



## **Dateline 2023: Opportunities, Fears, Hopes**

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### ***Abstract***

*Nigerian became independent in 1960, the giant of Africa was ready to take off and join the orbit of great world powers. Indeed, many of gigantic projects actually took off and went a long way. With expectations and hopes, then, came a tragic civil war which threatened the cooperate existence of Nigeria. Somewhere along the line, around 1980s, things began to turn sour. Many hopes and expectations of previous decades were either postponed or completely abandoned one after the other. These hopes and expectations became mere dreams and even dreams became the act of faith possible only for the most optimistic. The soured system of leadership emerged, today, many Nigerians are traumatized and profoundly distressed as they live in a patently dysfunctional society that gives the impression that governance is non-existent. There is emerging evidence that the current situation of the country have some connection with the political impunity which pervades the entire nation with total collapse of social and economic infrastructure. This paper employs the doctrinal method to surveys the existence of opportunities, expectations and hopes as 2023 generational election is fast approaching. The paper is therefore calls for attention be focused on the need for religious tolerance; positive attitude towards politics; eschewing politics of ethnicity; and appraising moral values instead of Money.*

**Keywords:** *Hopes, Expectations, Dateline 2023, Opportunities, and Fears*

## **Introduction**

Nigeria began its existence in 1914 when Northern protectorate was amalgamated with the Southern protectorate by Lord Lugard. It became an independent country in 1960, with expectations and hopes, then, came a

tragic thirty month civil war which threatened the cooperate existence of Nigeria. Nevertheless at the end of the civil war, rather than diminish Nigerians expectations and hopes, it heightened them. In the mid-seventies, big airports, seaports, industrialization in iron, steel and petroleum sectors were planned and embarked upon. At the same time, big universities and even a brand new federal capital territory to be constructed on an ‘empty land’ were planned. Nigeria the giant of Africa was ready to take off and join the orbit of great world powers. Indeed, many of these gigantic projects actually took off and went a long way.

Then somewhere along the line, around the 1980s, things began to turn sour. Many hopes and expectations of previous decades were either postponed or completely abandoned one after the other. Thanks to a tragic collusion of mismanagement and corruption by both Military junta and visionless politicians.

These hopes and expectations became mere dreams and even dreams became the act of faith possible only for the most optimistic. Hence, came the feeling by Nigerians of being in a jet plane speeding down a runaway but unable to take off and unable to stop. This brings us to the heart of the challenges facing Nigeria in its political milieu. Today, many Nigerians are traumatized and profoundly distressed as they live in a patently dysfunctional society that gives the impression that governance is non- existent. This is evident in the political impunity that pervades the entire nation, total collapse of social and economic infrastructure. The decadence in our educational system, the erosion of moral values, the insecurity of lives and property characterized by an increasing spate of armed robbery, hired assassinations, kidnappings, regular Fulani herdsman and farmers clashes which leave many dead, fatally injured against which the security agencies offer no protection.

It is in view of this that this paper sets out to do an analysis of these challenges, carry out a critique and proffer some recommendations on how Nigerian electorates can get it right, come 2023 general elections. Hence the title: **“DATELINE 2023: OPPORTUNITIES, FEARS, HOPES.”**

## **CONCERT OF POLITICS IN NIGERIA**

The etymology of politics comes from the Greek word; *“politios”*, meaning “of, for or relating to citizens.” It is the practice and theory of influencing other people on a civic or individual level. It refers to achieving and exercising positions or governance, organised control over a human community, particularly a State. A variety of methods are employed in politics, which include promoting one’s own

political values among people, negotiation with other political subjects, electioneering, making laws.<sup>35</sup> Politics is as old as the human society itself. It is the science or art of government. Politics has to do with the way a people or country is ruled. It has to do with government and the whole system has to do with the society and the State. More importantly, it is a system in which the rulers and the ruled have their different functions. Politics and political associations are of vital importance for human existence.<sup>36</sup>

Politics with regard to this paper can be defined as the disciplined investigation of political problems with a view to proffering solutions to these problems with an intension to creating an enabling environment that is conducive for growth and sustainable development. This is against the backdrop or the concept of politics in Nigeria, where it is seen as, “do or die affairs”, “a dirty game” and “winner takes all”. This is substantiated in the issues of Godfatherism, Tribalism, Nepotism, Religious bigotry, Elections malpractices, Voters apathy, vote buying, thuggery, etc. Any political concept to be applied to Nigeria should begin by first examining that Nigeria was in fact a creation of an external interest. Nigeria was created and dominated through colonialism which held the nation in bondage through economic and political strategies or put more politically, “where a number of historic cleavages as is the case of Nigeria intermix and create a basis for politics that will be unstable and weak. By definition, such politics does not include the concept of tolerance.”<sup>37</sup>

### **Ethnicity and Politics in Nigeria**

Ethnic politics in Nigeria has its root prior to the independence of Nigerian 1960 and the country's nationhood in 1963 when Nigeria became a public. Xenophobia is as old as man and woman on this earth. From time immemorial, man and woman have always shown fear, distrust and sometimes open hostility to strangers, namely those who did not belong to their ethnic group. Apart from the colour of the skin, the other most revealing factor is language or dialect or the modes of communication. Whoever did not understand these conventional symbols, sound and other bodily gestures was a stranger and would instinctively be given the

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<sup>35</sup> Bates and Fields, *State and Government 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. in Philosophic Foundation of Politics* Odimegwu, Ike, et.al ed. (Akwa: Lumos, 2008), 52.

<sup>36</sup> Burghardt, Walter J., *Justice: A Global Adventure* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004).

<sup>37</sup> Ijomah, B.I., *Essays on Social Controversies* (Benin City: Idodo Umeh, 2002), Nigerian Nationalism and the Problem of Socio-Political Integration. Onitsha: Oluluben, 2001).

treatment of a foreign body introducing itself into a living organism, known as rejection.<sup>38</sup>

Invariably, “when the British colonial rulers, in the early twentieth century, forced the two hundred and fifty ethnic groups that make up Nigeria into a territorial entity, their major preoccupation was to maintain law and order and to make the economic exploitation of Nigeria as easy as possible”. To do this they applied the principle of “indirect rule” principally in Northern Nigeria. By this rule they consolidated the position of traditional institutions in the emergent political system in Northern Nigeria thus preserving the cultures in the ruling emirates and building, as it were, a country of people with different and divergent cultures and systems of administration.<sup>39</sup> Due to our peculiar ethnic diversity in Nigeria, the country has acquired a catalogue of problems before, since and after Independence, amongst which is that of political instability and corruption. It should be stated categorically that no ethnic group or nationality is to be blamed for the amalgamation and unification of the ethnic groups into one country called, Nigeria. Neither the major ethnic groups nor the minority ethnic groups desired it. The blame to the pains, which the forced amalgamation caused the various ethnic groups, goes for the British colonialists. They did it because of their own economic interest and administrative convenience. However, it is obvious the pains of this amalgamation remain till today.

Hence, one of the chronic problems of Nigeria politics is that one ethnic group tries dominating the other. This fear is categorised into three dimensions. The first is the domination of Nigeria as a whole by the intimidating geographical size of Northern Nigeria as against the size of either Eastern Nigeria or Western Nigeria or both combined together as the "South". The Hausa-Fulani ethnic group has had an initial political advantage and domination over other groups by the fact that it has had control of political power at the center (Federal level). More than other groups put together. There is no gainsaying the fact "that the three major ethnic groups. Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba have dominated and oppressed the rest of over 250 nationalities in Nigeria. As a matter of administrative convenience, the British simply imposed the language of these major nationalities on the rest of the country as official languages in the Regions where they were found. In the North, Hausa became the official language to the resentment of the Tiv, Idoma, Kataf, Biron, I

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<sup>38</sup> Nwokora, Lawrence N., *Choosing an Alternative: How Nigerians under develop Nigeria* (Onitsha: Veritas, 1990).

<sup>39</sup> Concept of Politics, <http://www.poieinkai.prattai.org/Europe/European-debate-2/politics/concept-of-politics>, (Access 2/3/2015).

gala, etc .While in the West, Yoruba was imposed on the Bini, Etsako, Esan, Igarra peoples. The same thing occurred in the Eastern Region, in which the Efik, Anang and Ogoja dialects were suppressed in favour of the Igbo language. The consequence of this policy was that while the cultures of the major ethnic groups developed, those of the minorities remained stunted. This naturally caused resentment and disaffection among the minorities.<sup>40</sup>

### **Religion and Politics in Nigeria**

The objective destination of any religion is God and human beings attainment to him. Each religion has its own rules and regulations. Objectively, the rules and regulations of different religions are aimed at harmonious human coexistence. Each religion has its mode of expression of the objective destination of religions. When the different modes of religious expressions are in constant contradictory confrontation, then the results are mostly regrettable. The consequences of contradictory religious expressions are an everyday experience in Nigeria. Nigeria is multi religious country, with Christianity, Islam and African Religion as the three pronounced religions. The Nigerian constitution guarantees the freedom of religion; this “freedom of choice in matters of religion” makes it absolutely possible to practice or change one's religion without fear of persecution. Freedom of religion does not mean the freedom to use religion to incite or to instigate violence. Religious freedom does not guarantee the right to use religion to disturb the peace of mind of others. Religious freedom actually denotes right and not coercion. It calls for religious tolerance and recognition of diversity.<sup>41</sup>

Nigerians as a people are "notoriously" religious. They live religion and think religion.' Nigerians are religious addicts." This is due to the fact that Nigerians place religion at a position, that its misappropriation is highly predictable. Religion is used to legitimize almost anything in Nigeria. Politicians make recourse to religion to promote their course. They use religious events, gatherings and discussions to gain political advantage.<sup>42</sup> Without denying the honesty and seriousness in the religiosity of most Nigerians, it remains an undeniable fact that religion has become one of the instruments of manipulation and distraction in

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<sup>40</sup> Nwedo, A.G, *The Church Colonialism and Islam in Nigeria: A Post-Humous Publication* (Lagos: Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria,2000)

<sup>41</sup> Umeh, Emmanuel C. *African Theology of Solidarity and Religion of Self-Deceit: The Nigeria Experience* (Abs:Rex Printing,2012).

<sup>42</sup>Peter Schineller , *The Church Teaches: Stand of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria on issues of Faith and Life* (Abuja: Daily Graphics Nigeria Limited,2005).

Nigerian politics. Many hide themselves in the good name of religion to perpetrate vilest forms of evils ranging from brainwashing to ritual killings.

There has been a lot of talk about religion and politics in Nigeria. The Sharia debate and the still ranging controversy, "Nigeria's purported full membership of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC)" are only aspects of the wider question concerning the place and role of organized religion in the politics of Nigeria. Much has been said not only by people who claim to be defending Christian or Muslim positions, but also by those who declare themselves free of both religions. Yet, the "religious question" remains unresolved.<sup>43</sup> In the Nigerian context, the growing contentiousness of religious issues has been largely due to the politicisation of religion. A process in which religion becomes largely a facade, mask, or excuse for the pursuit of other objectives of individual or group interest. To bring a few fundamental considerations to our awareness as regard religion in Nigerian politics. The first comprises a "small, but vocal and troublesome minority of religious fanatics". By 'fanatics' here it does not "mean people who hold strongly to their religious positions, but rather those who believe that everybody else is wrong except themselves and are ready to perpetuate all manner of violent actions in the fanatical defense of their positions". Such fanatics constitute varying groups which give religion a bad name. Main stream religions in Nigeria ought to be able to identify such groups, isolate them and clearly disown them whenever they go on the rampage".<sup>44</sup> Religion's source of enslavement in Nigeria is political manipulation. Precisely, because majority of Nigerians take their religion seriously. Politicians who are clever at manipulation often cannot resist the temptation of manipulating religion for their own political ends. Those who really believe in religion should be able to liberate themselves from such manipulation, especially as very often the politicians who manipulate religion are themselves not very religious. It must be admitted that some people who consider themselves religious leaders make themselves easily amenable to political manipulation, for reasons that are definitely not in the interest of religion. When Nigeria succeeds in liberating religion from both fanatics and political manipulation, then the citizens would all be able to put their heads together to the task of repositioning Nigeria for greatness.

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<sup>43</sup> John Onaiyekan, *The Church and the State: The Imperative of Collaborating towards Political Stability in Nigeria* (Abuja: Gaudium Et Spes Institute, 2008).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Invariably, a new approach to the issue of politics and religion is that, it is not enough to proclaim our presumed religious points of view though these are important. A workable Nigerian solution should be sought for in order to continue living in the same nation in peace and harmony. Tolerance is good, but not enough. Mutual respect is needed, reciprocal acceptance of one another with our respective differences as well as riches. Only then can religion be liberated to play a positive role in politics. The question therefore is not whether religion should influence our political life but how and to what extent? It is agreed that all the religions in this country profess values of honesty, discipline, fear of God and other positive values. The crucial interest of this paper is the need to bring these positive values to bear on our political life.

### **Godfatherism and Politics in Nigeria**

Democracy is popularly defined as government of the people, by the people and for the people.” Implication of this definition is that in a civil society, everyone ought to have a say in the policy and decision process of the nation. This is quite contrary to our Nigerian experience in the sense that the government can just wake up one morning to increase fuel prices without dialogue or due consultation with the people whose mandate brought the leaders to the positions of authority. To ensure good governance therefore, political leaders or authorities should avoid favours granted to party members alone. Even though ours is a democratic dispensation, it is clear to all that contracts, appointments, promotions and even dismissal from the civil service are often decided on the basis of party loyalty. It is no longer a hidden secret that packages from any incumbent administration are allegedly distributed to party supporters as "dividend of democracy".<sup>45</sup>

Politics according to the Nigerian mentality is not a game for the poor or economically disadvantaged. Therefore, to be relevant in the political arena of the present day Nigeria, one needs to have enough money. The demands of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for party registration that require several millions of naira indicate that the Nigerian government encourages money politics, the basis for Godfatherism in Politics. The consequence of this is that a mediocre who has enough money and not the interest of the nation can buy his or her way to public office. This again explains why Nigeria has a stagnant

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<sup>45</sup> Segun Ekun L., *Good Governance: The Role of the Laity in the 2007 General Election* (Lokoja: Onaivi, 2007)

economic and socio-political landscape because this money is in variably always stolen from public funds. To install good governance, Nigeria needs people with great ideas, vision and good sense of management. Such people are not necessarily the rich and affluent of society. Money and inordinate desire for power is the root of "Godfatherism" which has to do with sponsorship to political office. Politics is the quickest and surest means to make money in Nigeria. Therefore, if an aspiring candidate has not enough cash to get him or her into political office, he or she simply looks for a political Godfather to sponsor him or her to the gold mine. The candidate allegedly pays a certain percentage from the state monthly allocation to his or her Godfather as a token of appreciation. Similarly, a rich and affluent politician may want to invest his money by picking a candidate who in turn is expected to pay an agreed percentage to his or her sponsor or investor. Failure to comply with the initial agreement may lead to political unrest similar to that of former Anambra State Governor, Chris Ngige and his Godfather Chris Mba in 2008.

Majority of Nigerians are still waiting for the dividend of democracy. There is no political accountability, elections are organised but leaders are handpicked, the people's votes on Election Day seem more like a camouflage and really do not count. All these are possible in the Nigerian political reality because the political parties are hijacked by the few money bags.<sup>46</sup> Nigeria is like a commodity placed on auction for the highest bidder. The political elites and money bags are the buyers. Nigerian political elites are modern equivalents of the African War lords of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who built up wealthy Kingdoms by selling millions of their people to the Europeans in the Atlantic slave trade. In their current incarnation, they sell their resources—oil in the case of Nigeria, instead of human beings. This explains why politics today in Nigeria is one of the lucrative "businesses" that many are rushing into without the primary objective of serving the nation, but of making for themselves as much profit as possible. The result is the negligence of social services, amenities and the need of the masses.<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, God fatherism instigates and influences undue process of nominations into political positions or offices. Political parties have constitutions which guide their operations including nominations and discipline for erring members

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<sup>46</sup>Umeh, Emmanuel C. *African Theology of Solidarity and Religion of Self-Deceit: The Nigeria Experience* (Abs:Rex Printing,2012).

<sup>47</sup> Merkl P, *Political Continuity and Change in Odimegwu, Ike, Philosophic Foundation of Politics*. (Awka:Lumos,2008)

so that the laid down guidelines or operational modalities could be followed in order to achieve fair play and openness in Nigerian politics but Godfatherism usually scuttle this process and make it unworkable .Unfortunately, due processes have been thrown into the winds by some political parties in their choice of candidates to occupy political positions. Nowadays some parties force candidates over their party members instead of allowing such candidates to pass through real primary elections to determine the level of popular acceptability of their choice. In several instances, such practice has been due to influence of God fatherism in politics.

Nigerian is currently witnessing an era of brutish political practice which is also connected to God fatherism. It all started with the killing of the highly respected journalist Dele Giwa through a parcel bomb in the eighties. Today, political rivals assassinate themselves through hired assassins .The case of the former Attorney General of the Federation .Chief Bola Ige (SAN) is still fresh in the minds while other ones such as the assassinations of Chief Anthony Olufunso Williams, a Lagos State governorship aspirant and Chief Godwin Ugokwe in Umuahia, Abia State, as well as the gruesome murder of Dr. Ayodele Daramola, another governorship aspirant in Ekiti State still baffle many.<sup>48</sup> The country is unfortunate to have one of the highest numbers of unemployed youths in Africa. These readily serve as thugs and assassins for Godfathers against their opponents. It is evident in the manner in which youths are readily available to serve as political thugs. Surely, these young men are recruited by “money bags” and they are used to stifle opponents of their political ambitions. In fact, many of these thugs are products of different cull groups who still roam streets after years of graduation without employment. This leads us to yet another important issue, the need for transparent and credible electoral process.

### **Voters’ Apathy**

Systematically, successive governments have directly or indirectly built voters’ apathy in many eligible voters. This is as a result of the various elections concluded in this country which more often than not have produced outrageous numbers outright and blatant rigging, as the figures of votes cast are more than registered voters.

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<sup>48</sup> Michael Ogunu Ed., *The Catholic Laity Council Of Nigeria: Our Youth, Good Governance and Sustainable Democracy*, (Benin City: Floreat Systems, 2005)

Subsequently, many Nigerian of voting age have come to conclusion that come what may, their votes do not count. The dire consequence of this is for eligible voters to stay indoors on voting days. That is why, one reads from INEC website that millions are registered but a few thousand of people voted.

Additionally, the militarization of our electoral process has left so much taste in the mouths of many Nigerians. It is on records that many voters are sometimes brutalized or outrightly killed on their way to the polling stations or even at the polling stations. This may be due to the fact that they belong to opposition parties or in the bid to stop anomalies perpetuated by military and police personnel and sometimes the electoral agents.

Nonetheless, dateline 2023 elections should remove this apathy from every eligible Nigerians voter who has his or her permanent voters' cards. This is pertinent and expedient because the 2023 general elections will either mar or make Nigeria. No one eligible to vote should sit on the fence this time around, because the action of one and all will fix or break Nigeria. Every voter should vote and defend their votes; get the authentic figures of votes cast at each polling unit to the polling wards and at the State level, once this is done, the votes of Nigerians will then count and indeed become the determining factor for choosing any political leader in this country. Hence, this is a clarion call for a full, active and genuine participation in 2023 general elections by all eligible voters with PVC to come out en mass to vote good and credible candidates of their choice.

### **Vote Buying**

The new lexicon in Nigeria's electoral process is of course "vote buying." This was massively witnessed in the immediate past two elections in Ekiti and Osun States. Thus was done electronically by sending money as minimal as Three to Four Thousand Naira only into voters' bank accounts, which the politicians have gotten through party memberships and some banks' staff. However, this is not limited to cash deposits, provisions, bags of rice, gallons of groundnut oil, textiles (wrappers), etc came in handy here. The voters should be educated that should they sell their vote for whatever the amount received or the cost of items collected, they have received their own dividends of democracy for the next four years. Hence, their mouths should remain shut and never complain if such politicians make life difficult and unbearable for them. After all, the maxim holds that "What makes evil to thrive is when the good people refuse to act."

Going biblical therefore, Esau had no rights to complain that Jacob stole his blessings, when he was actually the one who sold his birthright as the first child for a pot of porrage. Consequently, Nigerians have no right to complain of their constitutional rights of good livelihood, good infrastructures and bad governance when they sell their Permanent Voters Cards (PVC) and votes for peanuts, thereby installing bad government.

Remember, only the senseless, throws their pearls before swine to trample upon.

### **Lack of Transparent Electoral Process**

It should be emphasized that free and fair elections should always commence at the party primaries so that the best political aspirants might emerge as party candidates for elections. Anyone who has attained the voting age of eighteen (18) years , as stipulated in the Nigerian Constitution and Electoral Act and who is eligible to vote should always register and vote for candidates of his or her choice. Electorates' votes should not be based on ethnic, gender, religious affiliation or monetary inducement but to vote always with clear conscience candidates who are honest, patriotic and selfless .In a democratic dispensation, leaders come into public office through free and fair election .The credentials of those to be elected are scrutinized by the electorates through active participation in politics.

The recent experience in Nigeria reveals that electoral malpractice is occasioned by political parties themselves through manipulation of electoral processes to their own advantage. When this happens, fraudulent democratic system emerges in the sense that the people's wishes are not represented. Hence the first principle of good governance is free and fair election. This would mean that party registrations and indeed the whole electoral process must be free, fair and democratic. Accepted the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is saddled with transparent electoral process, the same applies to all Nigerians.

However, political parties that is full of more sound than well- prepared manifestos, or are interested in particular groups or classes rather than the whole nation, given more to high-sounding promises than evidence of their ability to fulfill them should not receive serious voters' support. On the contrary, those Political parties which manifest purposeful planning for the virtuous prosperity of the whole country should commend themselves to patriotic and pious voters both for their votes and their allegiance. Evidently, true and patriotic voters can virtuously disagree in what parties, platforms and personal candidates are best for the country. Every responsible voter owes it to himself or herself and the country to recognize the

difference between the truly patriotic and the evidently self-seeking and particularistic politicians. Both Nigerian patriotism and religious piety should therefore dictate his or her vote.

The criteria for electoral candidates 'suitability should be paramount to voters. While, indeed," the workman is worthy of his wages (Lukel0:7) and politicians can rightfully expect due compensation for their services, their credibility before The public depend on priorities of motives and purposes .Any lack of willingness to submerge personal ambition and emolument to public welfare, any disposition to appoint or approve appointment, mere hangers –on of a particular ethnic group. Any legislative preference in few our of the few rather than the nation as a whole, any judicial partiality for one's own class, show candidates to be unworthy of serious electoral support.<sup>49</sup>

Many of the parties in total disregard of their rules picked and chose candidates at will without going through the parties primaries. In some cases where primaries were successfully concluded and a winner emerged, the party changed the candidate after tedious court cases, candidates are ordered by the court to be reinstated by their parties. The Electoral Umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission should be above board, incorruptible credible, Fair and transparent in handling electoral process.

At all times and in every election, the Electoral Umpire should ensure that every vote is counted and that every vote counts. Voters exercise active voice. Their votes should actively and truly determine electoral winners and losers .Those who stand for election have passive voice, since they depend on the electorate for any votes. However, while they are passive in receiving votes, depending on them for whatever success in their electoral bid, the candidate for election are most active in presenting themselves, in campaigning, in seeking to show their worthiness of the confidence of the electorate.

With some degree of accuracy, it can be said that a people have the kind of government which they deserve. In so far as this is actually true then it is the noble right and serious duty of every responsible citizen to do what he or she feels towards the establishment, maintenance and successful operation of a good government .Evidently, not everyone has the disposition, talent or opportunity to serve the nation as a member or officer of government, but everyone with the right

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Schineller , *The Church Teaches: Stand of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria on issues of Faith and Life* (Abuja: Daily Graphics Nigeria Limited,2005).

to vote does have the opportunity, which should be exercised responsibly, to help form mandate and direct government. To do so is a demand of patriotism, which is itself an important part of the religious virtue of piety. True piety means respectful and responsible devotedness not only to one's familial father and our divine Father (God) but also to one's fatherland. Normally, it is in the fatherland that one expresses one's love for God and neighbour. Thus, the proper use of one's right to vote.<sup>50</sup> The prospective voter should be convinced of the importance of his or her vote. Neglecting to vote is the denial of potential support for social justice and progress; voting carelessly or corruptly whether for a foe or other selfish consideration can support injustice and retrogression. Voting conscientious and purposefully is the citizen's most available and direct way of contributing to the election of most suitable leaders and support of publicly beneficial policies. It is at least in this sense that a people can be said to deserve its kind of government. It is also in this sense that selling one's vote or casting it for short-sighted gain is offensive before God and humanity.

It is expedient that after enumerating the challenges being experienced in the Nigeria political scene, a critical look on the relevance of Nigerian electorates in renewing politics is necessary, particularly in 2023 general elections. Even when the political society appears to be impermeable, Nigerian electorates should not give up on this fundamental responsibility. Evidently, the last general elections of 2015 have ignited some light of hope for many Nigerians. The elections, in comparison to the previous elections, show that Nigerians are becoming politically conscious at least by making sure that their votes were properly counted. Even though there were certain irregularities, the elections were adjudged by both local and international observers as being free and fair. It remains for the elected persons to render to the people the services they were elected for. Once, the electoral processes is not transparent, the elections not free, fair and credible as it is usually promised by the Electoral umpire, Nigerians have the right to come united against all forms of dictatorship. Furthermore, this is the electorate only means of entrenching the culture of democracy and good governance in the country so as to ensure transparency and accountability. If the Electorate fled from the problem of politics, what would be lost would exceed that which presumed neutrality might aim to protect. Sadly, too many politics is an understudied and consequently, a misunderstood subject by many Nigerians. Politics is rejected by many Nigerians because it is thought about as a lying, deceitful and

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

fraudulent practice. Politics is believed to be about theft, it is about swimming in the epicentre of corruption.

Politics is defined from the point of view of elections parties and the processes of contestation. The temptation is for the electorates to remain cynical, denying realities and making moral judgment as to how rotten the system has become. In the process, running the risk of becoming guilty bystanders, contributing to the weight of our own collective oppression by somehow playing the ostrich and saying that the environment is not ripe for men and women of integrity to engage in politics.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, if politics is the norm rather than the exception, then Nigerian electorates must determine their future and fate in 2023 general election. Not by coercion or by tongue lashing can politics be renewed, but only by exhibiting the self-sacrificing spirit of making Nigeria great. Self-sacrificing spirit will empower the electorate to renew politics. The best renewal Nigeria electorate can give to politics is to always demand for fairness and justice to all and sundry, irrespective of gender, religious, ethnic or party affiliations. Active in their participatory role in politics. Equally emphasis should be placed on enlightenment of the electorate on politics, and apply the value contained therein to their daily live experiences.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. **The Need for Religious Tolerance:** All religions in Nigeria should promote and insist on the observation of the tenet of the secular constitution of Nigeria. This should be effected by making the so-called Sharia states rescind their position. Also, political office holders should never use their positions to promote or advance the interest of their particular religions at the expense of others. Inter-religious dialogue should be taken more seriously and honestly. Inter-religious cooperation should be started, for instance, owning some business enterprises in common. All religions should be un-hypocritical about the so much touted interest in peace, since all religion claims to propagate peace. Politics should be guided by religious value common to all religions namely, truth, justice, live, peace, honesty and hard work in order to make politics in Nigeria a noble enterprise.
- ii. **Positive Attitude towards Politics:** Effort is to be made to adopt a positive attitude towards politics and to become objective and constructive in its

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<sup>51</sup> Matthew Kukah, *The Church and the Politics of Social Responsibility* (Lagos: Sovereign, 2007)

criticism. Open-mindedness among the electorate and an inclusive attitude towards one another, would pave the way to unity among them, their various tribes or ethnicities, and in this way, among other efforts, they would affect the lives of other people more positively particularly in their political outlook.

- iii. **Eschewing Politics of Ethnicity:** Politics is about government therefore, it cannot be a dirty game; however, politicians make politics look dirty; by their approach to politics. Equally, ethnicity in itself is not a bad thing because on the day one is born, he or she is naturally born into an ethnic group. Nevertheless, when ethnicity becomes the source of oppression, favoritism, etcetera, then it is applied wrongly.
- iv. **Appraising moral values instead of Money:** The issue of Godfatherism will remain with us and in Nigeria's politics as long as money instead of morals, as long as mediocrity instead of merit remains the bane of Nigeria politics. This is because any politician who wishes to contest for election but does not have money has to look for sponsors whom in return he or she has to settle. This settlement at times is in perpetuity.

## CONCLUSION

The hype about impending doom, a potential second civil war from which Nigeria may never recover from. Disintegration of Nigeria rent the air shortly before the 2015 general elections that the country was said to be sitting on the keg of gun powder ready to explode. Nevertheless, the elections were conducted with none of these prophecies of doom fulfilled.

It must be stated that the tensions now are more rift than then. Therefore, it behooves on the electorate to once again douse these tensions by holding the government and the Independent National Electoral Commission responsible towards conducting a transparent free and fair election which is credible. This can only be achieved by adequately registering and collecting permanent voter's card (PVC). Electorate must emphasize the issue of one man, one vote, defend every vote cast and make sure everyone's vote counts.

This is the only way in which the maxim: "The government of the people, by the people and for the people" can hold water. Consequently, all forms of Godfatherism, religious bigotry, nepotism, election malpractices would have been reduced to barest minimum if not totally eradicated. Then Nigerian electorate

would have grabbed their opportunities by replacing fears with hopes come Dateline 2023.

Succinctly put, it would be evident that most of our problems that are usually self-inflicted mainly by Nigeria politicians on the one hand and complacent acquiescence and naivety of Nigerians on the other hand would have been cured once and for all from the roots. This will be a breath of new life, full of opportunities and hope as against fears which pervade the nation currently, come, dateline 2023 and beyond.