibrium", the authors used the word "sustainable": "We are searching for a model output that represents a world system that is: (1) sustainable without sudden and uncontrolled collapse and (2) capable of satisfying the basic material requirements of its entire people. In 1980, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature published a world conservation strategy that included one of the first references to sustainable development as a global priority.

The UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 outlines the building of a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century. The action plan Agenda 21 for sustainable development identified information, integration, and participation as key building blocks to help countries achieve development that recognizes these interdependent pillars. It emphasizes that in sustainable development everyone is a user and provider of information. It stresses the need to change from old sector-centered ways of doing business to new approaches that involve cross-sectoral co-ordination and the integration of environmental and social concerns into all development processes. Furthermore, Agenda 21 emphasizes that broad public participation in decision making is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving sustainable development. The

UN Commission on Sustainable Development integrated sustainable development into the UN System. Indigenous peoples have argued, through various international forums such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Convention on Biological Diversity, that there are *four* pillars of sustainable development, the fourth being cultural. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity from 2001 states: "... cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature"; it becomes one of the roots of development understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence.

The proposed changes were supported by a study in 2013, which concluded that sustainability reporting should be reframed through the lens of four interconnected domains: ecology, economics, politics and culture. The concept of sustainable development can be interpreted in many different ways, but at its core is an approach to development that looks to balance different, and often competing, needs against an awareness of the environmental, social and economic limitations we face as a society.

Christian Youths Involvement in Nigerian Politics since Independence in 1960

The political history of Nigeria has manifested an unmerited monotony of rascality, political, unbridled corruption, political blundering, moral decadence, incessant conflicts, and political motivated assassinations of political opponents, molestations of innocent citizens, wanton destruction of properties that worth millions of naira, political sycophancy and lawlessness due to the introduction of monetization of politics. Before amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, the political practice in Nigeria was a humanitarian service and communitarian affairs which involves the whole members of the society. It was not a game of "do or die affair", as it is being practiced today. Those elected into political positions were legitimately chosen by the populace without any form of political manipulation or malpractice of any sort.

Most of the elected people were adult Christians who had contact with western civilization, especially through education (Margaret, 1976). The youths and women were chosen only in peculiar situations. Even in the colonial period of Nigeria politics, which lasted till political independence of the nation in 1960, some of the prominent nationalists and politicians were Christians. These nationalists included Herbert Macaulay, Benjamin Azikiwe, and Ernest Ekoti and so on. It was later that Muslims emerged as political heavyweight especially on the platform of the Nigeria People Congress (NPC). Throughout colonial political period, the Christian politicians dominated the scene of Nigerian politics because they accept western education. The picture of political Nigerian leadership as shown in the accompanying table, modified from Margaret Peril.

Table 1 Major Political Parties in Nigeria Around 1960

NAME	LEADER	RELIGIOUS LEARNING
Action Group	Chief Obafemi Awolowo	Christian
Born Youth Movement	M. Abba Gana	Muslim
Dynamic Party	Dr. Chike Obi	Christian
Midwest Democratic Front	Apostle John Edokpolor	Christian
Mobolaje Grand Alliance	Alhaji Adegoke Adelabu	Muslim
National Council of Nigerian Citizens	Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe	Christian
Niger Delta Congress	Harold Biriye	Christian
Northern Elements Progressive Union	Alhaji Aminu Kano	Muslim
Nigerian National Democratic Party	Chief Samuel Akintola	Christian
Northern People's Congress	Sir Ahmadu Bello	Muslim
Out Edo	Chief Omo-Osagie	Christian
Socialist Workers and Farmers Party	Dr. Tunji Otegbeye	Christian
United Middle Belt Congress	Joseph Tarkaa	Christian

From table 1 it is clearly seen that most of the political developments in Nigeria during colonial period had bold stamp of the Christian political factor, which made the youths to adhere to the instruction and socialization provided by their parents, elders and kinsmen. The political and religious ideologies were one. There was little or no demarcation between religion and politics. If a father was a Christian or member of a political party, the children and the grownup dependants were also suppose to be members of that party. There was loyalty to senior citizens and elders, and any young person who erred was punished accordingly by traditional norms. The events unfolded fast and in rather unpredictable manner during the post colonial time. In the first place, the introduction of money politics advocated the abolition of non-commercialized politics in Nigeria. This anti-Christian attitude was seized up by parents and children who started identifying with different ideologies and political linings as orchestrated in materialism. This was further manifested in various forms which the youths who were recruited into political groupings exhibited in negative tendencies.

In contemporary times, there is a steady onslaught on the youths in Nigeria who has nursed some feelings of disadvantage position, religious wise. These youths have divided attention of going into politics for what they can get and their philosophy

of politics at best heightened materialism and secularism as counter productive. The deep conviction of average Nigerian youth today is that you must be a corrupt and unjust politician to succeed or bribe your way to get what you want. This philosophy becomes clearer with the prevalence of the popular dictum that “if you cannot beat them, then join them” (Nwoko, 1988). It suffices to say that the political lawlessness in Nigeria has produced another phenomenon of predentialism known as God-fatherism. In this relationship, there is “God-father” and “God-son”. The “God-sons” are the youths who are recruited by their political God-fathers and must remain loyal to them through out the period of political process. Any attempt of disloyalty, other God-sons will be recruited to deal decisively with the escape son. These God-sons are sometimes referred to as political thugs and are employed by political God-fathers or political lords to achieve their desired goals. The thugs could be used to eliminate opponents who stand on their way of achieving political goals or preventing them from manipulating political elections in the society.

As for the God-father, he is the political financier who pays for services provided by the God-son. Sometimes, he provides legal coverage by paying for legal charge in case there are, foot medical bills and other costs involved in the process of politicking. He promises the God-son political appointments and acquisition of extra-powers to influence or change issues of interest and power to protect them. Again, some of the God-fathers who are ardent cultists usually enroll some of their God-sons (the youths) as members too (Nwadike, 1999). In this ungodly practice, cultism becomes a political tool to grapple power from the opponents by unjust means. And the scapegoats are the youths. As a political lord, the God-father has the right to hire and fire God-sons anytime he deems necessary. At times, he can even disown or sacrifice the God-sons if he has met his desired goals. Sometimes, there is misunderstanding and disagreement between the God-father and many God-sons. This is because the God-father has a way of exploiting the God-sons. When this happens, the God-sons will rebel against the God-father and may even recruit many youth to join their fold. This is what leads to more violence and destruction of lives and property in politics and dispensation.

The point being demonstrated here is that youths no more adhere to their religious doctrines but are carried away by the materials benefits of politics in Nigeria. They therefore, resort to all forms of anti-social behaviors to achieve their desired goals. However, this is only limited to those youths who are materially inclined or were initially lured financially into politics. Notwithstanding this scenario, some youths who are God-fearing and subscribe to the tenets of their religion will do everything possible to preach the fear of God and its precepts.

Scriptural Foundation for Participation of Christian Youths in Nigerian Politics

The Bible contains detail accounts of Christian youth’s involvement in politics. The book of Genesis, for example, gives account of the creation of man by God to take charge and control of all created order. Man, however, has been trying to live under certain governmental plan in order to have political harmony in the world. Also, in Genesis 13:8-9, we saw the effort of Abraham to divide land with his brother Lot so as to avoid problem in the city or politics. Equally, in Genesis 25:27, we absorbed how Esau sold his right as the first born son to Jacob, because he was dying of hunger. He made a vow to relinquish his birth right as the first born son in place of a delicious meal. Here, we see clearly politics at play. This is the type of politics youth face today which is not typical of a Christian. Furthermore, in Genesis 27:21-25, Jacob with the help of their

mother, Rebecca receives the blessing of Esau from Isaac, their father. For that, Esau wanted to kill Jacob, and there arose enmity between the two brothers and their descendants. The book of Exodus relays the history of the Israelites: how they were in slavery in the land of Egypt. It also relates how Moses was born to be a leader to lead them out of slavery to the promise land; a land flowing with milk and honey into economic and political salvation (Ex. 3:1-21).

In 1Sam 8:1ff, the people of Israelites asked for a king. They rejected theocracy in favor of monarchy. God asked Samuel to allow them have monarchical government. This was an indication that God choose from his people leaders who are to play the game of politics for his own purposes, and according to his teaching. David and Solomon were the first youths chosen as ambassador of God. They were both religious and political leaders representing God in the world he created. Even when God himself sent Jesus Christ as His ambassador to represent Him in the world and to serve the people, Jesus was not interested in partisan politics. Thus, when a man came to him with a request to divide their father's property between them, Jesus refused to be party to local partisan politics; rather He was involved international politics between the Jews and Romans. Jesus told His followers not to lord it on others as Gentile rulers do. He rather commanded that who ever is in authority should serve one another. He was killed as a political agitator, who refuses tribute to Caesar.

Expected Role of Christian Youths Participation in Politics and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The Christian youths are leaders of tomorrow and so must participate in the politics of their nation in character, spirit or action that resemble Christ. They must not be as onlookers, passengers or passive participants in the political affairs of the nation. The Christian youths must be actively involved in politics in order to guide or influence government policy, with the sole objective to ensure just and fair governance. It has been said repeatedly that if Christian youths shun politics because it is dirty, then the unbelievers will take over the stage completely. This will lead to a government of the people by the unbelievers. This will be nothing short of anarchy. Active participation of Christian youth in politics can take one of these forms:

Participation in Legislation

The Christian youths can sponsor competent ones among their fold for elective posts. When such member's get elected they should be able to guide and influence legislation in the house of representative, assembly or senate as the case may be. The Christian youths, through such representative may introduce bills that will ensure good governance in several countries of the world, Christian youths have been known to initiate for reaching bills that have affected the likes of millions. The Christian youth in Italy is a ready example; the Christian youths fold may not form an exclusive political party. They may even belong to opposing political parties but when they identify a true Christian youths aspiring for political office, they rally round him or she because they believe that a true believer he or she would stand for what is noble at all times

Executive Position

Given the enormous powers wielded by the executive arm of the government the Christian youth may choose to provide moral, spiritual and material support to see a capable member of their group elected as a chairman of a local government, or even president of the nation. Such a candidate who must be Holy Ghost filled, will govern with fear of God, transparency,

honesty, prudence, justice and accountability, to the benefit of his people and the glory of the almighty God. Anything short of this will be serious backsliding on the path of the whole Christendom.

Party Functionary

Past experience both in Nigeria and other parts of the world revealed that certain functionaries of government may possess far more powers than those who hold positions in the executive arm of government. Where possible, the Christian youths should joint hands to elect their members to such positions. Through such functionaries, the Christian youths can exert tremendous influence on the government and government policies.

Political Education

Dictators, despots and inefficient leaders flourish in a nation or environment where a large proportion of the populace is politically ignorant. The Christian youths will therefore, ensure good and just governance by providing political education and awareness not only among their members but even among other masses. When the masses know their rights, they can then demand for them. When the politicians know that the masses are aware of their rights, they usually don't wait to be reminded of those rights and those who dare to withhold them do so at their own peril.

Mobilization

The Christian youths must educate their members on the need to participate in politics. They should be motivated to do so because they have everything to gain and nothing to lose in the process. The objective, however, of participation is not for personal gains but for the common good of all citizens. Aspects of politics in which the Christian youths could participate should be explained to them so that they do not assume that occupying the state house is the only way to "serve the nation" just helping a Christian politician to run a campaign efforts of a competent candidate as a sign of active participation into politics.

People Watchdog

The Christian youths, even if they are neither in the legislature nor the executive arms of government, can help ensure good governance by offering "constructive criticism" of inappropriate actions of either the legislature or the executive. Anyone who chooses to participate in this form under certain regimes may face harassment, intimidation and physical assault. But persecution for Christian youths is not new. Even Jesus Christ who went about doing well was crucified. I must say that in recent times, Christian youths, especially, from catholic denomination and even CAN have come out openly to criticize the government on certain issues. Even if the government does not rescind its decision on the issues being criticized, the public outcry helps to check the government from future excesses it would have perpetrated had its earlier action and decision not being challenged. I have no doubt in my mind that many unpopular decisions are avoided today because certain would call a press conference the day after the decision is made public.

Appraisal of Past Performance of Christian Youths Participation in Politics and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

It is pertinent at this point to appraise the past performance of the Christian youths in Nigerian politics. A careful examination of the past republic (first, second, third and fourth), reveal that the Christian youths has not performed satisfactory. For example, there is lack of commitment of the Christian youth in their religious doctrines. They prefer to worship their God-fathers and the money associated with politics. The introduction of money politics made many Christian youths to become indisciplined and can cure relatively young people in criminal tendencies and criminalities that could cause a lot of socio-economic and political consequences on the citizenry and the nation at large. Such youths who are caught up with negative politicking has no respect for constituted authority, parents and religious institutions in the society. In the area of sponsorship of candidate for legislative and executive positions, the Christian youths have done much. The Christian youths have not been known to sponsor enough candidates for such positions in Nigeria. Even when faced with certain bills in which the Christian youths were expected to vote one way or the other in accordance's with their faith, such members fail to give preference and loyalty to a political party than their member. The Christian youths has fared in the area of political education. The members were left to wallow in total ignorance, thus exposing them to manipulations, exploitations and oppressions by the fraudulent Machiavellian politicians.

Mobilization for Christian youths participation in politics was played down within Nigerian society. Some clergies made pronouncement to the effect that it was sinful for a Christian to participate in politics. So the society remained in dormant political force instead of being a dynamic agent of the change for the betterment of the conditions of our people. It should be noted here that the Christian youths who participated in politics do not give a good account of themselves either. Even in the past republics which were political dispensations not so desired, the revelation of corruption, fraud, embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds involving Christian youths, were not different from those of the unbelievers. We had thought that Christian youth politicians are all "new creatures. But their apparent dismal performance in the past must be attributed to general assumption that politics is dirty and Christian should keep away from it made some of the Christian youths who went into politics as rebels not to regard themselves as members of the constituency of our Lord Jesus Christ. For them, it was an ego trip for personal glory and material acquisition. The noble objective of service to humanity which the Christian constituency would have emphasized was lost on them. To such young money seeking politicians, the Christians, especially youth were not responsible for their elections and consequently, they owe them nothing. As rebels, they no longer consider themselves bound by the high moral standard which characterized Christian life. They were only Christian youths in the name at that stage.

Strategy for Improved Performance of Christian Youths Participation in Nigerian Politics and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The Christian youths are parts and parcel of the political system in Nigeria. They cannot form a government of its own alone. It is subject to the same government as the youths who are unbelievers. It is therefore, in their interest to ensure that sufficient influences are exerted on such a government in order to ensure good and just governance. This can not be achieved by being mere on-lookers or passengers in the political affairs of the state or nation. The Christian youths must be empowered by the government to participate actively in politics. At presents it is a dirty game. The first step for the youths is to sanitize the

political environment. We (the youths) must start by introducing a new brand of politics in which losers loose gallantly and winners can be humbled in victory. We must introduce politics in which players obey the rules, and those in the game are there to serve the players to the best of their ability rather than as “gold diggers”. The youth who are new politicians must serve as the fresh water, issuing out toward the east country, which will render the salty sea water fresh when it flows into it (Ezekiel 47:1-12)

CONCLUSION

From the foregone discussion, we will conclude by saying that youths as leaders of tomorrow have to be actively involved in the political affairs of Nigeria, it is unthinkable if politics should be left in the hands of the adult alone since politics has to do with the management of the affairs of the state or nation; it effects everybody, including the Christian youth, who have a role to play in political education, mobilization, sponsorship of the competent ones among them for elective posts and sponsorship of legislations that will ensure good and just governance. We (the youths) must offer constructive criticism of actions and decisions of government that are not in the best interest of the nation. Above all, the Christian youth must monitor their members in politics to ensure that they are not lost to the people of the world. For these to be achieved, the following recommendations are necessary:

1. The government should as much as possible keep away from manipulating political elections for personal benefits or interest. Political parties should be allowed to organize their elections under the guidance of INEC without government interference. This will help in putting to an end the God-father and God-son syndrome in Nigeria. The federal government should promote a law forbidding the use of thugs during political campaigns and elections in Nigeria. The law enforcement agency and the citizenry should check and detest any practice by this category.
2. The youths, particularly the Christian ones should practice their politics without compromising their religious values and convictions. They should inject Christian values into the temporal order in order to grapple with the many vices that accompany political behaviors in Nigeria, such as corruption, ethnicism, statism, arson, looting, hooliganism, assassination of political opponents and various forms of un-ethnic behaviors. The youth who operate in the nooks and corners of the society must endeavor to become the leaven of the society.
3. To usher in a new era of politics in Nigeria, which will put to a definitive end the suffering of the masses, all youth must participate in voting for those who will rule them in the fifth republic. Each youth must belong to one of the political parties approved by the government. As youths, we should not allow any party to deceive, cheat or use us with cheap money, or propaganda that this particular political party is for Muslims and the other one is for Christians. Both parties are for all Nigerians. To segregate ourselves into two parties because we are either Christian or Muslims is to throw off our rights. It is better to make up our minds individually as to which of the parties attract us most judging from their manifestoes ideologies leaders and performances.

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